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# CHELSEA SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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## Facing the Challenge of Change

DAMIAN GREENISH

It is a great honour to be invited to become Chairman of this fine Society, founded in 1927 by Reginald Blunt with the aim of protecting the historic fabric of Chelsea and influencing future environmental changes within it. The Society's aims are to protect the interests of all who live and work in Chelsea and to preserve and enhance its unique character. They are worthy aims indeed and I shall most certainly do all I can during my time as Chairman to ensure that the Society is able to continue to fulfil its aims as effectively as it has done in the past.

For those of us with long memories the article by Michael Parsons in the 2011 Report "Up and Down the King's Road – Memories from my Chelsea childhood" was a fascinating recollection of a truly iconic road which in so many ways is the very

who spend little time here. Of course that problem is not peculiar to Chelsea and wandering through Belgravia at a weekend very often gives the impression that the place is largely deserted. Residential populations in Central London have

"We are extremely fortunate to have a Society whose aim is to preserve the essence that is Chelsea for those who live and work here"



Damian Greenish

heart and soul of Chelsea itself. The list of shops from the 1953 Chelsea Directory is a very good indication of the fundamental change in the character of the road. Can it really be said that it is a better place now than it was then in terms of character and variety? Overall I would say certainly not, but there still remain little pockets of tradition which surely must be treasured and preserved.

We have also faced many changes in the overall environment. We have seen in recent years the loss of schools, pubs and other public amenity buildings. The Society has done and will continue to do what it can to try to preserve these essential ingredients of a true community.

### Changing population

We also have a changing residential population. Families living in Chelsea houses become ever fewer, with many buildings being acquired by non-residents

become very much more transient, which is in part the consequence of the rise in rental accommodation and in part simply a reflection of the modern lifestyle. Of course one of the benefits of this has been the improvement in the residential accommodation now available over the commercial units (particularly in the King's

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### Loss of the familiar

We live in challenging times, but then I suppose every generation feels that.

Road) which have provided affordable accommodation for people to continue to be able to live in Chelsea. We must try to ensure that such residents, very often of the younger generation, feel part of our community and as such want to become involved in the work that the Society does in preserving and enhancing the area in which they live.

There is always the pressure on retailers to be able to maintain a commercially-viable business with changing retail habits and the competition from large chain stores and out-of-town shopping centres. Places like the King's Road will only survive as a retail community if there is a good, balanced mix and, in particular, by encouraging new and entrepreneurial independent retailers.

## Changing planning climate

A considerable amount of the Society's work is of course dealing with planning issues. We await nervously publication of the Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). It is expected that the NPPF will refocus planning policy to support growth and will include the much-discussed "presumption in favour of sustainable development". The Society will of course continue to look at all planning applications, seek to influence decisions, and ensure that the Borough has appropriate planning policies which are properly implemented and will truly preserve and enhance the unique character of Chelsea.

## Maintaining diversity

There is in my view no doubt that, notwithstanding these challenges, Chelsea remains the most colourful, lively and vibrant place to live and work. Where else can you walk to a world-renowned theatre, an art gallery and a concert hall before wandering down the most celebrated road in the world to visit a 17th century garden and then join your friends on a house-boat on the river to watch the sun go down? We are extremely fortunate to have a Society whose aim is to preserve the essence that is Chelsea for those who live and work here and to ensure that it remains a place where people want to come to visit in order to enjoy all that it has to offer. With the hard work of members of the Council and the support of the membership, the Society will I know continue to play a vital part in the life of Chelsea. I very much look forward to having the opportunity to be a part of that.

## Damian Greenish: Profile of New Chairman

Following an open call for candidates and interviews, the Society is pleased to announce that we have chosen a new chairman: Damian Greenish.

Damian has spent his entire working life in Chelsea and knows the area intimately through walking the streets as well as advising his clients in his professional capacity. He still retains a flat off Sloane Gardens, but his main home is in Uckfield, Sussex.

Damian has worked as a property solicitor in Chelsea since 1974 when he joined Lee and Pembertons as an articled clerk. He qualified as a solicitor in 1979 and became a partner and head of the property department in 1980. Following the demerger of Lee and Pembertons, he became senior partner of Pemberton Greenish in 2000.

Damian primarily advises the owners of landed estates in London, but also private landlords, investors and tenants. His principal clients are Cadogan, Crown, Sloane Stanley

and Portman Estates. He has been, since 1992, a trustee of the Sloane Stanley Estate and is currently chairman of the Board of Trustees.

His particular area of expertise is leasehold enfranchisement and he is the author of a leading textbook on the subject. He regularly writes, lectures and chairs conferences on leasehold reform.

Pemberton Greenish have sponsored several Chelsea Society exhibitions and events, such as conferences and a garden design at the 2008 Chelsea Flower Show.

As chairman of the Society, Damian, like David Le Lay and Stuart Corbyn before him, will not be a member of the Society's Planning Committee.

Damian is committed to Chelsea and the aims of the Chelsea Society – see Chairman's Letter above.

# Planning – a moving target?

MICHAEL BACH

No sooner had the Borough adopted the Core Strategy as its local plan in December 2010, than the Government announced its intention to review and shorten national planning policy. The Government's draft new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Mayor's London Plan were both published in late July.

