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CHELSEA SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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The Changing Character of Chelsea

DAMIAN GREENISH

As I wandered through “Old Chelsea” from Sloane Square to Petyt Hall to attend last year’s Summer Meeting, I was struck by just how lucky I am to have been able to spend so much of my life in this extraordinary and unique part of London.

During 2015 the Society spent many hours talking about the character of Chelsea (one of the objects of the Society is to promote interest in the history, character and traditions of Chelsea) in the context of a number of proposals for Chelsea that we feel may impact adversely on that character. But, what is that character; how do we define it and what is it that we are seeking to preserve?

It was Heraclitus who said “There is nothing permanent except change.” History confirms that – after all, Chelsea

has changed significantly over its long and distinguished history and no more so than over the last 60 years. So when we look at the history of Chelsea, what do we see?

The evolving character

There are the traditional landed families, originally inheriting from the Sloane sisters, who did much to influence the modern make-up of Chelsea and of course continue to do so. There is the radical tradition that gave us the great social housing estates of the late 19th century which still exist. Chelsea is and always has been a cosmopolitan borough with a wide ranging demographic. The rich and powerful choose to live here in their fine houses, but alongside the middle classes and ordinary working families. It may now be less obvious and diminished in size, ▶

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see Dates for your Diary on the back page

Picture: Michael Bach



The former Six Bells pub, latterly Henry J Bean’s – now The Ivy Chelsea Garden

▶ but there is still an active community of artists, painters, writers and poets who live and work here and a bohemian tradition of providing alternative outlets for their work from the soulless West End. Chelsea comprises a number of village communities which together make up the borough.

The bedrock

Then there are the great institutions, some old and some more recent but always names that resonate and are instantly recognisable: The Royal Hospital, the Duke of York's, the Royal Court, the Physic Garden, the Chelsea Arts Club, Peter Jones, and the World's End to name but a few. There are the open spaces such as Sloane Square, the Duke of York's, Burton's Court, Cremorne Gardens and Dovehouse Green with the many communal (if often private) gardens. There are the churches, clubs, cinemas, galleries, concert halls, schools, shops, restaurants and offices and the Chelsea riverside with the Lots Road Power Station. There are great houses

and Chelsea cottages and magnificent 1930s mansion blocks. Just look at Old Church Street, with Chelsea Old Church, the Old Rectory, the former Wright's Diary, the Chelsea Arts Club, Sloane House, the Mendelsohn house, and a singular selection of small shops, houses, studios and flats – all in one street running from the bottom to the top of Chelsea.

Our youthful past

Perhaps most famous of all, the King's Road: the artery of the Borough. It may have lost some of its innovation and the excitement of the "swinging sixties" and its punk shock of the 1970s. Perhaps "the Chelsea Set" and the Sloane Rangers are now less obviously identifiable. Nevertheless, there are still hanging on some of those small independent boutiques and outlets selling their eclectic wares which is what made it so different.

Every place has a personality and although different places may have a lot in common, like people, no two are exactly the same. What distinguishes

one place from another? It is its physical and human characteristics, its history, its geography, and of course its people. It is those factors that determine a place's unique character and that is why Chelsea has its own special and distinguishable character.

Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose?

However, that character needs to be preserved and the factors that make up that character need to be nurtured. Over the years the Society has achieved many successes (and suffered some failures) as we address issues that we believe threaten the essence of the place. Of course, elements of the character have changed and future changes are inevitable. However, when the Society is asked to comment on or respond to proposals, the first question that we must ask ourselves is: how will this impact on the character of Chelsea as a place? Our support will always be dependent on being satisfied that the unique character of Chelsea will be preserved for future generations. ■



Chelsea on the move

Picture: Michael Bach

Planning Report

MICHAEL STEPHEN

Future of Chelsea

We have drafted, consulted, debated and adopted Policy Guidelines for the Future of Chelsea. The paper was presented to a public meeting on 2nd November 2015 and is on the Society's website at: <http://chelseasociety.org.uk/the-future-of-chelsea-whats-next/>

Crossrail 2

We have consulted widely on Crossrail 2 and have debated the issue with the membership and the general public at well-attended meetings on 2 and 23 November 2015. We support Crossrail 2 generally, but the members voted at the AGM to oppose a station in Chelsea, and the Council of the Society has endorsed that position. The Society's response to Transport for London was published on the Society's website on 21 December 2015 at <http://chelseasociety.org.uk/crossrail-2-station-chelsea-2/>

On 7 January 2016 Greg Hands MP wrote to the Managing Director of TfL <http://www.greghands.com/news/rt-hon-greg-hands-mps-submission-crossrail-2-consultation> expressing his preference for a station at Imperial Wharf and asking for a further study to be done. The problem with this is that the tunnelling would probably still be under the buildings of Chelsea, and one or more large ventilation shafts would have to be constructed somewhere in Chelsea.

