

## **Old Chiswick Protection Society**

### **Spring 2020 Newsletter**

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



#### **Chairman's Message**

We are very lucky to live in, and to visit, Old Chiswick.

It is not only a special place for all of us working to preserve and enhance it; also, the community spirit is both strong and kind.

What started with an idea to contact the households in our area needing help through their self-isolation quickly blossomed into a WhatsApp group for our residents, a letter drop and emails, set up for the purpose of mutual support and contact.

Speaking for myself, it's a delight to get to know so many more neighbours and friends, and I add my thanks to all those who have so far helped someone, got involved, volunteered their time and effort, or await an opportunity to contribute in the future.

OCPS is always looking for help with our sub-committees (see the sub-committee reports below) and many of you are clearly keen, and concerned about, these subjects, which are also at the heart of what we do as a Society. Please contact us if you want to get more actively involved.

## President's Message: Old Chiswick Support WhatsApp

What's the best way to create an online community quickly? Well, I don't really know. But I do know, from the experience of running a cricket team in the summer, that WhatsApp can bring together people of limited technical ability (like myself) efficiently and safely. It was also clear that the Covid-19 crisis created the need for both a community response and a community messaging system. OCPS had the best database and pool of personal knowledge of residents of this area. And so, it seemed sensible that we should take the lead. The result? The Old Chiswick Support WhatsApp Group.



It started slowly – well, for an afternoon at least – as I tried to load up the details of the Committee members with mixed success. But within hours, membership grew. And grew and grew! As I write this, there are well in excess of a hundred households from a rough area which starts at the Black Lion and finishes at the Mawson Arms. This is not a fixed catchment and anyone in the vicinity is welcome to join.

We are still in our infancy, but we do many things. We have a group dedicated to providing freshly baked bread to those who are self-isolating and beyond - many thanks must go to Tom the baker and Mario for the flour. We have a group which sources meat from the farmers of mid-Wales, who have otherwise lost their market - many thanks to Sara and team. We have a list of first responders for the sub-sections of the area, which Meg keeps up to date, as well as a newspaper delivery round, an up-to-date list of shops and take-aways and some very skillful sign makers. The list expands daily and every single contribution is hugely welcome, whether mentioned here or not.



*Tom and his delicious bread!*



*Martha and Teddy delivering papers!*

Most of the group's work involves providing *ad hoc* solutions to the day-to-day problems that arise in a community in lockdown. There's a sentence I never imagined myself writing. Nobody should be frightened or embarrassed to post a call for help.

