

Old Chiswick Protection Society

Autumn 2023 Newsletter

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

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

WEDNESDAY 8 NOVEMBER 2023

AT THE GEORGE AND DEVONSHIRE

Meeting at 8pm

**Canapés, very kindly provided by the George and Devonshire,
will be available from 7.30pm**

**The following committee members, having served 3 years, are due for re-election this year:
Mrs Penny Barltrop, Mr Robbie Gill, Mrs Jane Nissen, Ms Rachel Wood**

**If you would like to stand or propose someone for election to the Executive Committee, please inform
the Secretary, Patricia Langley, at least one week before the AGM**

**Any questions, in advance please, by email to the Secretary
patricialangley@me.com**

Message from the Chair

Since the inception of OCPS, its essence has been community, with residents volunteering their time and expertise to safeguard the heart of the old parish of Chiswick, a place of rich heritage and timeless beauty. Over 50 years after its founding, our mission remains clear: to conserve and protect the unique character and quality of life that has defined Old Chiswick for generations.

Over the years, we have addressed a wide range of issues that have an impact on the Conservation Area and beyond. OCPS has participated in efforts to maintain the architectural integrity of our streets; we understand the importance of retaining the charm of our historic buildings while accommodating the need for modernisation. We have collaborated with the local authority to establish guidelines for responsible property development that respect the aesthetics and identity of Old Chiswick. Through rigorous campaigns, we have been able to influence commercial development plans that have threatened to disrupt the essential nature of the Conservation Area and beyond. Unfortunately, this is a never-ending struggle, and the community must remain vigilant.

The organisation's commitment extends beyond bricks and mortar: the protection of our local environment has been a focal point. We work tirelessly to ensure Chiswick Eyot is maintained and we are involved in improvements in and around St Nicholas Church, whose burial ground is an attractive green space that contributes to the quality of life for residents. We liaise with the authorities about

planting on and around the Hogarth Roundabout, in addition to regular litter picks and removal of illegal flyposting. This very newsletter is compiled by dedicated volunteers.

None of this would be possible without the support of our members and the broader community. Your commitment to our cause, whether through financial contributions, volunteer hours, or simply by being an active part of Old Chiswick, is what keeps our society flourishing.

If you are not yet a member of the Old Chiswick Protection Society, I encourage you to join and invite you to the AGM at 8pm on Wednesday 8 November at the George & Devonshire. Together, we can ensure that Old Chiswick remains a thriving, unique and welcoming community for generations to come.



Message from the President

The Importance of Settings in Conservation Terms

What constitutes the 'setting' of a heritage building or asset has kept many lawyers employed for many years. But it is more than a dry legal consideration.

Early and unfinalised plans for the development of land for a tall building to the west of the Conservation Area (which are explained under 'Planning' below) mean that great care is needed to identify the extent and importance of relevant 'settings' potentially affected.

The setting of a designated historic asset (a Listed Building or Conservation Area) includes any area beyond the asset itself which allows an appreciation of its historic importance. Settings can, as a result, extend well beyond Listed Buildings themselves and well beyond the boundaries of Conservation Areas too. Any proposed development within a setting which would harm the appreciation or significance of the heritage asset needs to be clearly and convincingly justified or else refused.

Often, a historic building or quarter will depend upon its setting for an important part of its historic interest and significance. This is particularly the case where the original relationship of the parts of a historic area remain intact and can be seen and experienced as largely unaltered.

In the case of Old Chiswick, it is still almost uniquely possible to experience and to understand the place as an 18th century piece of townscape, both from within the Conservation Area and beyond. This is remarkable so close to the heart of a world city. The long-cherished cross-river and along-river views are well understood. They allow the Area's buildings and their collective settings to be experienced and appreciated in close to their original form. New additions above and beyond the townscape risk disturbing this composition.

The largely self-contained nature of the area itself (without intervention from buildings beyond) is also an important part of its charm. The views of the Area from within are often 'stolen', 'discovered' or 'revealed', but that does not make them any less relevant than the grander better-known river panoramas. Again, such relationships need to be preserved for their own sake.

As a result, the Area and its buildings are hugely sensitive to setting change by way of new buildings – including those that lie outside the Conservation Area boundary but within its setting and within the settings of some of its Listed Buildings.

