



Old Chiswick Protection Society

Autumn 2013 Newsletter

Chairman's message

Another year passes in Old Chiswick. As ever, the tide rolls in; the tide rolls out. But not everything is as constant. The Milne London Use Map of 1800 identifies Old Chiswick as a small hamlet surrounded entirely by arable land and market gardens. A trip from Old Chiswick to Westminster would have been an arduous one with large parts of it passing through open countryside owned by the Manor of Earl's Court.

In the 200 or so years since then, Chiswick has grown beyond its riverside beginnings and has been subsumed into the metropolis. The fields and market gardens are long gone. The A4 has carved its way through even the newer elements of the suburb. And yet, it is still possible to understand the essence of Old Chiswick from its buildings, its townscape and its relationship with the River.

It is this essence which we seek to protect. We do so by research; such as that into the history of the Eyot which has influenced the present pollarding regime; by hard physical work, such as the beautiful post and willow erosion protection which, with Thames 21 help, is starting to surround the Eyot; and by monitoring and commenting on the transport and planning decisions of Hounslow Council.

We aren't the planning or transport authority for the area but we can influence their decisions. Our influence is enhanced the more active members we have. So, if you treasure the essence of Old Chiswick please join! To learn more of our work, take a look at our excellent new website at <http://ocps.btck.co.uk>.



Photo supplied by Alice Nissen: elm tree on Chiswick Mall in early 1952 (estimated planting 1750)

Planning

An application to convert 14,000 square feet of offices in Lamb House, Church Street from office use to residential has been refused on grounds of the impact this would have on parking and the amount of traffic using Church Street, which is already congested. OCPS was not informed or invited to comment on this proposed change of use as the Prior Approval legislation introduced in April 2013 does not provide for local input. This decision by the Council may well be appealed by the developers in due course so it may be that a full planning application can be expected.

Otherwise, there has been relatively little activity over the past few months on the planning front. In terms of works that have been carried out, Fullers Brewery has repaved its yard, which is a vast improvement on the concrete surface that had been patched up over many years.

There are currently two applications that are under consideration. Fullers have applied for planning permission to build a conservatory next to Belle Vue House on Chiswick Mall. The design is traditional in style and would replace an earlier, slightly smaller conservatory in the same location.

A new application has been made to develop the Hammersmith Town Hall site. The proposed development is confined to the land adjacent to the Town Hall and does not include a plan to construct a landscaped bridge over the A4 Great West Road linking the site to the Furnivall Gardens, a feature of the original proposal two years ago. From what we have seen, the proposed designs at this stage would appear to have little impact on the Old Chiswick conservation area.

Thames Tideway Tunnel

As reported in our summer newsletter, Thames Water's application is with the Planning Inspectorate. They have now issued their proposals for the procedure and timetable for their examination, which they must complete by March 2014. We will continue to keep a watching brief. As reported last time, a decision is due in Autumn 2014, work due to start 2016.

Traffic and Roads

The Hammersmith Flyover

Patching up this 50 year old structure only just in time for the Olympic Games revealed its fragile and expensive limited life. Already Hammersmith & Fulham (H&F) has had to issue a £90m contract for further strengthening of the structure and work will start this month.

A consortium of nine local architects has presented preliminary plans for its replacement which are strongly supported by H&F Council. To build like-for-like would cause a massive, very expensive disruption of traffic and none of the ecological, visible and traffic disadvantages would have been addressed. Their solution is to run all A4 traffic through twin tunnels.



Picture: Artists impression of proposed twin tunnels

Recommendations have not yet been made on where the ends of the tunnels should be or the layout of the local roads system during and after construction

H&F have started work on a feasibility study to improve the local road network and consider how a 'flyunder' might be paid for possibly by releasing highway land for development. Public consultations are planned. See <http://www.westlondonlink.com/WLL%20Brochure%20Final.pdf> for more details

The Hogarth Flyover

Coincidentally with the Hammersmith Flyover proposal, we hear that Transport for London (TfL) is studying options for replacing the surely life-expired 'Scalectric' Hogarth flyover. No details are available yet but they are looking for a "higher capacity solution that better suits the needs of the junction such as one that removes the A4 traffic from the roundabout. There will be a comprehensive re-modelling of the local road network." TfL expects construction to commence in five years time. Clearly the planning of both flyover replacements and the effects on local road systems must be co-ordinated.

Chiswick Lane Subway

Following our continual contact with TfL the walls to this subway's approaches have been repainted with a consistent and more permanent finish.

Rough Sleepers

Hounslow has one of the highest and rapidly increasing number of homeless rough sleepers of all the London Boroughs with 24 in 2009/10 increasing to 106 in 2012/13.

The rubbish on the Hogarth roundabout left by evicted squatters and the action OCPS took to have it removed was reported last time. Subsequently we have been pressing for the removal of unsightly mattresses, bedding and clothing hung out to dry on railings at Homefield Park. It required the chaotic use of emergency services

not properly equipped to deal with the problem. Hounslow does not at present have the appropriate outreach team dedicated to this service and the present (lack of) system is costing £2.65m pa.

This is soon to be remedied as Hounslow has approved the setting up of a dedicated outreach service and is seeking tenders with a view to its commencement in Feb 2014. Public Health and Homeless Seekers Grants are available and it is believed that for every £1 invested £2.65 will be saved.

Signage project

You may have noticed a few changes to the pedestrian and traffic signs recently. OCPS mounted a campaign with TfL and Hounslow to reduce the number of signs and improve the others. This is work in progress. In broad terms, TfL is responsible for the Hogarth roundabout and the subways, whereas Hounslow looks after all our street signs.