Sutton Estate

We have considered the important planning application made by Affinity Sutton for their estate in Chelsea, and our response was published on the Society's website on 23 December 2015. See <http://chelseasociety.org.uk/response-to-planning-application-by-affinity-sutton-homes-for-the-william-sutton-estate-chelsea/>

RBKC Local Plan

We have considered and commented on the partial review by RBKC of its Local Plan and have published our response on the Society's website at <http://chelseasociety.org.uk/chelsea-society-comments-on-rbkc-local-plan/>

Housing and Planning Bill

We have opposed the Government's plans to privatise part of the planning system. See <http://chelseasociety.org.uk/privatisation-in-planning/>

Upward Extensions

We have opposed the Government's plans to allow upward extensions of buildings without planning permission <http://chelseasociety.org.uk/extra-storeys-without-permission/>

Duke of York Square

At the invitation of Cadogan, the Chairman and I met on 18 December with their Chief Executive and architect to discuss the design for their proposed new café in Duke of York Square to replace the existing temporary structure. The Society has written to RBKC supporting the proposal. Work is likely to start in early 2017, with completion end 2017.

Electric Cars - We wrote to RBKC, and on 25 January received the following reply, "we will do our utmost to minimise the impact of the charging points on local residents and visitors. They will only be installed in locations suitable for long-term parking so they will not cause obstruction to traffic. The bays will only be available for vehicles while charging their batteries.

Chelsea Fire Station

In August 2013 thirteen fire engines in London were withdrawn on a temporary

basis, one of which was from Chelsea, leaving one engine permanently stationed here.

The Fire Brigade says that it has continued to meet its London-wide average attendance time target of six minutes for a first fire engine and eight minutes for a second while the 13 appliances have been out of service. If the 13 fire engines were returned to service, they believe that this would improve average London-wide attendance times by around four seconds for the first engine and by around 18 seconds for the second engine.

Curzon Cinema

On 17 July 2015 we wrote to RBKC in support of the revised plans to redevelop this site, which retained the cinema with the provision of step-free access, and the pub on the King's Road frontage. Planning permission has now been granted and we have since met with the architects to discuss the detail of the front elevation. We have written to RBKC supporting the designs presented to us by Cadogan.

New Hotel at Sloane Square

Cadogan were granted planning consent in 2012 to convert One Sloane Gardens into hotel accommodation with 38 rooms. Having now attracted a prestigious brand, to operate the hotel, Cadogan are proposing a number of changes to improve upon the currently consented scheme, which will be submitted as a new planning application later this year. If granted, the Coste Hotel would be completed in early 2019.

Chelsea Old Town Hall

On 25 February the members of the Planning Committee and Sarah Farrugia and James Thompson met at the Old Town

Hall with the architects appointed by RBKC to refurbish the building. There would be no structural alterations and the proposed changes were relatively minor. We made some suggestions concerning disabled access, closed-loop audio systems, toilet facilities, and cloakrooms. We asked to be kept in touch as the proposals are developed, and before any work is contracted.

Architects

On 25 February the members of the Planning Committee and Sarah Farrugia and James Thompson met Michael Squire, senior partner of a firm employing 125 architects. The meeting was at his request, and he explained to us the general principles on which his firm bases proposals for development in Chelsea and Westminster. We had an interesting discussion in the course of which we gave our view that Chelsea has a very special style and character which needs to be respected. Chelsea is not a blank canvas on which architects can paint at will. There are some sites where a completely innovative design would be appropriate and others where it would not. ■

Ward Reports

MICHAEL STEPHEN

Reports were received from ward representatives on the Planning Committee on the following subjects:

Stanley Ward – Patrick Baty

- Disruption that will be caused by major construction projects in west Chelsea.
- Redevelopment of Chelsea FC stadium

Riverside Ward – Martyn Baker

- The impact of the gas pipeline enhancement project starting in February 2016 from Stanley Bridge and going eastwards along King's Road and then up Gunter Grove to Fulham Road
- Thames Tideway Tunnel/ Cremorne Wharf
- Counters Creek storm relief sewer
- Lots Road power station
- Chelsea FC stadium and meeting with Mark Chetwynd, chief transport policy officer of RBKC

- Fulham gas works
- West London River Group

Royal Hospital Ward

– Chris Lenon

- Royal Hospital draft conservation area appraisal
- Cycle Quietways
- Development pressures
- Physic Garden

Brompton & Hans Town Ward

– Paul Aitkenhead

- Former John Lewis clearings
- Former Harrods car showroom and workshop – 60 Sloane Avenue



Moravian Close – former Moravian Burial Ground

Planning Updates

MICHAEL BACH

196-222 King's Road:

Curzon Cinema, Habitat, Trafalgar:
Timetable: the cinema will close - March 2017 and demolition starts - June 2017; estimated completion – Mid 2019

Liscarten House, 131 Sloane Street: (Now called George House)

This was completed in February. Ongoing works are RBKC roadworks front and rear.