OCPS exists to ensure that the special nature of the Area and its buildings (and as a result their 'settings') are preserved and enhanced. It goes without saying that the Society will pay special attention to this duty when considering any final application for any building which might disrupt or harm the significance of this special place.

Planning

A number of issues have arisen since the last newsletter, some good and some potentially having a very major impact on the Conservation Area.

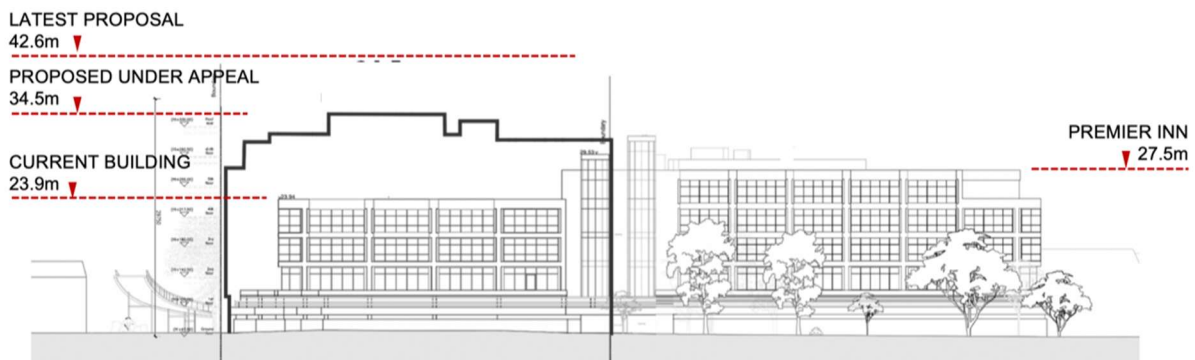
Griffin Brewery Gates and Gatehouse

Following extensive time and effort invested by local residents and OCPS, it seems that this application has been firmly turned down, at least for the time being. The gates in the original application and the later proposal for a barrier and gatehouse were all met with rejection. The key to the latter rejections was unequivocal acknowledgment of the public right of way; the barrier and guard's hut were utterly contrary to this. This sentiment is echoed by the painted message at the entrance from Chiswick Lane South, which aims to discourage visitors and residents from using this path. For now, it seems this matter has been resolved.

1 Burlington Lane

The saga of the redevelopment of the site on the corner of the Hogarth Roundabout has been going on for many years. Whereas Premier Inn elected to refurbish the rather ugly existing building, the owners of the other half of the building started with a refurbishment approach, followed by an expansionist scheme, and have now started a consultation process to demolish the existing building and build a residential development nearly twice the height. The current building is 23.9 metres high. The expanded development, which was rejected by Hounslow Council and is currently under appeal, reaches up to 34.5 metres in height. The new proposal, though only 'anecdotally' stated to be 42.6 metres high, lacks detailed drawings for confirmation. OCPS has voiced objections at every phase of this process for the past five years.

The quality of the design and its impact on the Conservation Area have been completely unacceptable. A submission in support of the Council's earlier decision has encountered strong opposition. Prior to this, a new design was put forth for local consultation. No doubt many attended the webinar with the design and development team during the two public sessions. The drawings that have been circulated are very loose watercolours, so it is difficult to gain any real impression of the design, which, at best, looks mediocre. Moreover, it looms over critical sections of the Conservation Area, which encompasses 66 listed buildings within 500 metres.



VIEW TOWARDS HOWGARTH ROUNDABOUT FROM HAMMERSMITH



View from Chiswick Brewery



View along Burlington Lane

The developer has extended an invitation for a meeting with OCPS, and we intend to take them up on this offer. Nevertheless, it remains unclear from the consultation whether any additional information will be provided prior to the formal submission. This struggle is likely to persist for the foreseeable future.

The Hogarth Triangle

This is an ongoing project. Small hebes were planted by TfL a year ago, but died in the heat of the summer. However, some wildflowers appeared and the triangle looked attractive for the summer months. TfL tells us that they plan to replant the triangle between September and March. In the first instance, they have agreed to remove weeds and dead plants. The Society has asked to be informed of the new planting scheme.

New Cycling Route Signage in the Conservation Area

OCPS Roads and Traffic subcommittee met Ian Perry, Hounslow Council's Chief Engineer, Transport, to discuss signage through the Conservation Area for leisure cyclists, allowing for both high and low tides.

