



Old Chiswick Protection Society

Summer 2011 Newsletter

Old Chiswick before the A4

Have you lived in Chiswick since before the A4 was built? If so, OCPS would like to hear from you. We're gathering memories from people who know what it was like to live here before the A4 cut Chiswick in two. We'd be delighted to listen to your stories, write them down and publish them. If you would like to be part of this project, or know anyone else who might like to, please get in touch with Thérèse Bennett by email at t.tobin@talktalk.net or by phone on 020 8994 6753.

Wild flower planting on Hogarth triangle

Readers of this newsletter will remember that in 2006 an unofficial planting project took place here, resulting in a beautiful small wildflower meadow - but it was mowed down by Transport for London (TfL) on the grounds of interfering with traffic sightlines.

It was decided to try again in 2011, and to obtain official approval from TfL. Brita von Shoenaich, a renowned wildflower expert offered her services free of charge. We met with officials from TfL, underwent the required training (how to cross the road wearing a TfL vest) and in April the wildflower seeds were sown by Brita and her team. Initial worries that lack of rainfall would affect germination have proved unfounded and we are hoping for results later in the summer as attractive as those of 2006.

Churchyard

Foscolo tomb – much restoration work is complete but work on the tomb itself is to start in early June. At the end of June there is to be an unveiling with an eminent Italian representative. A member of OCPS is to be invited to be present.

River defences

The Environment Agency has begun on the repair and improvement of the flood defences on Chiswick Mall.

Church Street Causeway

The area of highway belonging to the London Borough of Hounslow (adjacent to the causeway restored by the PLA several years ago) has at last been paved with attractive cobblestones. This has taken five years of negotiation with the Borough and was finally achieved when one of our local councillors obtained Section 106 funding for the project. We are most grateful to Councillor Todd for his help here – but at the same time disappointed that we were not allowed input in the final design. We had originally agreed with the Highways Department that planting strips were to be left to both sides of the paved area, but this has not proved possible. However, the general appearance of the area is much improved.

Trees on the wooded towpath, Barnes.

As mentioned in earlier newsletters, this Society contributed a significant sum towards the replanting of trees on the towpath in Barnes by the Port of London authority in the winter of 2009. It was reported in the last newsletter that some of these newly planted trees died in the drought of 2010. We have been pressing for these trees to be replaced and have just heard that a third lot of trees have been planted. We will be keeping a check on this situation and on all the trees on the towpath this summer.

Thames Tideway Tunnel

Following the initial enquiry, public approval for the Tideway Tunnel scheme was reported to be 96%, with considerable support from MPs. Criticism of two shaft sites (one of them Barn Elms) is being considered. 2nd stage consultation will begin 5th September including schedules for road and barge soil removals. Thames Water was grateful for the feedback it had received from OCPS.

Some residents have just received notice of intended trial boreholes for establishing subsoil conditions along the chosen route from the river, near Miller's Court, to the Acton Storm Water tanks. This route is the favoured one due to Thames Water already holding an easement over it. Nothing will be visible above ground.

Road changes for Olympics

Many households have received notice of road changes for next year. This is the position on the three issues as we understand it:-

1. No right turn into Sutton Court Road, alternative route to be found
2. No right turn across the central A4 reservation into Netheravon Road South and alternative route to be found.
3. Crossing the dedicated lanes at the Hogarth roundabout, nothing mentioned.

Following the exhibitions in March we believe there was considerable concern as to 1. There is also concern as to 2. as the alternative route down Church Street is unsuitable for heavy goods vehicles.

The OCPS called Transport for London to get the latest following the exhibitions, to be told a stage 2, which will take into account the results of stage 1, will be on exhibition soon but they can't yet give a date.

Pollarding willows on the cleaned-up Eyot

Encouraged by good weather, there was an excellent turn-out from locals for pollarding on 6th February. This followed the clean-up of the Eyot on 12th December 2010, which was a great success partly because of the tremendous turn-out of volunteers from Thames 21, the Charity which works with communities to bring London's waterways to life. As most of the plastic rubbish from the Eyot had been removed, pollarding was much easier. It was also good to see the beginnings of new growth of flora in the cleaned-up areas.