Pavilion Road:

Small artisan shops (butcher, greengrocer, baker, etc) and restaurant on Pavilion Road are being marketed right now. The little shops should be open by mid-2016 and the restaurant should be up and trading by Christmas 2016.

Cadogan Arms

Work will start in August 2016 and take 12 months.

Chelsea Building Society

The Chelsea Building Society merged with the Yorkshire Building Society in 2010 and as from September 2016 will be rebranded accordingly. However, the Chelsea branch at 110-112 King's Road will be closing in June and the nearest branch will be at 255 Kensington High Street – the former chief office of the CBS.

Chelsea was first established in 1875 as the London & Camberwell Building Society. Three years later, in 1878, the Borough of Chelsea Permanent Building Society was formed. Over the years both societies merged with smaller societies and on 31 December 1966 the two societies merged to create a new society called the Chelsea and South London Building Society until April 1971 when the name was changed to Chelsea Building Society. The Yorkshire Building Society Group is the fourth largest building society in the UK.

Government changes to planning

The Government decided in 2013 to allow offices to turn into housing without needing planning consent. RBKC was exempted because of the likely adverse impact on businesses, especially premises for small business. Now they propose to remove the exemption in May 2019, but invite the Council to justify any further exemption.

However, they now propose to allow light industrial uses and launderettes (why?) to turn into housing without planning consent. The Government's only concern is to create more housing – they are not concerned about the importance of these other uses to the community. There are still five launderettes in Chelsea – there is still a need for them, even if today they are dry-cleaners as well. ■

Lottery grant for the Brompton Cemetery

TERENCE BENDIXSON

The Brompton Cemetery, long in need of conservation and repair, has been offered grants of £6.2 million to repair the central chapel and colonnades, create a visitor centre next to the Brompton Road and carry out other conservation works.

The Royal Parks, which own and manage the Grade I cemetery, have been given £4.5 million by the Big Lottery and Heritage Lottery Funds. They will add to that £1.2 million from their own grants with a further £500,000 coming from the Royal

Parks Foundation.

The money will pay for the repair and restoration of Benjamin Baud's 1840 chapel and colonnades (loosely modelled on St Peter's at Rome), the improvement of natural habitats in the cemetery, and the conversion of the North Entrance into a visitor centre. Some residents consider that the addition of substantial wings to the south or cemetery side of Baud's neo-classical entrance is a mistake. The architects, who have put the wings as far as possible to the sides,

hope that this will minimise their impact on the central arch while providing a café, visitor centre, lavatories and other useful accommodation.

Arthur Tait, Chairman of the Friends of Brompton Cemetery, said that additional space would provide 'a hub for volunteering (and) training' at the same time as the cemetery would continue to be 'a place of relaxation for children and families while still being a haven for those who want peace, quiet and beauty.' ■

Conservation Area Appraisals: Progress Report

MICHAEL BACH

If you live in a conservation area – as most of you do – you may be familiar with the Conservation Area Proposals Statements (CAPS) that the Borough produced in the 1970s and 1980s. These documents met the requirements of planning legislation to declare conservation areas, but also to draw up proposals for preserving and enhancing their character and appearance.

The CAPS included not only a history of the area and a street-by-street assessment, but also considered how the policies in the Borough's local plan should be interpreted locally, by identifying where additional storeys might be appropriate and what sort, how street boundaries should be

treated by retaining original features and where there were real opportunities for enhancing the buildings or the street.

The Council has been concerned that these documents would be considered "out-of-date" – although the date of adoption does not necessarily mean that they are no longer relevant. The Council, however, took Government policy advice too literally and have stripped out anything that looked like "guidance" – that is providing advice on how to interpret the Local Plan policies in particular circumstances. The new Conservation Area Appraisals are almost entirely descriptive documents – much more colourful than the CAPS – but provide

little clue as to how the conservation areas might be enhanced. It is not clear who will be promoting improvements, what residents should be expected to do and what planning officers should be trying to achieve in terms of improvements.

So where are we up to?

The review of all the CAPS is now half way through. New Conservation Area Appraisals have been adopted for Lots Road Village (November 2014), Sloane Stanley (October 2015) and, most recently, Chelsea Conservation Area (January 2016). Still to come are: Chelsea Park Carlyle; Cheyne; Royal Hospital; Sloane Square and Thames CAAs. ■



Picture: Michael Bach

Metrobank – opened 13 April

Crossrail Update

MICHAEL BACH

Following the TfL consultation, the initial analysis revealed the large number of objections against a station in the King's Road. A fuller analysis of the results and TfL's response is due shortly.

Since then the Government has indicated strong support for Crossrail because of its regeneration benefits elsewhere in London. Lord Adonis, chairman of the Government's National Infrastructure Commission, whilst endorsing the project as a national priority and urging the Government to release funding for further development studies, indicated that further work was needed on the business case. The Chancellor allocated £80m for further studies as part of the Budget last month.