Over the last few years OCPS has objected to Hounslow's proposed cycling routes through this area, particularly because of hazards to cyclists following high tides, where the road surface is extremely slippery. It has been clear from the beginning that the Council had no intention of taking our objections seriously and had already decided to go ahead with the cycling routes.

The Council proposes changes to signage in locations including the bottom of Church Street and the intersection of Chiswick Mall and Chiswick Lane South. We are still in discussion regarding signage at the top of Church Street. No road markings will be allowed in the Conservation Area. The plan also includes works on the triangle at the bottom of Chiswick Lane South, to allow passage in both directions for cyclists on the low-tide route. The high-tide route diverts to Church Street.

Our thanks to Councillor John Todd for instigating this meeting.

Cycling on Pavements

In July, OCPS representatives met with Hounslow Council's Cycling Education Officer and their Traffic and Transport Road Safety Engineer to discuss ways of protecting pedestrians, an increasing concern, especially with the added danger of e-bikes and e-scooters.

Powell's Walk

Despite marked cycle lanes and quiet streets close by, Powell's Walk, a footpath with blind corners and restricted views, is used as a rat run. Cycling is not permitted on Powell's Walk, but it was agreed by all that current signage is inadequate and confusing, that awareness needs to be heightened and that behaviours need to change. A suggestion that Hounslow Council install chicanes has not been dismissed out of hand, but a plan was produced concentrating on signage upgrade first.

OCPS pointed out that geofencing (the use of GPS to allow alleyways, areas in parks and cemeteries, etc. to be off limits) for Lime e-bikes is inadequate as a solution, as this only cuts out the electric drive and does not stop the bike from entering under pedal power.

Thames Path

OCPS asked Hounslow Council to look again at how to protect pedestrians along the no-cycling parts of the Thames Path.

Old Chiswick Burial Ground

The trees planted earlier in 2023 managed to survive the dry weather, but there have been a few casualties from earlier plantings. Water supply is an issue: in addition to some residents watering, we have been dependent on the Parks Department, which struggled to maintain 200 park areas in Hounslow over the summer.

The Green Flag awarded last year was not renewed this year and we are waiting for the Parks Department to share its proposed action plan with the community for the next 12 months.

War Graves

OCPS has asked Hounslow Council to invite the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) to install at the entrances to the cemetery the small and discreet notices designed by CWGC to inform the public of the presence of war graves and a memorial. Many cemeteries, churchyards and burial grounds across the country display these signs. The Chiswick Old Cemetery happens to house one of London's larger collections of war graves, both marked and unmarked, and its handsome Portland stone memorial with inscribed names is a notable feature of local historical significance. The signs are neat and unobtrusive, installed and maintained by the CWGC in agreement with the local authority.

Hounslow's Parks Department has indicated its full support for this proposal.

Frederick Hitch

The handsome grave monument of Private Hitch commemorates his part in the Battle of Rorke's Drift in the Zulu War in South Africa. He was awarded the Victoria Cross for bravery. The battle was made the subject of a Hollywood film, *Zulu*, with Michael Caine.



There was a drama 30 years ago when the helmet was stolen from the monument and there was an appeal for funds to replace it. Hitch ended up as a hansom-cab driver and the London cabmen still gather at the graveside to honour him on each anniversary. His house in Cranbrook Road has a blue plaque.

Manhunt

Many residents will have been kept awake on two consecutive nights in early September by police helicopters and police on the ground searching for Daniel Khalife, who had escaped from Wandsworth Prison. Some residents whose houses back onto Fuller's Brewery had their premises searched. The exemplary conduct of the police elicited this letter of thanks:

Dear Commissioner,

As one of the residents of Chiswick Mall W4 whose garden and house were thoroughly searched, along with those of my neighbours, during the night of 8/9 September, in the operation to find the absconding prisoner, I should like to put on record our appreciation for the thorough, reassuring and courteous way in which the large number of police officers, both in and out of uniform, conducted their sensitive tasks here in the course of that disturbed night.

Please feel free to pass this message on to those concerned.