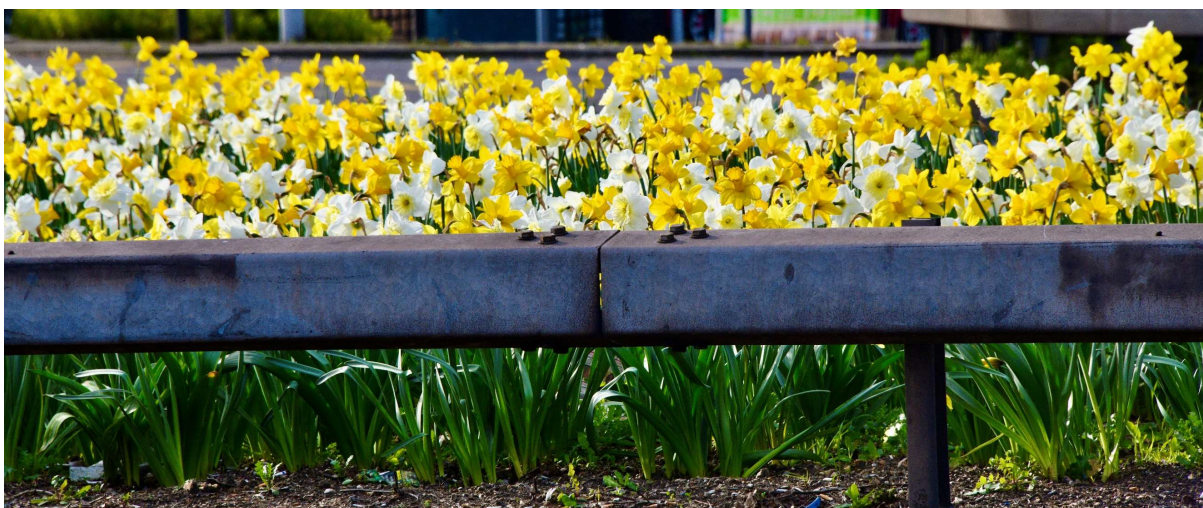


There will be difficult times ahead. Hopefully, the group will play its part in ensuring that no-one who is vulnerable or in need is left alone or in difficulty. Please get your neighbours to join! Contact me on [rhqc@mortonhouse.co.uk](mailto:rhqc@mortonhouse.co.uk), or Sophie Sainty on [sophie@sainty.net](mailto:sophie@sainty.net), or William Hindmarsh on [william.hindmarch@gmail.com](mailto:william.hindmarch@gmail.com), or the truly fab Fabio on [ffabrizio@gmail.com](mailto:ffabrizio@gmail.com).

### **The Hogarth Triangle**

As many of you will know, the valiant efforts of wildflower expert, Brita von Schoenaich, came to an end last year when the combination of climate change and the spread of the invasive orache weed signalled the end of the wildflower meadow which had given so much pleasure to all. We are very grateful to Brita for her all efforts, and for the care and creativity she gave to the Triangle over many years.

The OCPS is now working with TfL on the future of the Triangle. This year's display of daffodils was magnificent. Many thanks to TfL for sponsoring this planting. We hope the display of perennial wildflowers, due to come next, will be equally effective.



## **Chiswick Mall Tree**

The liquidambar planted outside Staithe House just over a year ago has thrived and we are pleased that once again there is a tree on the spot – the earliest recorded one dates from the 16th century. The OCPS had concerns about the strength of the support provided and finally agreed with Hounslow Council that we could supply a metal tree guard. One of our members, Fiona Ligonnet, offered to have one made for us by her son, Conan Sturdy, who is a blacksmith; she has also very generously financed it. The guard has arrived and we are waiting to hear from Hounslow Council when they can install it. Conan describes himself modestly as a blacksmith from Camden Town with a workshop in Streatham – commissions welcomed! However, we can certify that he is a creative artist who can design from photos and sketches, and can produce 3D renderings of the project so that the customer can visualise it before he makes it – as we saw with our really beautiful tree guard. We are hopeful that it will be in place before the next newsletter!

## **Trees on the Barnes Towpath**

The London Borough of Richmond has now undertaken a survey of the landward towpath trees from Hammersmith to Barnes Bridge, with particular regard to safety. Some felling has taken place. The OCPS (as well as other members of the Towpath Group, of which OCPS is a member) is anxious to have news of replanting. However, this will not be considered until the Port of London Authority, which is responsible for the trees on the river side of the towpath, completes its own survey. The OCPS is keeping a close eye on this situation, as we consider the wooded towpath to be an amenity for all of West London.

## **Roads and Traffic**

Our dialogue with Transport for London continues on the subject of restricting HGV traffic in Church Street and the Mall. The following is an extract from a letter received at the end of February from TfL:

“... the HGV signs require lighting, which limits our options for placement. In addition, they need to be placed at points on the approach to the roundabout where they can convey a meaningful message.

In order to meet both these needs, it will be necessary to install a new electrical feed and column, which is more challenging and costly than putting up the signage on an existing post, as we were planning.

There is a meeting taking place next month with TfL reps and the designers for the Hogarth Roundabout. We will use this meeting to bottom out for definite if there is a suitable location where the signs can be placed. We also need to ensure where possible that such signs will not conflict with the Hogarth Roundabout safety scheme, especially if we go for the cost of lighting them on new posts.

In the meantime, I have followed up on your request to have the routes marked as unsuitable for HGVs on GPS route guidance. We intend to advise Google, Waze, TomTom, Apple and HERE that Church Street is unsuitable for HGVs. This would be entirely at their discretion as there is no traffic order in place, but we have successfully implemented similar guidance before. I will keep you in the loop regarding these conversations.”

As you can see, TfL are taking some pains to get this right and although it has taken some time, there is hope at the end of the tunnel. We will investigate further the extent of the Hogarth Roundabout safety scheme and we have asked for further information following the planned meeting in March.