The project has become an issue in the forthcoming Mayoral election, with Zac Goldsmith endorsing Crossrail2 and Sadiq Khan saying that, if elected, he will review plans to build a station for Crossrail2 in Chelsea, as well as the option of a station at Imperial Wharf. ■



Picture: Michael Bach

Site of possible Crossrail station

Quietways: Cycling off the main roads

MICHAEL BACH

Chelsea is an ideal place to walk and cycle – as long as you don't have to fight the traffic in the main roads. Its compact, high-density layout means that most of its amenities are within easy reach – and it is flat! Using a car is as much a liability as a convenience – the popular places are difficult to find parking. So walking and cycling are convenient and quick.

Many people are put off cycling on the main roads, although they are seen as familiar and direct for some trips travelling east-west. But what if you need to go “cross-country” – you

could get lost or still have to face crossing main roads.

The Mayor of London and the Council have proposed a Quietway – a backstreet, cross-country route from Dovehouse Street to St Leonard's Terrace, via Cale Street, Elystan Place, Tryon Street, across King's Road to Royal Avenue and St Leonard's Terrace. To help cyclists cross both Sydney Street and the King's Road, raised crossings will be installed and Tryon Street would become a one-way street with no entry for cars from King's Road. This scheme is likely to be approved shortly. ■



Quietway routes for LBKC

Walking into the future

TERENCE BENDIXSON

Residents of Chelsea are great walkers. The reasons are partly cultural (How do I say it without being too snobbish? Can I get away with 'people like us' walk?), and partly to do with the physique of the Borough. Starting from anybody's front door there are, almost invariably, lots of useful destinations within walking distance. When I tell friends elsewhere that, living as I do in Elm Park Gardens, it is a short walk to three cinemas, three convenience stores (M&S, Tesco and Sainsbury), a post office, umpteen eating places, an underground station and a supermarket, they are flabbergasted.

Chelsea is also good for walking because, though there is too much traffic in the King's and Fulham Roads, they are narrow, relatively easy to cross and lined by decent pavements. Many back streets are less busy and visual delights.

But could conditions for walking be made better? Could we who live and work in Chelsea be persuaded to walk more and drive less? Can we find ways in which to celebrate the pleasures of walking?

I think we can assume that no one at the Town Hall is going to propose in the near future to change Sloane Square from being a traffic roundabout. But, might the Council change the paving in the King's Road opposite Duke of York Square, in front of Dovehouse Green and around Chelsea Green? Might they replace the asphalt with raised brick paving slightly ramped where it joined the ordinary roadway. The idea would be to tell drivers that they were entering somewhere slightly different - 'people places'?

Camillo Sitte, an early urbanist and Austrian architect, confronted by the uncrossable enormity of the Ringstrasse in *fin de siècle* Vienna, proposed to tame movement along the circular boulevard with great triumphal arches. (He was

thinking of monuments like the Wellington Arch at Hyde Park Corner.) Sitte reckoned that if such structures could be plonked down across the Ringstrasse this would both slow the traffic and convert bits of the road into squares or 'people places.'

So... what about placing lightweight variants of this idea in the King's Road at the thresholds of the extensions to Duke of York Square. An architectural competition and a modest budget might sort that out. I see, as one possibility, gleaming stainless steel arches that would be lit at night but something more classical is a possibility too. Such markers would be inappropriate for Chelsea Green but maybe something might also be done to signal the boundaries of the extension of Dovehouse Green.

So much for roadworks, what should be done about the halitosis of our beloved cars? The recent Volkswagen scandal has drawn attention to the damage that diesel soot does to our lungs but, whether an engine is petrol or diesel, it is a crude rule that the bigger the engine, the greater the volume of pollutants coming out of its exhaust pipes. Some of these emissions damage us, some contribute to climate change: either way the less the better.

Residents already pay varying amounts for their parking permits depending on engine size. What about loading an extra £500 onto permits for Chelsea Tractors and other vehicles of that power? Might that help to keep the tractors in their stables in Gloucestershire? The cost of other permits would be graded down to nothing for cars with electric batteries.

Could anything else be done to clean the air we inhale as we walk? What about expanding congestion charging out to the North and South Circulars, varying the rate by time of day (top charges in rush hours) and by engine size, and

allocating the proceeds to improved bus and tube services? With traffic running more smoothly, emissions per mile would go down and the buses would run more quickly. And given that congestion in places like Pinner and Bromley is awful, charging at a lower price could then be extended right out to the M25.

If this all seems ridiculous bear in mind the findings of Peter Jones, professor of transport at UCL. His recent research identifies four stages in thinking about travel in London. First came (and went) the 1960s motorway mania; realisation then dawned that it was more useful to improve bus and rail services and, finally, after 1995 Londoners saw a mix of congestion charging, cycleways, more room for walking (as in the Exhibition Road and in front of the National Gallery) and new undergrounds. Stage 4 is still to come and is likely to involve still more space for walkers and cyclists and may also involve driverless taxis.