Neighbourhood Watch

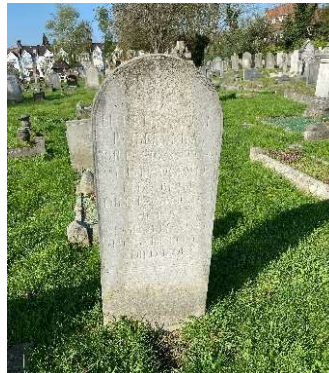
Our area and its surroundings continue to be subject to anti-social behaviour, thefts from vehicles and drug dealing, in addition to burglars gaining entry to properties by climbing high walls. Some incidents can be prevented by ensuring nothing is visible in cars, even old plastic bags or coats, and ensuring all points of entry to properties are kept locked.

The police ask us to continue to report every incident. We have pointed out to them that people become disenchanted with reporting incidents which are perceived to be low priority, either online after the fact or by phoning 999 while witnessing an incident. However, in order to ensure that specific areas and streets are properly given attention where needed, it is important to report. Unless we do, we will not be able to progress in improving our streets to make them less attractive to criminals. To report a crime, go online to met.police.uk.

News from St Nicholas Church

A Headstone by Eric Gill

It has come to our notice that we have in the Chiswick Old Burial Ground a headstone that was almost certainly carved by Eric Gill (1882-1940), one of the leading British sculptors of the earlier 20th century. Because of the supposed nature of his relations with his sisters, and latterly with his daughters, Gill has in recent decades become somewhat notorious, even infamous. Certainly, there are aspects of his ideas, beliefs and lifestyle that were, to say the least, unconventional: details may be found in Fiona MacCarthy's biography, *Eric Gill* (Faber and Faber, 1989).



But Gill's achievements as a sculptor in stone, as a typographer – such as his iconic Gill Sans typeface – and as a calligrapher were exceptional and cannot be overrated. His major sculptural works are the group of *Prospero and Ariel* on Broadcasting House, and the *Stations of the Cross* in Westminster Cathedral. The high quality of his work as a calligrapher is echoed in the fine lettering of the inscription on the headstone in our cemetery, which is to be found not far to the east of the War Memorial at the Corney Road entrance and close by the tomb monument of Frederick Hitch V.C.



The headstone records the deaths of Gill's maternal grandparents, Gaspar Robert King (1829-1916) and his wife Rose (1833-1891), and of their daughter Elizabeth (1860-1926). At the end of his career, Gaspar King was the foreman of a timber yard in Brentford, living with his daughter Elizabeth on Kew Bridge Road. When he died, they were living at 13 Clarence Road, Gunnersbury (now W4 3AS). Chiswick Burial Ground would have been a natural cemetery in which to have the family grave and perhaps it was Elizabeth's death in 1926 that stimulated the family to commission the headstone. The family connection strengthens the likelihood that the headstone was carved by Eric Gill himself.

This is the view of the leading Gill scholar David Peace, who lists the headstone in his definitive study *Eric Gill: The Inscriptions – A Descriptive Catalogue* (Herbert Press, 1994), page 134 no. 569, and proposes that it dates from 1931-32. The headstone is of good quality Portland stone, carved with a simple semi-circular top. Within the semi-circle is carved in low relief a stylised plant form, beneath which the inscription is lettered:

HERE LIE GASPAR
ROBERT KING
DIED 1916 AGED 86
& HIS DAUGHTER
ELIZABETH
DIED 1926 AGED 59
R.I.P.
REMEMBER ALSO
HIS WIFE ROSE
DIED 1891

The bold, clear capitals of the inscription are characteristic of Eric Gill's superb calligraphy. Unfortunately, the front of this headstone has been seriously damaged by exposure to the weather: the inscription, which is almost illegible most of the time, can be easily deciphered only under raking sunlight at around 9.30am. I am most grateful to Joseph Mirwitch and to Ann Rix for their helpful contributions to this note.

The Tree in the Church Street Garden

Members of OCPS may have observed that the tree that has for several decades graced the small garden that is sited between Church Street and the church's north porch has been dying over the past months (photograph taken on 26 September 2023). A tree surgeon recently employed by the diocese to inspect the trees in the vicarage garden suggested that our tree has succumbed to honey fungus, a disease that attacks a tree's roots, and is incurable. The members of the congregation who look after this patch of ground hope that any replacement tree will not cast as much shade over the garden. Discussion is in train between the churchwardens and Hounslow Council about the felling of the dead tree, the species of the replacement tree to be planted, and the practicalities of the project.