The draft NPPF caused a major stir last summer – planning does not usually make the headlines week after week. But most of the concerns related to development in the countryside, with London, cities and urban areas not even getting a mention – but then the draft NPPF does not mention them either: it fails to paint a picture of the future or how to get there. It is silent – as this is now a matter for local people!

So what does this mean for us? The NPPF is largely an irrelevance in London. We are fortunate that with a London Plan and a recently-adopted local plan, the NPPF

should not have much impact on Chelsea. The London Plan and our own local plan both plan for growth and have both been adopted recently, so we have an up-to-date plan. The main effects of the NPPF, however, could be to encourage some developers to push the envelope even further than they do already. The NPPF is the new mood music, setting a strongly pro-development tone. We now need to make sure that our plan stays up to date and clearly reflects what local people want.

Having said that, the Government wants less proscription from the centre and to devolve power to local people and to back local plans. Nevertheless, the Government is determined to impose change, such as the forthcoming proposals to change the Use Classes Order – the classification system which defines which proposals to change the use of a property require planning consent. There is little, if any, appetite for changing the current

classification, yet the Government seems hell-bent on removing these controls to enable more things to change use without the need for consent. This could be a disaster in Chelsea – everything would turn into housing, as housing prices are so much higher than other uses.

The Council already recognises this by trying to retain small offices – until 2010 they were being lost at a rapid rate – and to retain “social and community uses” – uses that we recognise that we need to retain to maintain our quality of life, whether schools, doctors' surgeries, care homes, libraries, sports facilities and even petrol stations and pubs. The Government's proposals could undermine the future of our community.

The Council is now reviewing the Core Strategy – our local plan – to make sure that it meets our concerns about pubs, basements and conservation.

## Pubs – where next?

MICHAEL BACH

Following the refusal last December of the application to convert the Cross Keys to a mansion and the Council motion to review the policy in the Council local plan – the Core Strategy – Council officers have been reviewing what has happened to pubs in the ten years, and, in particular, the pressures. In the mean time, the proposal to develop the Phene into a mansion with swimming pool has been put on hold – it was refused by the Planning Applications Committee. Both the Cross Keys and the Phene will be the subject of appeals.



The Australian - as a pub!



The Australian now - Helen Green Interior Design

## Recent losses – to restaurants, design studio and shops

Having reviewed the current state of pubs in the Borough, it is obvious that many have changed into gastropubs or are now restaurants – their role as pubs has reduced or even disappeared. These include:

- The King's Head and 8 Bells, 50 Cheyne Walk – now the Cheyne Walk Brasserie
- The Blenheim, 27 Cale Street – Tom's Kitchen

These changes, however, do not require planning consent. Indeed, changing a pub into a design studio – the fate of The Australian in Milner Street – or a shop – the fate of the Shuckburgh Arms, Denyer Street and the Queen's Elm in Fulham Road - does not require consent either. This is because any use in the A Use Class



**Moore Arms – now**

of the Use Classes Order – the classification system that enables the regulation of such changes of use – pubs (in Use Class A4) can be changed into restaurants or cafes (A3), banks, building societies or design



**The Phene**

studios (A2) or to shops (A1) without requiring any consent other than for physical changes to the building. The only changes that require consent are to other Use Classes, such as to housing.

## Consultation on changing policy

**MICHAEL BACH**

The Council is consulting on the options for changing its policy on pubs. See:

<http://www.rbkc.gov.uk/planningandconservation/planningpolicy/publichouses.aspx>

### The document asks:

- Do you agree that the Council should amend policies within the Core Strategy to try to resist the loss of public houses within the Borough?

### If you do, it then asks you to choose between four options:

1. The Council should resist the loss of Class A4 uses (drinking establishments including public houses) across the Borough where a public house acts as a community facility and/or contributes to the character or appearance of the area; or

2. The Council should resist the loss of Class A4 uses (drinking establishments including public houses) and Class A3 uses (restaurants and cafes) across the Borough where the facility acts as a community facility and/or contributes to the character or appearance of the area; or

3. In consultation with residents groups, land owners and other interested stakeholders, the Council will draw up a list of public houses which it would like to see protected. The loss of any public houses on this list will be resisted.

4. The Council should resist the loss of all A Class uses where the facility acts as a community facility and/or contributes to the character or appearance of the area.

Although the document asks you to choose one of the four options, you may be attracted to more than one option. The object is to understand what people want – if you like more than one option, say so and say why!

Perhaps the best option is not in the list: a policy that makes clear what the Council is trying to achieve and why, providing additional justification in terms of the contribution that the pub makes to the character of the neighbourhood as well as to contribution the building makes to the character and appearance of the area.

The Council is looking for your suggestions for how best to protect the remaining public houses from being lost

**Your views are sought by  
Friday 27 April**



# Are we losing our petrol stations?

MICHAEL BACH

Petrol stations have been disappearing almost imperceptibly. Unlike pubs we don't think of them in terms of popping round to the "local", but over the years the number has shrunk so that there are now only three left in Chelsea.