I am sure that many residents will see this as wild fantasy but it can hardly be said that present arrangements work well. My life is made easy by my bicycle but I do hear from others an awful lot about traffic congestion. Would you solve that problem by, say, widening the King's Road? Might it not make greater sense to have more dependable bus services and better conditions for walking? That is certainly where policy is going.

PS. Finally here is good news about cycling. Not long ago I was, quite improperly, riding at night along the King's Road without lights. After passing another cyclist waiting to mount near Oakley Street, I stopped at Tesco's for milk. When I came out of the shop the same rider was standing by my bike. First she made me feel like a small boy for my lack of lights: then she told me she was 88. Ride on Chelsea! ■

Betty Woolf – Campaigner For Chelsea

MICHAEL BACH

The Chelsea Society has always had a campaigning side to its activities – there have always been battles to fight. Recently one of the Society's most redoubted campaigners, Betty Woolf, died on 29 December.

Betty twice led the fight to save the Lots Road area community from major road schemes, promoted first by the GLC and then a second by Government, she managed to persuade the Council to protect the area by declaring it a General Improvement Area, secured first the night ban on heavy lorries on the Earl's Court one-way System which led to the London-wide Night and Weekend Lorry Ban, she helped form the Ashburnham Community Centre and rescued the gates of Cremorne Gardens. Few people can claim such a legacy.

Betty moved to Chelsea in 1960 when her husband Jesmond was offered the GP practice at 21 Cremorne Road. Jesmond was the first GP in the Worlds End Health Centre and Betty acted as receptionist.

One of Betty's early achievements was to help to create the Ashburnham Community Centre.

The battle to save the Lots Road Area

In 1972 she helped fight the West Cross Route development at the public inquiry and prove that this was not a local relief road but major highway which would plough through the Lots Road area and destroy the Chelsea Embankment. This scheme was abandoned following the 1973 GLC elections.

After years of blight the Council wanted to demolish the World's End area south of Cremorne Road. Betty represented the Ashburnham Community Centre to oppose this at a public inquiry at Chelsea Town in August. Councillors did not realise that this was a working-class



Picture: Michael Bach

Cremorne Gate

area, so did not go away during August! To the fury of the officials it ran for twice the time they had allocated and it is the only time that the Council had lost such a public inquiry.

In 1976 Betty succeeded in persuading the Council to make the Lots Road Area a General Improvement Area, which saved the area from demolition. Between 1976 and 1988 much of the housing was rehabilitated and Westfield Park was created on the site of former

bomb damage to provide a new public open space.

West London Traffic Reform

So when I first met Betty in 1977/78, she already had several successful campaigns under her belt. It was Betty's idea to form an umbrella group to oppose the revival of this route and to tackle the traffic problems associated with the Earl's Court one-way System – originally designed to deal with

traffic congestion during the Ideal Home Exhibition in 1964. It had become a rat-run for heavy lorries driving through London. Betty and I, with help from volunteers from Response Community Projects, started a campaign for a night-time lorry ban on the one-way System. "Save Earl's Court – Ban the Juggernaut". It took us less than two years to achieve the ban - we were fortunate that the time was ripe.

Together we set up West London Traffic Reform (WLTR) – an umbrella group of some 40+ residents' groups led by Betty, May Maguire and myself, supported by Lesley Lewis and Hugh Krall from the Chelsea Society.

London Night and Weekend Lorry Ban – 1980-1986

Our next project was to get the commitment of the Labour Group on the Greater London Council to campaign for a London-wide night and weekend lorry ban, which they set about implementing after the 1981 GLC Elections. This led to a major inquiry led by Derek Wood QC but it was not until 1986, just before the GLC was abolished, that the London-wide night and weekend lorry ban came into effect. It still operates today.



Picture: Michael Bach

Lots Road - achieved Conservation Area status

WEIR – 1985-1990

Before we could celebrate, the Government decided to revive the motorway option – this time called the Western Environmental Improvement Route (WEIR) – following lobbying by RBKC. From 1985 to 1990 Chelsea had this project looming over it. WLTR took every opportunity to raise people's awareness, particularly at the local elections. By 1990 even the Council had realised that such a scheme was very unpopular and the coalition led by WLTR secured the support of the Council in opposing the scheme. Shortly before the 1990 Borough elections the Government decided to abandon the proposal.

WLTR then joined forces with West London RoadWatch to promote the

reopening of the West London Line for a local passenger service – which we achieved by 1995.