A New Backdrop for the Carving of Our Lady

In 1961, some sixty years ago, a wood carving from Oberammergau of the Virgin Mary was set up close by the entrance to the Lady Chapel, against a brocade curtain. With the passage of time, this curtain had begun to look rather shabby and tired. A new curtain of high-quality gold and blue brocade fabric has now been hung, providing an admirable foil for the finely carved figure of Our Lady. This is another improvement to the interior of the church brought about in memory of James Stitt.



Further Concerts in the Sunday Afternoon Series

A new season of concerts in the monthly Sunday Afternoon series was launched in the church on 17 September. We were treated to a bravura piano recital given by the young prize-winning Welsh pianist Tomos Boyles. The programme opened with a warmly romantic account of Clara Schumann's *Romances* Op. 21, a work that demonstrates why the composer demands to be released from under the shadow of her husband Robert. There followed three movements from *Miroirs* by Maurice Ravel, which demanded an athletic technique as the pianist's hands dashed up and down the keyboard, characterising birdsong, the lilting effects of tidal ebb and flow, or the dramatic contrasts of stormy weather at sea. The concert concluded with the powerful, resonant chords and brilliant finger-work of Chopin's Piano Sonata no. 3, Op. 58, played by Tomos Boyles with great spirit and confidence. The next concert in the series is a return visit on Sunday 19 November of the trumpet trio of Will Thomas, Joe Skypala and Nick Budd, who entertained us with such aplomb on 14 May 2023.

A Talk about Barbara Villiers on 9 November

On Thursday 9 November, Jamie Paterno Ostmann, a researcher for Historic Royal Palaces, will give a talk about Barbara Villiers, Lady Castlemaine and Duchess of Cleveland, mistress of Charles II and resident of Walpole House on Chiswick Mall.

Jamie writes:

'Barbara Villiers was one of the most significant figures of 17th century England. Dubbed "the curse of the nation" by the diarist John Evelyn, she deeply influenced both the personal and political life of Charles II and the people who surrounded him. This talk will explore both the private and public lives of Barbara, from her meteoric rise to power in the Restoration court to the Chiswick parish where she lived in Walpole House on Chiswick Mall and was buried in St Nicholas Church following her death on 9 October 1709.'

Barbara's death is recorded in the parish register of deaths and the relevant register will be available to look at both before and after the talk for anyone who wishes to do so.

Doors open at 6.30pm and the talk will begin at 7.00pm. Friends of St Nicholas are free. Otherwise £12 and £10 for students. As usual, drinks will be available to buy on the evening.

A Creative Haven at Durham Wharf : Julian Trevelyan and Mary Fedden

Nestled on the bank of the Thames, Durham Wharf was, for many years, an enclave for artists seeking inspiration. This is thanks to Julian Trevelyan and Mary Fedden, two celebrated British artists whose lives and works were rooted in this area. In this article, we will explore the creative legacies of Julian Trevelyan and Mary Fedden as they made Durham Wharf their artistic haven.

Julian Trevelyan (1910-1988) was born into a family deeply connected to the world of art and culture, so it was only natural for him to develop an affinity for the arts from an early age. He studied at the Ruskin School of Drawing and Fine Art in Oxford, where he honed his skills as a painter and printmaker. Trevelyan's work was characterized by its playful and experimental nature. He was a master of printmaking techniques, and his prints often featured bold colours, intricate textures, and a sense of whimsy.



Durham Wharf, 1971. Julian Trevelyan

It was in the 1930s that Julian Trevelyan discovered Durham Wharf, a cluster of old warehouses along the River Thames in Chiswick. Originally used as a coal depot, it later served as studios for various artists including Eric Kennington, the sculptor, and Len Lye, the experimental filmmaker. This scenic location became Trevelyan's primary residence and studio for the next fifty years and provided the perfect backdrop for his artistic explorations. The old warehouses were reimagined as artists' studios, and the river views from his studio window offered ever-changing landscapes that found their way onto his canvases. Trevelyan's art was profoundly influenced by the industrial character of the wharf and the sense of history that permeated the area. To begin with, living standards were basic at Durham Wharf but Julian decorated the Wharf with works he had brought back from Paris, most notably an early mobile by Alexander Calder, whom he had befriended while living there.



The Thames at Chiswick, 1962. Julian Trevelyan

One of Trevelyan's paintings created during his time at Durham Wharf is *The Thames at Chiswick*. This work captures the essence of the riverside locale, showing the Eyot with swans gathered at the eastern end, and working boats going upstream, as Chiswick Mall at the time was still quite industrial.