- Shell, 49 Tadema Road, London SW10
- Tesco, 459 Fulham Road, London SW10 (formerly Stamford Bridge Service Station)
- Chelsea Cloisters Service Station, Sloane Avenue, London SW3

## Lost petrol stations

Many of the early places to buy petrol were tucked away in mews, such as Ashton's Garage in Dudmaston Mews off Fulham Road; attached to mansion blocks, such as Cranmer Court Service Station, in Petyward or KDM & Cherrington Ltd, in Nell Gwyn House in Sloane Avenue; or tucked away like Isherwood's Embassy Garage in Ashburnham Road or St Mark's Service



**Chelsea Cloister Service Station, Sloane Avenue**

Station at 79/89 Lots Road. Petrol stations were a "downstairs" activity where the chauffeur went to refill his vehicle. These all existed as late as 1970.

These places were really like corner shops, but as the big petrol companies took over they lost out to the petrol equivalent of supermarkets – self-service filling stations.

## Pressures

So will those that remain survive? In Kensington a number of purpose-built petrol stations have disappeared in the last 10 years.

Chelsea's petrol stations are real survivors. The Shell station in Tadema Road was the subject of an application to redevelop it for 10 flats which was granted in 2000, but fortunately that consent lapsed. The petrol station at 459 Fulham Road, formerly Stamford Bridge Service Station, is now run by Tesco in conjunction with a Tesco Express store, but in 1975 it was threatened by redevelopment for a 5-storey building with a petrol station on ground floor, offices on the first floor and 21 flats above. This was refused. Fortunately the Chelsea Cloisters garage is one of the last surviving "downstairs" garages, originally serving the mansion blocks of Sloane Avenue.

Westminster has a strong planning policy to retain petrol stations. Kensington and Chelsea, whilst it does consider them to be a "social and community use", the policy has not been put to the test. Petrol stations need more protection or soon we may lose them to the juggernaut of housing.

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# Do you know what is going on?

MICHAEL BACH

Kensington and Chelsea has had a good record of notifying and consulting local residents about development proposals. This is deliberately put in the past tense because things have changed in the past year or so and the Council is now consulting on public involvement in planning. **Your views are sought by 27 April.**

<http://www.rbkc.gov.uk/planningand-conservation/planningpolicy/publicinvolvementinplanning.aspx>

The discussion paper covers the Council's ways of informing, communicating with, consulting and involving residents on planning issues. Although it is supposed to cover the whole range of planning issues where the Council engages with residents, the document largely focuses on planning applications

The main purpose of the paper appears

to be making the case for cutting back on consultation on planning applications, although some of this has already happened.

Until recently you might find out about a planning application in your area from:

- **the weekly list of planning applications in the local newspaper** – the Kensington and Chelsea Chronicle – that is meant to be delivered free to most of the Borough. This was a requirement by Council in return for placing the advertisements in the paper. The Council has agreed to these now being available from certain outlets, rather than delivered.

- **neighbour notification letters** – until last year letters were sent to nearby properties, but recently this has been cut right back to immediately adjoining neighbours – either side – and no longer

those two doors away, across the road or properties backing onto the application property.

- **site notices** – in conservation areas site notices are put up where physical works are proposed, but not changes of use, advertisements or new shopfronts.

The Council had a reputation for ensuring people knew about proposals, going further than the national minimum requirements set in legislation. And there were good reasons for it – it was often hard for people to know what was going on.

Now, in the interest of economy, the Council is cutting right back on notification and consultation. We are all expected to be online, being responsible for finding out for ourselves. Do you want to make sure that you hear what is planned in your area? If so, respond to the consultation.

# Change of use at Cremorne Wharf?

TERENCE BENDIXSON

Thames Water made clear some time ago that Cremorne Wharf is a place where it wants to build a link between Chelsea's Victorian sewers and its huge new Thames Tideway Tunnel. Now the Royal Borough has muddied the water by announcing its intention to seek to change the use of the wharf. At a recent exhibition at Chelsea Academy the Council showed how the wharf could be developed to accommodate buildings containing 80 flats and offices.

So what is going on? Although much was made of the design of the proposed buildings – by Fielden Clegg Bradley, the same architects as produced the nearby Chelsea Academy – the Council's main objective is to establish a higher value

for its site. At present, with industrial and riverside use, for which there is little demand, the value is low. But this would change if planning permission could be obtained for riverside flats with views of Battersea Old Church, Montevetro and the bridges.

Armed with this increased value the Council would, in negotiations with Thames Water over a lease or compulsory purchase, ask for a higher price. As Councillor Tim Coleridge put it: 'We are seeking to protect the interest of residents.' Any development would only go ahead after the tunnel works are complete.

One snag is that the wharf, a rare bridge for goods and passengers between river and

land, is safeguarded. The Council, however, 'does not consider that this designation remains compatible with the residential nature of the local area and has submitted representations to the Mayor of London to allow for its removal.'

The Society is unhappy about this argument. For one thing, the Lots Road area is designated as an Employment Zone and Cremorne Wharf is safeguarded as a wharf and all recent residential development was carried out in the knowledge of the existence of a working wharf. The other is that once access to the river is killed off it is gone for good and would not be there for as yet unknown uses that could be of the greatest importance to Chelsea residents.