Cremorne Gates

The original Cremorne Gates, which now stand in the diminished Cremorne Gardens on the Embankment, owe their resurrection to her. Alec Froud, the local dustman and a patient of the practice, told her that after the brewery in Lots Road had been knocked down the gates were rotting in the dustyard near Chelsea Bridge. That was all she needed, the Council said they could not afford to repair them. She pointed out that the then Government was financing an apprentice training scheme. Today the gates look beautiful.

Betty was a member of the Chelsea Society Council from 1978 to 1985 and in 2002 she was one of the first to get the Mayor's Award.

Following Betty's success in saving the Lots Road Area, the Society asked for the Lots Road Area to become a conservation area – this has only recently been achieved.

She was an incredible woman and a wonderful, much missed and faithful friend. As one person said "people like her are thin on the ground these days." ■



Picture: Michael Bach

Chelsea Academy: Public Art

Hugh Krall's Riverside Exhibition:

29 September – 3 October

CAMILLA MOUNTAIN

It was only after a highly successful and lengthy career as an architect in private practice that Hugh Krall officially turned his talent to the artistic world. He enrolled in the printmaking class at Heatherley School of Fine Art as a part-time student and became fascinated by etching on copper, relief printing on wood, lino and MDF.

His draughtsmanship is extraordinary and it seems to come naturally to Krall, which explains why he so quickly became skilled in etching, engraving and relief printing. His subject matter was also a natural choice. In 1951, Krall and his wife bought a canal boat for a home and spent part of their honeymoon towing it to its Cheyne Walk mooring in front of Lindsey House. After a few years they moved to dry land: but not far. They made their home on the corner of Cheyne Walk, within sight of their original mooring and Krall's favourite location – the River Thames. His beautiful drawings are considered reminiscent of Whistler, but the outlines of boats, buildings and bridges could be drawn by no one else.

Having lived and drawn the river for over half a decade, Krall's vast catalogue is a detailed illustration of the changes that have happened on, and along the river in Chelsea. An extremely modest man, Krall rarely exhibits his work but was persuaded to allow the Society to exhibit 35 of his prints. A venue was sought and Cadogan came to the rescue and lent the temporarily unoccupied 43 Cadogan Gardens. Once stripped of its previous incarnation, it transformed into the perfect space and *The Changing River at Chelsea* was on display for six days at the end of September.

Krall is well known to all Chelsea Society members, not only as he was he Honorary Secretary for years, but also as

the artist behind the Society's greetings cards and as a designer for many of the exhibitions. As a result, a large number of members who came to study more of the beautiful, detailed drawings and to remember and reminisce about Battersea Flour Mills before Montevetro and before the demolition of the Morgan's Crucible Works. But the exhibition also attracted a whole raft of people who had never

known Hugh Krall. From Monday to Saturday 'The Gallery' was filled with people, most of whom spent a long time examining each work, such is the detail in Krall's work. It was a fabulous exhibition.

If you missed the Hugh Krall exhibition, it will be on display again at Heatherley School of Fine Art, Lots Road, from 3 to 13 May 2016. Full details will be sent out in future mailing. ■



Cadogan meets Hugh Krall

Apsley House Visit

21 October 2015

JOHN DONCASTER

On 21 October members of the Chelsea Society gathered at Apsley House, often known as Number One, London, perhaps the grandest address in the country. Apsley House is famous in its own right for its commanding position at Hyde Park Corner, but it is more generally known for its association with the hero of Waterloo, Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington.

The house dates from 1771, when Baron Apsley commissioned Robert Adam to build him a town house. In 1807 it was bought by Wellington's older brother, Richard, who nearly bankrupted himself by spending his fortune on the building. He was bailed out by his brother Arthur, on whom a grateful country had lavished many rewards, including a grant of £700,000 for him to build a place in the manner of Marlborough and Blenheim.

But Arthur decided that Number One, London, with suitable extensions and alterations, would do very well for someone of his status. So he engaged the younger Wyatt to expand the house. Then, in 1828, when he became Prime Minister, Wellington made further alterations and additions to elevate the house to show the pre-eminence of Britain and that of himself as head of state. The house became the town residence of the Iron Duke and a centre of the social and political life of London.

Following the death of Wellington in 1852, the second duke decided to open the house, so the public could see not only the house but the collection of treasures heaped on the 1st Duke, who had, in 1838, caused legislation to be drawn up to forbid any subsequent heir from disposing of any of the paintings, silver and other treasures. As a result the house is in many ways much as the 1st Duke left it.

In 1947, following the death of both the 5th Duke, and his heir the 6th Duke



No 1, London



Interior views, Apsley House

who died of battle wounds in World War II, Gerald, the 7th Duke, decided to offer the house to the nation, both as fitting memorial to the 1st Duke and as the logical place for a Wellington Museum. The house is now in the hands of English Heritage who maintain and staff the house. The Wellesley family, now headed by the 9th duke, however, still keep private apartments there. ■

Gillian Best's talk on Social Housing

26 October 2015, Chelsea Old Town Hall

TERENCE BENDIXSON

Chelsea has for many years, starting with philanthropists and then the Council, sought to provide houses for poorer residents. Gillian Best, a member of the Society's governing Council, and for many years a video and events producer, told this story to a packed audience at Chelsea Old Town Hall and then, in an inspired concluding moment, introduced several residents whom she had encountered while doing her research. Some of these 'real' Chelsea people then took part in the ensuing debate.