Mary Fedden (1915-2012) was another influential artist who would make her mark at Durham Wharf. She was a prolific painter, known for her distinctive style, which was characterized by vibrant colours, simplified forms, and an emphasis on everyday objects and domestic scenes. Fedden's work often featured still lifes, interiors and landscapes, each infused with her unique perspective. These paintings captured the essence of their surroundings, from the cosy interiors of Durham Wharf to the lush gardens surrounding it and the serene beauty of the riverbank. Her work often exuded a sense of joy and contentment, inviting viewers to appreciate the beauty in the ordinary.



Red Still Life, 1967. Mary Fedden

Mary met Julian while she was a student at the Slade School of Fine Art and she used to help at the annual Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race parties he organised at the Wharf. In 1951, they were married and Mary joined him in Chiswick, where the couple transformed the old wharf into a vibrant hub of creativity, with their studios reflecting their individual styles and personalities. Trevelyan's studio was filled with the paraphernalia of printmaking, and the walls displayed an array of his experimental prints and paintings. Fedden's studio, on the other hand, was a riot of colours and shapes, reflecting the inspiration she found in the everyday objects around her, from flowers and fruit to teapots and textiles.



One of the famous Durham Wharf Boat Race parties



Mary Fedden and Julian Trevelyan in Durham Wharf (Trevelyan Family Archive)

Durham Wharf was a popular venue for social gatherings and parties that brought together creative minds from all over London. Julian Trevelyan and Mary Fedden were known for hosting legendary soirées that attracted artists, writers and intellectuals. Guests included Christopher Isherwood, Benjamin Britten, W H Auden, Cyril Connolly and E M Forster. These gatherings were usually marked by a spirit of camaraderie and celebration. Friends and fellow artists would come together to toast their successes, share their latest works and engage in lively conversations that spanned art, literature and politics. But the parties could also get a little boisterous, on one famous occasion ending in a brawl where several distinguished members of what *The Sunday Times* described as 'London's literary and artistic clans' were to be seen 'bleeding in the flowerbeds'.

In a gesture of solidarity with fellow artists, Julian, who owned land next to Durham Wharf, had the idea of developing a group of houses exclusively for artists. In the early 1970s he worked with his

friend the architect Michael Patrick to design six live-work spaces at St Peter's Wharf, with a communal garden and terraces overlooking the Thames.



Julian in the garden with cat, 1984. Mary Fedden

In 1988 Julian Trevelyan died, leaving Mary alone in Durham Wharf until her death in 2012. She left an indelible mark on everyone who came to know her as she continued her creative practice with warmth and generosity of spirit.

The story of Julian Trevelyan and Mary Fedden at Durham Wharf is a testament to the transformative power of art and the profound influence of environment on creative output. Their life and work at this picturesque riverside retreat not only enriched their own artistic journeys, but also left an enduring legacy in the art world. Durham Wharf, with its historic charm and natural beauty, provided the perfect backdrop for their creative endeavours, and their shared passion for art and life remains a source of inspiration.

Durham Wharf is set to continue as an artistic oasis. Clearance of the site is currently underway to transform it into a collection of artists' studios, informal gallery spaces and accommodation, designed by the Turner Prize-winning multi-disciplinary practice Assemble.

Together, the artists at St Peter's Wharf, soon to be joined by a new cohort of artists in Durham Wharf, form a diverse and dynamic artistic community that inspires both residents and art enthusiasts from afar. Their collective presence contributes to the neighbourhood's cultural richness.

Membership of OCPS

We would like to thank everyone for their continued support. Subscriptions are back to their pre-Covid levels. We've lost a few subscribers but gained several new supporters – either people new to the area or people who appreciate the work the Society does.

Payment by Standing Order is ideal: not only is payment automatic but the Treasurer is able to budget efficiently. For those who would rather not sign a Standing Order, subscriptions (remaining at £15 per person) can be paid by banker's draft or cheque. However, we strongly encourage everyone to pay directly into our account as all cheques are subject to a bank charge. Please make sure the subscription form is dropped into the Membership Secretary (Norfolk House, Chiswick Mall) so that she knows who has paid and so that any Gift Aid can be claimed. Membership forms can be found on our website, or email the Membership Secretary, who would be happy to drop a form into anyone interested, m.gatenby@btinternet.com.

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.



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