## To tower or not to tower?

TERENCE BENDIXSON

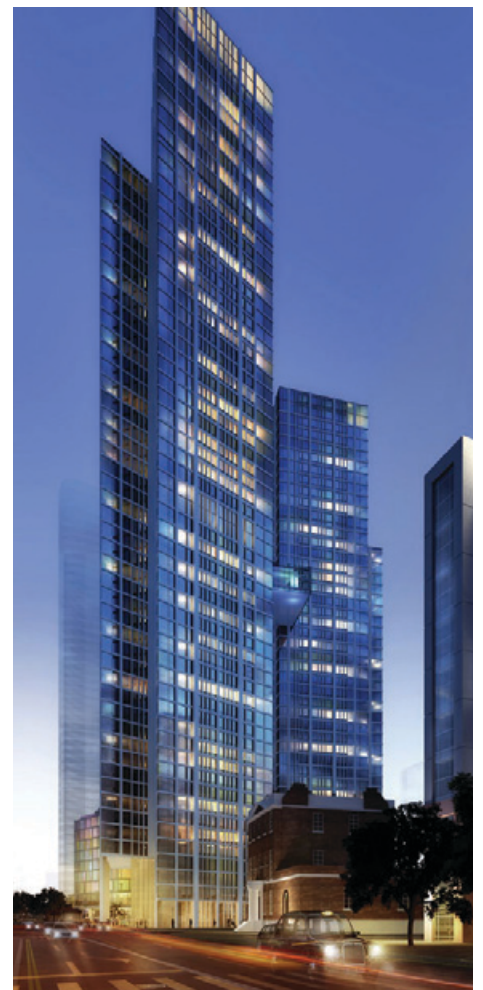
Wandsworth Borough Council has received an application for the building of two towers near Vauxhall. If built they will be 58 storeys (ca 200m) and 43 storeys (161m) high respectively. Like the new 50 storey (186m) Vauxhall Tower at St George's Wharf, they would certainly be visible from some points in Chelsea – probably from the Chelsea Embankment.

This raises the whole question of what view the Society should take about tall buildings. In the past we opposed both Richard Rogers' Montevetro next to Battersea Old Church and the two towers designed by Sir Terry Farrell for the Lots Road Power Station site.

Happily no skyscrapers have been proposed within Chelsea's heartland although there is a possibility that if Crossrail 2 were to be built along the

safeguarded route under King's Road, with stations at Sloane Square and the fire station, there could be pressure for high-rise development at those two locations. Then there is the huge hospital site to the west of Sydney Street. If the Brompton decides to move and sells its patrimony, a developer could well try to build 'Chelsea Towers'. Would we be opposed to these? Almost certainly.

Vauxhall is a different proposition. It lies in what the London Plan calls an Opportunity Area and is shaping up to be a mini-Manhattan - as is indicated in a drawing by Kohn Pederson Fox, architects for One Nine Elms Lane. KPF, a huge American firm with an international practice, has already built a very tall and elegant spire in Shanghai. It is in Pudong, the financial district and is the city's highest building.



One Nine Elms

## Major civil engineering in Old Church Street

Sloane House is being gutted. Sloane Lodge is reduced to two stunted side walls and, in the garden behind both houses, piles are being driven down 18 metres. A huge underground pool and entertainment complex is to be built there.

This is, so far, the biggest residential excavation in Chelsea and major civil engineering equipment has been involved. At times the site has seen two or three diggers in the garden, a rotary piling machine with head gear sixty feet high, a huge cement batching plant, a large diesel generator and ready-mix cement lorries arriving every fifteen minutes. For the neighbours, who have had their plight reported in The Daily Telegraph, it is a misery.

The excavation is under way for Petra, daughter of the Formula 1 billionaire, Bernie Ecclestone. Everyone knows something is wrong with it. Work on such a scale cheek by jowl with people's homes is inhuman. The Council could have rejected the application on the grounds that Sloane House is listed but chose not to. However the Executive Director for Planning has since been instructed to revise the Local Plan. Meanwhile research promoted by residents in Markham Square is seeking ways to reduce the horrors of high-impact development and Dr. James Thompson has been lobbying hard at Westminster to get changes to the law.

None of this will help the neighbours of Sloane House but it may make a difference in the future.



## Free Wi-fi in Chelsea

O2 has signed a deal with the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and Westminster City Council to create the largest free wireless hub in Europe. The deal is part of both councils' plans to ensure that visitors to London will be able to make the most out of London's offerings, particularly in a year in which both the Diamond Jubilee and the Olympics take place. The costs of providing the Wi-Fi have been covered

by O2 and not at the expense of the taxpayer.

According to O2, the free Wi-Fi access will be available once the wireless network is installed on street furniture. Roll-out started in January. The Wi-Fi routers will be installed at lampposts and bus stops in time for the Olympic Games. Transport for London is also installing Wi-Fi hotspots in up to 120 Underground stations by June.

## Changes to traffic in Belgravia and Victoria

The Grosvenor Estate is promoting a study of how traffic is managed in Belgravia, Victoria and adjacent neighbourhoods. So far it is only at an exploratory stage, but the overall aim is to minimise through traffic in residential streets and improve conditions for pedestrians. However, it may result in measures that would affect Sloane Square and other parts of Chelsea. The Society will be keeping an eye on this but is reassured by the presence, as technical expert, of Professor Tony May, for many years a distinguished head of transport studies at the University of Leeds. A steering group that includes Westminster City Council is led by Nigel Hughes of the Grosvenor Estate.