Gillian's research, commissioned by the Society and published on its website as 'From Hovel to Penthouse', began in 1753 when the death of Sir Hans Sloane led to the creation of the Cadogan estate and much aristocratic benevolence. Yet this did not, of course, save Chelsea from being, like so much of Victorian London, a place where poverty, overcrowding and disease afflicted huge numbers of people, attracted the outrage of reformers such as Charles Dickens, and in due course led to Bazalgette's sewers, the philanthropic housing movement and finally, after World War I, the empowering of local authorities to build houses for the poor.

It was Chelsea's good fortune that, in the period between 1870 and the

Great War, four remarkable men took it upon themselves to do something about the problems so vividly described by Dickens. Gillian showed portraits of William Sutton, haulier, Edward Guinness, heir to the brewing fortune, George Peabody, American businessman and Samuel Lewis, moneylender, all of whose housing estates can still be seen dotted about amongst Chelsea's modern-day, millionaire houses.

All were men with a social conscience. And all, before the days when socialist reformers had identified the state as a primary agency of welfare, set to work individually, via wills and bequests, to do something about overcrowding and poverty. And, as Gillian showed, with Chelsea's population rising from 11,604 in 1801, to 56,000 in 1851 and 74,000 in 1901, it was by the last date that overcrowding had become acute. As was reported in the muck-raking Chelsea Pick and Shovel of 1900, living five to six to a room was commonplace and even worse conditions could be found.

The rise of the Labour party, the shock of the First World War and the need to 'build homes for heroes' led to the beginning of the Council house era and, in due course, though not immediately, to the end of philanthropic housing. The

Samuel Lewis Trust, in particular, went on building after 1918.

In our time Gillian drew attention to how the 'right to buy' given to Council house tenants by Mrs Thatcher, led in Chelsea, in due course, to two former Council flats, with the Michelin Building next door and Stella McCartney's shop on the ground floor, being put on the market for a million pounds each in 2015.

Meanwhile, thanks to the strange obligation put on developers who build for the rich to provide 'affordable' housing as well, Kingsgate House (on the site of the former Penguin Books office in King's Road), which is run by Catalyst Housing Ltd, was able to offer two four-bedroom penthouses to tenants on the Borough Council's housing waiting list.

Gillian was, rightly in my view, unwilling to be drawn on the future for social housing in Chelsea, but she did stress how deeply impressed she was by Laura Johnson, the Council's director of housing. Here, she said, was a woman of vision, dedication and ability who, in addition to her work in K&C, chairs a London-wide committee of Borough directors of housing for City Hall. It was a good note on which to end. Had not Chelsea in the past benefitted particularly from individuals of vision and generosity? ■

The Royal Borough's Beacon

On Thursday 21 April the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea marked Her Majesty The Queen's 90th birthday by lighting a special beacon at the Royal Hospital Chelsea.

The borough's beacon joined over 1,000 others being lit up and down the country as part of a royal tradition.

The Mayor of the Royal Borough, Cllr

Robert Freeman, and the Governor of the Royal Hospital, General Sir Redmond Watt, were joined by Earl and Countess Cadogan, the Leader of the Council, Nick Paget-Brown, members of the Council and Chelsea Pensioners, who gathered to witness the Royal Hospital's Regimental Quartermaster, Sergeant Mark Smith, light the beacon. ■



Picture: RBKC

Who Would A Membership Secretary Be?

ALLAN KELLY

I think it was about two years ago, quite early one evening, when the phone rang disturbing the dog's slumber and interrupting my concentration on the crossword.

It was Sarah Farrugia – she of the sweet talking voice and dangerous persuasive chat. (Remember how she got John Simpson to become our President?).

Normally one needs a degree of introduction to approach a stranger. Not our Sarah. Both feet in having recognised him in a café. The poor man did not stand a chance – I know how he must have felt.

At least I had previously (stupidly) filled in a questionnaire in the newsletter so it was my own fault for the cold call. It asked for volunteers and an area of expertise. Well I thought I might do a spot of admin so duly ticked that box and posted it off. Hardly had it been delivered than I got the fatal phone call. "Would I be interested in becoming the Society's Membership Secretary?". I think not. This was not my idea of a spot of admin. The honeyed voice continued "probably about an hour a week". (Downright lies). Not difficult (more lies). "You would be perfect" (she did not know me from Adam). Realising she was not giving up I gave in.

So why me? Because - surprise surprise - there was nobody else!! Charming.