## Planning

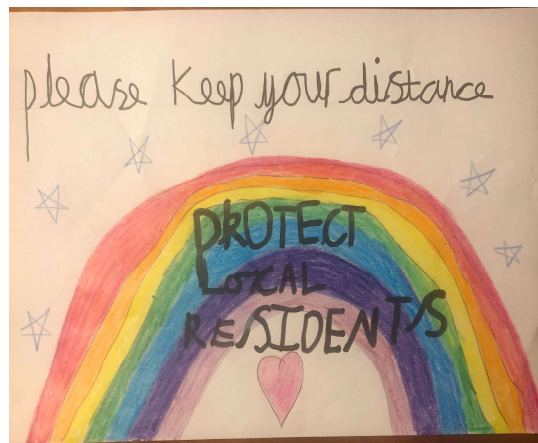
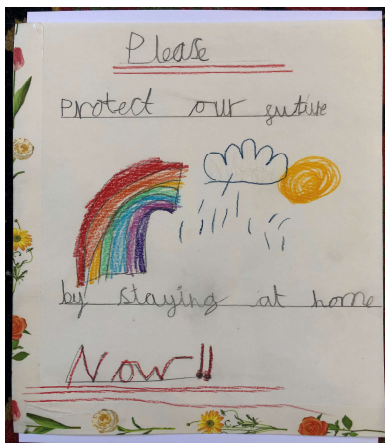
This is the first time in a decade that there have been no planning matters of any real consequence. The only one of any note has been the re-laying of the cobbles in the rear yard of the Griffin Brewery and, unfortunately, the need to remove the historic weigh bridge, which had become unsafe. Happily, it is being restored and displayed on the wall opposite its original location.

## Membership

Membership for the year to April 2020 has been very healthy, with the majority of people paying by standing order or bank transfer. We must thank everyone for supporting the OCPS by these subscriptions, with added thanks to those people who included generous donations. During these testing times, our committee and members are doing everything possible to support our neighbours, especially those who are vulnerable. Please find the attached membership renewal form.

## Crowd Control on the Mall during the Coronavirus Crisis

In response to a growing concern about overcrowding on Chiswick Mall and the Eyot, a number of residents working together have taken the initiative to suggest, design and produce signage. This asks visitors to consider their behaviour and to practise social distancing. In the case of the Eyot, it asks visitors not to enter the nature reserve. Many of these signs were made by children.



*Fabulous posters by local Elsa and her friend Georgia!*

## Chiswick Eyot

The eyot has been doubly afflicted this year. First, pollarding the willows and bundling the cut withies had to be cancelled, on the advice of Richmond Lock Keeper, because the volume of water coming down from the floods further upstream meant that low tide was too brief to allow safe access to the eyot. We felt we'd look a bit stupid if we had to call out the lifeboat. These events cannot be postponed until later in the spring because they are disruptive to birds, which would by then be nesting.

And then the eyot became an attraction for what felt like hordes of people looking for an outing during the Coronavirus lockdown. We have had to put up signs warning people that the eyot is a nature reserve and not a recreation ground and that walking on it disturbs the nesting birds. It is also dangerous in that the tide rushes in, from the top and the bottom simultaneously, and it is easy to get cut off. The lifeboat has had to come out to rescue people, and the RNLI have put up their own signs.



We cannot be sure which birds nest on the eyot, but probably far more than we realise. All of the following can be found on this part of the Thames. The locals nest first (including Cetti's warbler, which used to migrate but no longer seems to), and then the summer migrants arrive. Here is a list of likely Eyot nesters:

Reed warbler, Cetti's warbler, whitethroat, blackcap, willow warbler, chiffchaff, robin, blackbird, song thrush, mistle thrush, blue tit, great tit, coal tit, nuthatch, wren, reed bunting, chaffinch, goldfinch, greenfinch, tree sparrow, house sparrow, magpie, green parrot, green woodpecker, greater spotted woodpecker, lesser spotted woodpecker, pied wagtail, grey wagtail, moorhen, coot, mallard, teal, wigeon.