## Alpha Place: Luxury housing scheme to start soon

Following the collapse of Alpha Place Development Chelsea in 2009, everything seemed to go quiet about the redevelopment of the Power House. In February it was announced that Grosvenor and Native Land had secured £90m of funding which had enabled them to acquire the Alpha Place site.

Native Land is a specialist residential developer, who has developed Waldron House in Old Church Street. The site has permission for 100,000sqft of residential – 25 private flats and 13 affordable homes. Work is due to start this summer and scheduled for completion in spring 2014.

# Chelsea Society Exhibition 2012: Chelsea - at the Heart of Gardening

UPDATE

Dovehouse Green, King's Road from  
Tuesday 22 May to Saturday 2 June.  
Admission Free

Thanks to the generosity of our sponsors our plans are beginning to take shape. The Council have kindly given us permission to put up a marquee on Dovehouse Green and have waived their fees. All the administrative tasks are now well in hand which means that time can be spent on the more exciting creative work. Members of the sub-committee have been searching the Local Studies collections for materials, especially pictures, and we have made several 'new' finds.

The exhibits will be arranged in five 'rooms' each with a distinctive theme. Several of the rooms are being developed in partnership with local horticultural organisations. Dawn Kemp is working with us to showcase the role that the **Chelsea Physic Garden** played in the international exchange of plants and seedlings and highlight the key figures who worked at

the garden. They have opened up their archive and we have commissioned a photographer to provide us with digital images of some of their gems. They will also be putting on a small exhibition on the work of plant illustrator Elizabeth Blackwell at the Physic Garden.

Botanical painting tutors at the **English Gardening School** will be showcasing their work interpreting Chelsea's flora, past and present. This will be an exciting opportunity to see modern botanical illustrations and talk to the artists.

Meanwhile members of the exhibition committee are working on the other sections. As well as showing where the plants we buy from garden centres originated, we will tell of the trials and tribulations the plant hunters encountered collecting them. Another section will

locate the many nurseries that used to flourish along the King's Road from Sloane Square to Stanley Bridge. Prints and photographs will be used to show how gardens developed from the 16th century onwards and we hope to include the work of landscape designers working in Chelsea today.

Felicity Kendal has kindly agreed to open the exhibition on Tuesday 22 May and we hope that you will all take the opportunity to come and visit the show.

Anyone who is willing to help us over the two weeks please contact us either by e-mail to [Honsecretary@chelseasociety.com](mailto:Honsecretary@chelseasociety.com) or by post to **Chairman, Exhibition Committee, Chelsea Society, 36 Walpole Street, SW3 4QS**

## Olympic Games – how do they affect you?

The Olympic Games will affect you because you might want to go to some of the events – travel to and from the venues will be difficult. Certain stations will be very congested, especially the main rail termini (eg Victoria), major interchanges and the City. See: <http://www.getaheadofthegames.com/travelinaffectedareas/city/london-public-transport.html>

- TfL has a special webpage about travelling during the Games <http://www.tfl.gov.uk/gettingaround/london2012/21820.aspx> and for queueing times at underground stations: <http://www.tfl.gov.uk/gettingaround/london2012/21787.aspx>

Events in or near Kensington and Chelsea include:

- Volleyball at Earl's Court Exhibition Centre starting 28 July: <http://www.london2012.com/games/venues/earls-court.php>
- the cycle road races along Brompton Road and Fulham Road on 28 & 29 July: <http://www.london2012.com/news/2011/02/london-2012-announces-new-route-for-olympic-road-races.php>
- the men's and women's triathlons on 4 and 7 August: swimming in the Serpentine, cycling in Central London and running in Hyde Park: <http://www.london2012.com/triathlon>

- Buses will be diverted, including 11, 14, 19, 22 and 137 <http://www.tfl.gov.uk/assets/downloads/bus-service-alterations-2012-games.pdf>





# Chelsea Arts Festival 2012: 13–21 October

LEONARD HOLDSWORTH

Many Chelsea Society members will recall the Chelsea Arts Festival which sadly collapsed a year or two ago.

Last year, the Rev. Brian Leathard, Rector of St Luke's, Sydney Street and Christ Church Chelsea and a small team revived the Festival on a modest scale with concerts in both churches. This year the Festival will be between Saturday 13 October and

Sunday 21 October on a grander scale and with far more secular content. Not only will there be splendid concerts at the two churches, but also diverse theatrical and literary events, as well as art shows showcasing local talent, and popular music and jazz 'gigs.'

Hopefully, many local schools will also be involved, including the New Chelsea

Academy. King's Road traders are also being approached to participate as well as the Saatchi Gallery, the Cadogan Hall and the Royal Court Theatre.

Please keep in touch with highlights of this Festival, many of them free events, by contacting the Parish Office at St Luke's ([parishoffice@chelseaparish.org](mailto:parishoffice@chelseaparish.org)).

## Winter Lectures 2012:

### Ken Howard: 'Inspired by Light'

DAVID LE LAY



The first talk of the 2012 Lecture Series was given by the artist, Ken Howard, introduced by another well-known Chelsea artist, Julian Barrow. Both Ken and Julian are traditional figurative painters whose work is dominated by a wonderful sense of light; and indeed Ken's illustrated talk was entitled 'Inspired by Light'. Ken Howard is that rare thing – a painter who is extremely successful in his own lifetime, not only do his paintings command high prices but he is a Royal Academician and has been awarded the OBE. Everyone agrees that it couldn't have happened to a nicer person.