The job is anything but "an hour a week" more like an hour every day. This age of computers is supposed to make life simpler. Do not believe it. I am permanently surrounded by pieces of paper. Maybe I am doing something wrong or is it that I belong to that pre computer generation? And as for Twitter and Titter get it.

There is of course a certain satisfaction in collecting and organising membership details if you are that type of sad person!

My database is a work of art. Chasing members who forget to renew their subscriptions is almost an obsession. (Now that we only take renewals by direct debits my life will be empty in January). Nothing on television? Then spend a fascinating evening trying to claim Gift Aid from the Inland Revenue. Only they could make a simple process so complex that you wonder if life is worth living. I console myself that I am not involved with Health and Safety, which I am told, is a true nightmare. I have a worrying feeling it could be on its way.

Although only an admin role it is fascinating being a member of the Council and hearing arguments for and against contentious issues facing Chelsea. At the end of the day I feel I am doing a useful job. Of course I am because the sweet-talking, honeyed voice tells me so! ■

Treasurer Wanted

You may be aware we are looking for a new Treasurer to run the financial accounts for the Society. This will suit someone who is good with numbers and has an interest in financial budgeting and raising funds for us. We have a strong system in place so it will be easy to take over and can take just a few hours a week. If you are interested in finding out more about this important role then please email Hon Secretary on HonSecretary@chelseasociety.org.uk ■



Blue Plaques for Women

English Heritage has decided to increase the number of women that are recognised by Blue Plaques. Only 13% of London's Blue Plaques celebrate the lives of women – but Chelsea, always ahead of the curve, has 14 out of 51 Blue Plaques to women – 27%.

To mark Women's History month this March, English Heritage is seeking nominations for women who should be commemorated.

Is there anyone you would like to nominate more women for a Blue Plaque? If so, contact:

plaques@english-heritage.org.uk

For details how to nominate look at:

<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/blue-plaques/propose-a-plaque/>

New Blue Plaque

Samuel Beckett (1906-1989): The Irish Nobel Prize-winning playwright and author lived in London for three years in the mid-1930s during which time he was seeking literary work, and attending psychoanalysis at the Tavistock Clinic. The plaque will mark the house, 48 Paultons Square, where Beckett was staying in 1934 when his first full-length work, a collection of interlinked short stories called *More Pricks than Kicks*, was published, and his lodging and living experiences of London were beginning to form his ideas for his first novel, *Murphy* (1938). ■



Princess Seraphine Astafieva – ballet dancer – The Pheasantry, 152 King's Road

Dorothy Bland (Mrs Jordan) – actress – 30 Cadogan Place

Evelyn de Morgan – artist – 127 Old Church Street

George Eliot – author – 4 Cheyne Walk

Mrs Elizabeth Gaskell – novelist – 93 Cheyne Walk

Joyce Grenfell – entertainer and writer – 34 Elm Park Gardens

Lillie Langtry – actress – 21 Pont Street

Jennie Lee – politician – 23 Clivedon Place

Dame Maud McCarthy – Army Matron in Chief - 47 Markham Square

Sylvia Pankhurst – suffragette campaigner – 120 Cheyne Walk

Jean Rhys – writer – 22 Paultons House, Paultons Square

Dame Sybil Thorndyke – actress – 6 Carlyle Square

Elisabeth Welch – singer – Ovington Court, Ovington Gardens

Jane Francesca, Lady Wilde – poet and essayist – 87 Oakley Street

Picture: English Heritage



Jean Rhys Blue Plaque 22 Paultons House

Dates for your Diary

Dates:

Exhibition: Hugh Krall's pictures Heatherley School of Art **3-13 May**

Election for Mayor of London and the Greater London Assembly **5 May**

Chelsea Society Exhibition "Royal Chelsea", Duke of York Square **13-25 June**

European Union Referendum **23 June**

Summer Meeting **12 July**

Doggett's Coat and Badge Race: Chelsea Embankment **20 July**

Cricket match Chelsea Society v Chelsea Arts Club, Burton Court **7 September**

Anniversaries In 2016

950th: Battle of Hastings (14 October)

400th: Death of Shakespeare (23 April) The Globe Theatre

350th: Fire of London: "Fire! Fire!" Museum of London (From 23 July) <http://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/london-wall/whats-on/exhibitions-displays/fire-fire>

300th: Capability Brown: Year of the English Garden

150th: Founding of London's Blue Plaque Scheme

150th: Birth of Beatrix Potter

125th: Chelsea Arts Club: <http://chelseaartsclub.com/home-public/history/>

50+ Rolling Stones: Exhibitionism: the Rolling Stones at Saatchi Gallery from 5 April to 4 September stonesexhibitionism.com

Get in Touch

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 simply stating 'this is my address' and giving your name.

We would like everyone's email address so we can alert you when we need your support. If you have not yet done so please send your email address to Allan Kelly at membership@chelseasociety.org.uk

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www.chelseasociety.org.uk

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