Thames 21 has an expertise in habitat management and we decided to try out their advice about maintaining the withy beds (willows pollarded at intervals for withies - the long pliable stems which were used in the past for basketry, furniture and cart making). This was to pollard only about one third of the willows each year, leaving the younger willows time to produce good roots (instead of stems) which would hold the soil together better. The withies were collected and bundled to be used in the future to help stabilise the banks of the Eyot and similar areas under threat. Some were placed in a corral in the centre of the island whilst the rest were taken away by Thames 21, who has them safely in store.

The Committee is well aware that pollarding all the willows annually has been achievable and successful in the past whilst the results of the new approach have yet to be assessed.

Chairman's message

Well, this is my last Chairman's message. It has been a privilege to work with so many people who give their time freely to ensure that our lovely area is protected, that it stays special and indeed unique, for those who live, work, cycle, or walk here. On a day to day level, our sub-committees continue to keep watch on the unsung, unsexy issues such as roads, the River, planning and the Thames Tideway tunnel.

Chiswick Lodge has been one of those issues that has taken years to oversee. I think that when it is finally finished it will look good. Any such a development in a Conservation Area doesn't merely have to be in keeping, it has to enhance the Conservation Area. I pay tribute to our retiring Conservation Secretary Peter Wadley who has given his time tirelessly to this matter. We won't all be of the same view, but at least we won't end up with a pastiche.

The work completed on Church Street causeway, similarly, won't have universal approbation. It is certainly a huge improvement on the way it was before. I know that some would have preferred to see edges for soft planting, myself included, but in the end that wasn't possible. We are grateful to Councillor Todd for his efforts in getting the funding for the scheme. The cobbled setts have been very well done, and it looks rather more as it did in an old photograph we came across, taken "Before the A4 was Built".

And on that subject, I'm very much looking forward to seeing the outcome of Therese Tobin's project.

I wish I could count the Corner Shop as a success. It is still closed. It's now nearly ten years since it was sold. I remember when we first moved to the Mall, I was able to amble down there to get a coffee, and my favourite thing in the world, an almond croissant. Oh the joy.

It's the one thing I think would make a great difference to the area, cut off as we are by the A4. I have spoken with Mario, the owner, who has assured me that he wants to open it as a corner shop. That was six months ago. We'll see....

Still, as I sit with my morning coffee in the window seat overlooking the River, I think how incredibly lucky we are to live in such a beautiful part of the UK. If you didn't know it was London, you'd never believe it. Long may it remain so.

OCPS Books on Old Chiswick

The 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 Chiswick Library, Waterstones and WH Smith or can be obtained from Rosemarie Clifton at Brampton House, Church Street.

Neighbourhood Watch

Neighbourhood Watch coordinator Penny Barltrop is providing us with news on our area. Penny writes:

"During this period, our members have had some success in observing and reporting suspicious behaviour. These included helping to identify an intruder who was involved in a burglary, reporting vagrancy and antisocial behaviour, reporting house alarms and challenging a person looking into cars. In all cases the police responded swiftly. It is worth noting that when house alarms have sounded, it was later discovered that thieves had attempted to gain entry, but were thwarted. Please continue to support your neighbours and help make our area safer by calling the police for these types of incidents."

Just to remind you, if you observe any suspicious activity, please contact the CPO (Crime Prevention Officer) on 07900 65 66 95. If you are not successful and you believe it needs immediate attention please try to call the local station.

In emergencies 999 is the phone number, non emergencies can be reported via 0300 123 1212, and remember the SNT can be contacted on 0208 247 6415 or 07900 656 695, anytime.

If you have any queries or would just like some advice the contact details are as above and via e-mail on ChiswickHomefields.snt@met.police.uk

Names and addresses of OCPS officers

Sir A Munro, President, Eynham House, Chiswick Mall
P Langley, Chairman, Riverside House, Chiswick Mall

J Stitt, Treasurer, 8 Eyot Green
A Nissen, Secretary, College House, Chiswick Mall
Newsletter Editors: Liza Bray and Cliff Clifton, OCPS committee members

Planning Sub Committee chairman: Peter Wadley (rtd)

River Sub Committee chairman: Jane Nissen

Traffic and Roads Sub Committee chairman: Sir Alan Munro

Thames Tideway Tunnel Sub Committee chairman: Tony Taylor

The OCPS can be reached at oldchiswick@googlemail.com