The hall's amplification system decided not to work which turned out to be a blessing, for Ken was able to establish a closer rapport with the packed hall, pacing up and down the aisle. He enthralled us for almost 90 minutes. His talk was informative and inspiring, and liberally 'peppered' with

amusing anecdotes. Artists are not often noted for their skill at public speaking, but Ken Howard is a real professional.

He told us how he came to be a painter and gave us an insight into his beliefs and approach to his work. For him, the discipline of drawing is at the heart of painting. He draws all the time to the point that it is an addiction, he just can't stop doing it, so much so that, as he approaches 80, he is beginning to have physical problems with his eyes and right hand. Examples of his drawings showed just what a touch of genius he has but he was quick to stress that, contrary to what many people say, everyone can draw. The medium of watercolour has always appealed to Ken because of the natural luminosity of the paint, but he now mostly paints in oils – the medium for which he is now most well known.

Ken is a strong believer in painting 'on the spot' and any 'touching up' in the studio he keeps to the absolute minimum, though his studio, which, for very many years, has been near to The Boltons, is one of the recurring subjects of his paintings. Other subjects that dominate his work are boats and harbours, beaches and Venice, but he also finds industrial landscapes beautiful. When living near to a railway goods yard, for example, he made many studies of the railway tracks.

Everyone went away delighted by Ken's wonderfully presented, educational and thoroughly entertaining talk.

### Kim Wilkie

GILES QUARME

I was delighted to introduce Kim Wilkie, a friend and a professional collaborator on historic buildings and gardens. Kim is one of the UK's leading garden designers with a national and international reputation.

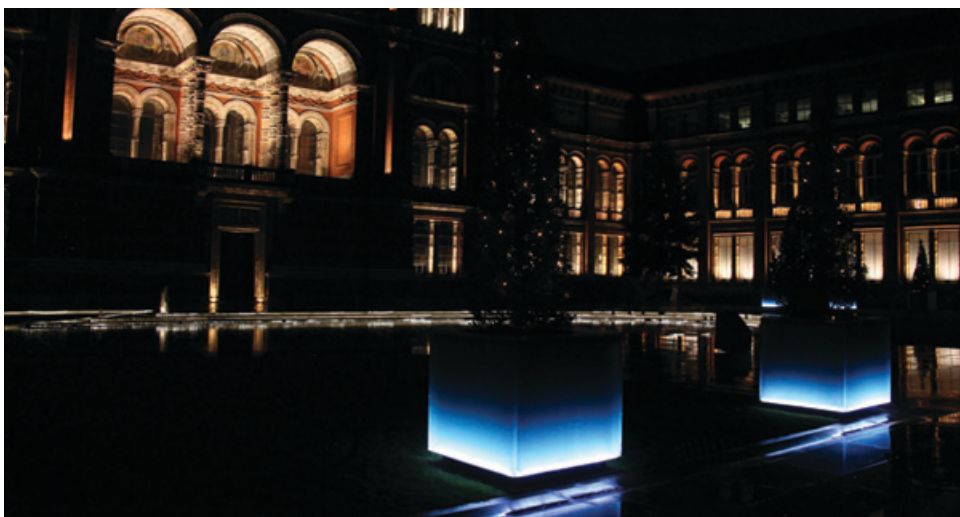
Hyde Park Corner was redesigned in the 1960s to accommodate the car at the expense of the pedestrian. Kim's proposals involved the recovery of the island for public use including obtaining the Queen's permission to re-open the gates of the Constitution Arch and laying out pedestrian routes to the monuments, particularly Jagger's Royal Artillery Memorial. The proposals screened the south-west corner by contouring and moulding the landscape to create a noise buffer to receive the New Zealand War Memorial. The opposite corner was landscaped to receive the new Australian War Memorial. Ultimately a new Tube entrance leading directly onto the island will complete the recovery of the island for public use.

Kim's scheme for the Madjeski Gardens in the Victoria and Albert Museum was an equally bold attempt to enhance the use of a central courtyard. The garden contained mature fir trees that were too densely packed and obscured the distinguished Victorian architecture. His proposals involved cutting down the trees and creating a spirally stepped pool that reflected and with spectacular

lighting enhanced the surrounding architecture. With the enthusiastic support of the V&A the adoption of the pool by school children has been a serendipitous affirmation of its public success. The pool can also be drained in a couple of hours to allow it to become an orchestra pit for public concerts.

The rationale behind his design for the Chelsea Barracks is a combination of climate change, financial upheaval and political transition that has focussed his attention on how to make new settlements succeed in the future. He sees the relationship between historic open spaces and buildings as the way forward. The scale, location, level of investment and long term management of this site will make it possible to create a way of living that can set an exemplary pattern.

The combination of deep, well-watered soils in the leafy suburban edge of London,



historically made Chelsea a prime place for growing fruit and vegetables to feed the capital and has been the central inspiration for the project. [Ed: Note that this is the theme of the Society's Exhibition for 2012]

His design attempts to create a variety of gardens, squares and courts that are

inspired by the stewardship of soil, water and air, in addition to offering play and recreation that will harvest rainwater, filter air and compost waste, nourish wildlife and even grow food. We were all inspired by a new vision of the future.