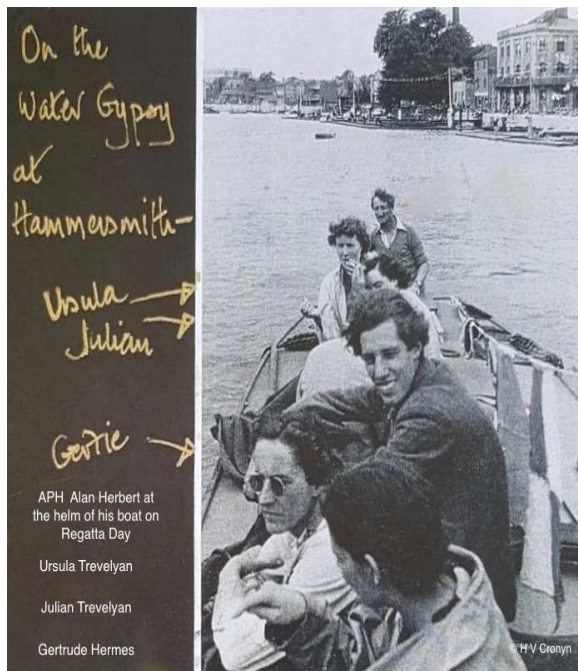
### **Artists in Old Chiswick**

As long ago as the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the River Thames along the banks of Hammersmith and Chiswick held an allure for artists, most notably William Hogarth, William Kent and William Morris. However, it was the 20<sup>th</sup> century that saw the blossoming of a new and vital artistic movement encompassing painters, writers and creatives. Without a doubt, it is the ever-changing, moody river that has been an inexhaustible challenge to creativity. Moreover, a dynamic and lively community of like-minded people made the area irresistible for artists, who frequently gathered together in their homes, on the river and at the pub.

When we heard about the sale of *Modern and Post-War British Art* at Chiswick Auctions (to be held on April 22) and discovered that many of the artists lived and worked in and around Old Chiswick, we thought it would be interesting to learn more about these local artists. This is the first in a series that will appear in the OCPS Newsletter, looking at their lives and works.

### **Hugh Cronyn**

Unsurprisingly, the combination of a bohemian crowd of friends and affordable rents initially drew Canadian-born painter Hugh Cronyn (1905-1996) to the area, but it would be the river itself that would ultimately act upon him like a magnetic pole, drawing him back throughout his life.



It was in the 1930s that, after several years painting and studying in Paris, Hugh first came to this part of London. Initially, he lived at 9a Black Lion Lane (now part of Emery House), conveniently located for revelry across from the Black Lion pub, where, later, he would meet his wife Jean. Their lively group of friends, including the writer AP Herbert, Julian Trevelyan and Gertrude Hermes, were often enjoying parties – on Herbert's boat *Water Gypsy*, at Durham Wharf or at the pub. It is at this time that Cronyn's attachment to the river began. It would not only captivate him, it became a major source of inspiration and the backdrop to his life.

Hugh loved sailing and being on the water, so it was natural that on the eve of the Second World War he would enlist in the Thames River Emergency Service. He moved onto the Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve and was awarded the George Medal for bravery while he was in charge of the Naval Bomb Disposal Squad at Bristol docks. In 1942, Jean and Hugh married in St Nicholas' Church, as did their two daughters years later.

The lives of Hugh's family and friends orbited around this area of the river and thus, after lengthy periods spent painting in Suffolk and the Lot in France, he returned with Jean in 1975 to live at 3 St Peter's Wharf, the artists' studios constructed by his old friends Julian and Mary (Fedden) Trevelyan. It was here, overlooking the Thames, that he was inspired by the ever-changing, elemental nature of the

Thames, by the shifting light and the activity on and around the river. He never tired of painting the view from his studio, until his death in 1996.



*Studio window: training day c.1980*

Throughout his career, Hugh's painting style was dynamic and innovative, and he painted from the heart. He responded to his environment, experimenting with colour and perspective to capture the endless variety of the river and the spirit of a moment, whether it be the riotous colours and activity of the Thames on Boat Race Day, or the atmospheric calm of the river on a winter's day.



*Thames at Chiswick c.1990*

Hugh Cronyn's dynamism and authenticity are also in evidence in six early works that are to be offered in the *Modern & Post-War British Art* sale at Chiswick Auctions on 22 April 2020: [https://www.chiswickauctions.co.uk/auction/details/22 Apr 2020 B-Modern--Post-War-British-Art?au=493](https://www.chiswickauctions.co.uk/auction/details/22_Apr_2020_B-Modern--Post-War-British-Art?au=493)



## **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 second edition. This and his history of the Thornycroft Works are on sale at Hogarth House, and at Bookcase and Waterstones in Chiswick High Road. They can also be obtained from Rosemarie Clifton, Brampton House, Church Street.

## **OCPS Officers**

*President Emeritus:* Sir Alan Munro, Eynham House, Chiswick Mall

*President:* Russell Harris, Morton House, Chiswick Mall

*Chairman:* Mrs Penny Barltrop, October House, Church Street

*Treasurer:* Mr James Stitt, 8 Eyot Green

*Secretary:* Mrs Patricia Langley, Riverside House, Chiswick Mall

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