As you might expect, there are a good deal of laws surrounding road signage, so we do not expect to achieve everything on our wish list. However, quite a lot has been done already and we hope that in a few more weeks, we will have fewer and improved signs which amongst other more obvious streetscape benefits will mean fewer visitors lost and asking for directions and a better understanding of parking regulations on the river foreshore. The river flooding signs have been an issue, not least because they do not always appear near the river. However, we will continue to pursue this matter with the Council.

Wildflower planting on the Hogarth Roundabout

The wildflower display was disappointing this year compared to 2012. In late July, several members of the committee met with Brita von Shoenach (the wildflower expert who has so generously given us her services over the last few years) and TfL's new contractor Cowleys. Phil Hurst (newly appointed) Route Manager Arboriculture and Landscape at Transport for London, was unable to attend.

Because of the change in contractor, and also changes at TfL, there had been no rotivation or herbicide application, and the cold winter weather delayed sowing. Later warm weather conditions with minimal rainfall impeded wildflower seed germination.

The contractor agreed to mow the triangle once a month until the end of the current season, to spray with glyphosate against perennial weeds, and to rotivate in the autumn and again early next spring, after 10cm of organic matter and slow-release fertilizer has been spread over the site.

A second meeting with the contractor took place in late Sep confirming the above. This time Phil Hurst of Transport for London was present. It was agreed to replace the dead tree on the triangle, probably with a plane.

We have now established good relationships with both TfL and the contractor and we hope to see a beautiful wildflower meadow once again on the triangle in the spring of 2014.

Work on Chiswick Eyot

Bank stabilisation

A great deal of work has been done in recent months on the stabilisation of the north bank of Chiswick Eyot. This work involves driving stakes into the mud – these were bought by OCPS with the generous help of Fuller's Brewery – then weaving withies (willow branches that were pollarded on the Eyot last winter) through the stakes to make fences and then securing bundles of withies and brushwood behind the fences. The idea is that mud will be trapped and will pile up, and we are happy to report that it is doing so very satisfactorily. This work is organised by the charity Thames21, with the help of local volunteers.

But there is more to do. Thames21 hold an activity day one weekend every month; the time depends on the tide. If you would like to get involved, please look at the Thames21 website for details (www.thames21.org.uk) or get in touch with Thérèse Bennett on t.tobin@talktalk.net and we will let you know about planned conservation days.

Withy bundling

Last year the pollarding of the willows was done professionally. This will happen again this winter. But the pollarded withies will again need to be gathered into bundles to be used in the bank stabilisation work - and this will be done by local residents, as it was last year.

Bundling day will be Sunday 19 January, from 10.30 am to 12.00. We do hope you'll come and help - it's fun and rewarding for adults and children. You'll need to wear wellies but no tools are needed. And in case you haven't got next year's diary yet, we'll remind you nearer the time.

Himalayan Balsam

This invasive non-native plant has colonised waterways all over the UK, including Chiswick Eyot. It is very vigorous, outcompetes native plants and dies completely in the winter, leaving no roots to bind the soil and prevent erosion by the tide – all of which could result in a barren island, and then eventually no island. The work we did last year to clear the balsam was very successful and there was much less of it this year. In its place it was very rewarding to see native perennials flourishing. But balsam won't give up – when it explodes its seeds are thrown up to 6 feet away and one plant has thousands of seeds so it's important that we keep on top of it. *Photo: balsam roots*



Panorama of the Thames

In 1829 the London publisher Samuel Leigh produced a panorama which depicted both banks of the river Thames between Richmond and Westminster in one continuous coloured etching. The 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 is creating a website where a digitally restored version of the Leigh panorama can be viewed, as well as a contemporary panorama using a unique photographic process. In both panoramas, the 1829 hand-coloured original and the modern photographic version, there will be information about the buildings and landmarks that can be seen. OCPS is involved in providing the information about the stretch along Chiswick Mall. If you'd like to know more, please go to <http://leighpanorama.com/river/thames/>

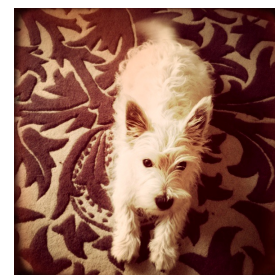
Books on Old Chiswick

Anthea Craigmyle's book, A Vicarage in the Blitz, is now available to buy locally or on the web. Limited copies of a book by Alice Nissen called Past Images of Chiswick Mall are available for a short time from t.tobin@talktalk.net.

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 and Chiswick 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.

Neighbourhood Watch

A neighbour at Eyot Green was woken at 4am one morning by her very agitated White West Highland dog Artair (Gaelic for bear and pronounced Arthur). Looking out of the window of her flat onto the forecourt of the three garages she saw a burglar trying to break into one of the cars. She called the police who arrived within 3 minutes and made the arrest. Well done Artair!



New website

To find out more about our activities, please visit the new OCPS website at <http://ocps.btck.co.uk>.

Names and addresses of OCPS officers

Sir Alan Munro, President, Eynham House, Chiswick Mall
Mr Russell Harris, Chairman, Morton House, Chiswick Mall

Mr James Stitt, Treasurer, 8 Eyot Green
Mrs Patricia Langley, Secretary, Riverside House, Chiswick Mall

The OCPS can be reached at oldchiswick@googlemail.com

Next OCPS event: AGM Monday 11th November from 7pm in Fuller's Hock Cellar.

Drinks and nibbles. Come and meet your neighbours – all welcome.