## Chelsea People

# In memory of Chelsea passengers on *RMS Titanic*

– CAROLYN STARREN

It is now a hundred years since the sinking of the *Titanic*. At 11.40 on the night of 14 April 1912 the *RMS Titanic* struck an iceberg and two hours forty minutes later she disappeared beneath the surface of the Atlantic Ocean. The loss of life was appalling all the more so because of the lack of equipment and training. Two thirds of the people on board perished, 1,517 out of the ship's complement of 2,223.

## Christopher Head

But what does this tragedy have to do with Chelsea? One of those who perished was Christopher Head, Mayor of Chelsea 1909-1911, whose town residence was 7 Wyndham House, Sloane Square. He was also Hon. Secretary of Cadogan Place Gardens Committee where a sundial in his memory was erected. A Councillor since 1906 he was described as a man of unusual energy, happy to meet anyone and who put in hours at the Town Hall both before and after work. Contemporary art, open spaces and insurance costs were his main interests and he left many items to Chelsea Library. A barrister by profession, in 1905 he became a director in the family firm, Henry Head & Co insurance brokers and underwriters at Lloyds of London.



Boarding the *Titanic* in Southampton Christopher's ticket number was 113038 for cabin B 11 and cost £42. He made many voyages on all types of trading vessels and coupled with his professional interests, a trip on the maiden voyage

of the *Titanic* must have seemed an attractive proposition. Interestingly he took out a £25,000 insurance against 'ocean accidents'; his profession had made him very aware of the dangers of sea. In 1910 he married Mrs. Hill Trevor, daughter of Mr H D Chapman of Kilhendre, Ellesmere. His foresight meant that she was well provided for.

Money for a memorial portrait of the ex-mayor was quickly raised amongst his colleagues on the Council and the work was commissioned from his friend, the artist Miss N Labouchere.

## William John Mellors

There was another Chelsea resident on board but William John Mellors' tale has

a happier ending, despite the trials he went through on that awful night. Many survivors remembered him. Standing at 6' 2" with blue eyes and light brown hair the 19 year old from 8 Christchurch Terrace made an impact on fellow travellers especially the ladies! Others gave glowing accounts of his actions both on board helping women and children into life jackets and in the lifeboat.

A valet to Sir Frederick Schuster he decided to seek his fortune in America. A relative had secured him a post at Richmond Country Club, Long Island. A second class passenger, he paid £10.10s for his ticket SW/PP 752. A cache of papers found in an attic by a relative paints a vivid picture of his terrifying experiences.

William describes how he was hurled into the air from the bow by the force of an explosion, landing in the freezing water. He swam for about an hour before reaching Collapsible A, one of the canvas lifeboats. The sides had not been raised and the craft collapsed several times. Only 12 of the 30 odd people on the lifeboat survived, William spent over 6 hours waist deep in water before eventually being picked up and taken to the *RMS Carpathia*. It took months for him to regain feeling in his frozen fingers, legs and feet.

He also sheds light on Captain Smith's role as he was standing near him as the tragedy unfolded. He states that the Captain tried to call back the half-filled lifeboats and that the 'brave old seaman ... stuck heroically to the last' before jumping from the bridge. According to William, Captain Smith's final words to the crew were, 'You have done your duty boys. Now every man for himself'.

When he recovered he took up his post at the Country Club, then worked as a valet in New York before travelling round the States as a social entertainer. He joined up in 1917 and due to his distinguished war service was naturalised as an American citizen in 1918. For the next 15 years he worked as a salesman, marrying Juanita Sarber in 1920 and they had one daughter. In 1935 they moved to a suburb of Detroit where he edited the *National Republic* magazine. William died on 23 July 1948 of lung cancer at the age of 54.

## English Heritage Blue Plaque for Jean Rhys

– ENGLISH HERITAGE

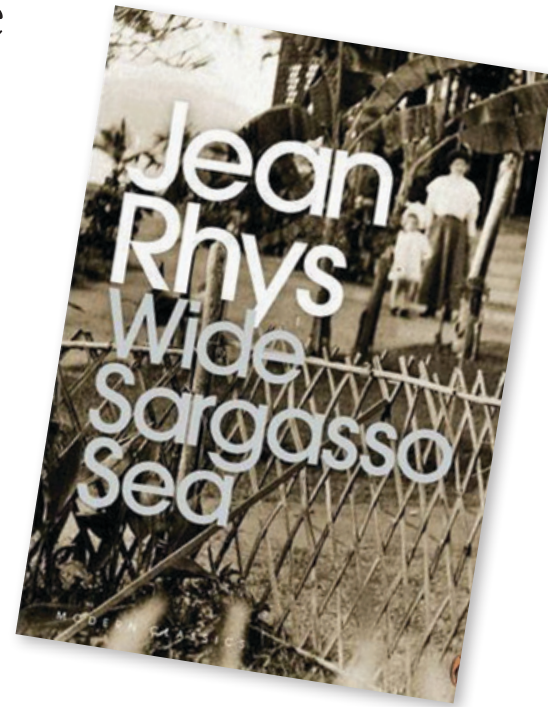
One of the 20th century's greatest women writers was honoured by a blue plaque on her former home by English Heritage. The plaque to the Caribbean-born writer Jean Rhys (1890-1979) was unveiled by her grand daughter at Paultons House, Paultons Square, Chelsea on 6 March.

It was while living here in the 1930s that she developed her career as a novelist and wrote *Good Morning, Midnight* (1939), now considered one of her finest works.

Sir Andrew Motion, said: "Jean Rhys made an invaluable and unforgettable contribution to writing." Baroness Andrews, Chair of English Heritage, said: "It's wonderful to see the blue plaques scheme commemorating one of our most important female writers. She made a vivid mark on literature, and has left us a great legacy."

Jean Rhys was born Ella Gwendoline Rees Williams in Dominica, the daughter of William Williams, a Welsh physician, and Minna, née Lockhart, a white Creole of Scottish descent. Educated at a Catholic convent, she was deeply influenced by her experiences of exploring the wild, isolated estate of the sugar plantation which had belonged to her great-grandfather. A spell at the Perse School, Cambridge, taught her that she would never really belong in cold, grey England, and she retained her Caribbean accent, despite numerous elocution lessons while studying at the Academy of Dramatic Art in London. 'Jean Rhys' was one of several stage names she used during her early career as a chorus girl, and she later adopted it as her nom de plume. This stage of her life inspired her third novel *Voyage in the Dark* (1934).

In 1919 Rhys married Dutch journalist Jean Lenglet and moved with him to Paris. After featuring a short story of hers in *The Transatlantic Review* in 1924, the writer Ford Madox Ford published her first collection of short stories, *The*



*Left Bank* (1927). He recognised the powerful combination of her colonial perspective with her distinctive 'stream of consciousness' technique. Rhys's affair with Ford, and the breakdown of her marriage, provided the material for her first novel, *Quartet* (1928), which was first published under the title of *Postures*.

A return to London in 1928 led to Rhys living with her literary agent Leslie Tilden Smith, whom she married in 1934. Her next three novels, *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie* (1930), *Voyage in the Dark* (1934) and *Good Morning Midnight* (1939), drew on her experience of displacement, poverty and sexual dependence in Paris and London. From 1936 to 1938, Rhys and Tilden Smith made their home at Flat 22 in Paultons House, a large block of flats that had been built in 1935. It was here that Rhys wrote *Good Morning, Midnight*, not at her desk, but in the mornings while still in bed, which was 'strewn with pages'.

After Tilden Smith's death in 1945, she married for a third time, and in 1960 moved to Devon, settling in the village of Cheriton Fitzpaine, which is where she wrote *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), her response to Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. It was this novel, which portrays the first Mrs Rochester's Caribbean childhood, that brought her fame and it has remained a mainstay of the 20th-century literary canon ever since.



## Diary Dates

### Visit to the English Gardening School

17 April, 15 Lots Road, SW10

Chelsea Society visit – tickets from Paulette Craxford

### RHS Chelsea Flower Show

22-26 May: Royal Hospital South Grounds

<http://www.rhs.org.uk/shows-events/rhs-chelsea-flower-show/2012>

### Chelsea – At the Heart of Gardening

22 May - 2 June 10am-6pm;

Dovehouse Green, Opposite Chelsea Old Town Hall, King's Road

### Chelsea Society 2012 Exhibition:

'Chelsea – At the Heart of Gardening' see page 8

### Queen's Diamond Jubilee Weekend, 2-5 June

#### Thames Pageant

Sunday 3 June

The Thames Diamond Jubilee Pageant: This event will take place at high water, about 2pm, on the Thames and consist of up to 1,000 boats assembled from across the UK, the Commonwealth and around the world. The Queen will travel in the Royal Barge which will lead the flotilla. This event is being organised by the Thames Diamond Jubilee Foundation, chaired by our president, Lord Salisbury: <http://www.thamesdiamondjubileepageant.org/>

Thames piers, the Embankment and bridges will be closed to traffic. The pageant can be viewed from Embankment and the bridges. There will also be large outdoor screens. Get there early!

### Late May Bank Holiday

Monday 4 June

Diamond Jubilee Concert BBC1

### Diamond Jubilee Bank Holiday:

Tuesday 5 June

Street Parties:

There may be street parties in Chelsea. If you want to hold one look at:

<http://www.rbkc.gov.uk/communityandlocalife/havingastreetparty.aspx>

### Summer Drinks Party

To be held at Brompton Cemetery on 5th July.

Details to follow.

### Doggett's Coat and Badge

20 July

The 299th race will be held on Friday 20 July. Please assemble at Cadogan Pier at 12.00 where the Mayor will meet the winner of this historic race

For a history of the race see:

[http://www.pla.co.uk/display\\_fixedpage.cfm/id/163](http://www.pla.co.uk/display_fixedpage.cfm/id/163)

### Olympic Games

27 July – 11 August

### Paralympic Games

29 August – 9 September

## KEEPING IN TOUCH WITH YOU

We want to be able to communicate with you by email. If you have access to email, please send it to: [honsecretary@chelseasociety.org.uk](mailto:honsecretary@chelseasociety.org.uk) simply stating 'this is my address' and giving your name.

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The views expressed in this Newsletter are those of the individual contributors and not necessarily those of the Chelsea Society.