



No. 44

# CHELSEA SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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## Queen's Head – Closed *End of an Era?*

MICHAEL BACH

The Queen's Head in Tryon Street closed on 13 September – its future as a community pub is now threatened.

The Society helped see off a previous scheme by the same developer to convert the pub into housing, by supporting the Council's refusal when the applicant appealed. The appeal was dismissed because of its importance to the local community, especially residents of the Sutton Estate, as well as to a London-wide gay community. For both groups other local gastropubs were not an alternative – they did not feel comfortable.

The freeholder is now trying again, but this time proposes to "retain a public house on the site", although it would be "substantially refurbished" – it would

become yet another Chelsea gastropub.

The Society has recently met the agents for the developer and seen plans, which would involve reducing the ground floor area of the pub, converting the basement to include a dining room, but splitting off the upper floors as flats, including an additional floor.

The Society is concerned that this plan could reduce the potential viability of the pub. More importantly, however, if the intention were to drive it upmarket, it would no longer meet the needs of its current patrons – the local community.

The Queen's Head has served the local community since 1840 – could this be the end of the road? Let's save the Queen's Head!!

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/savethequeensheadchelsea>  
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Picture: Michael Bach



The Queen's Head

# Planning Report

MICHAEL STEPHEN

The period since the last Newsletter has been a busy time for the Planning Committee. Here are summaries of the main points. More detail can be found on the Society's website at [www.chelseasociety.org](http://www.chelseasociety.org)

## Royal Brompton Hospital

The Royal Brompton has made a three-part planning application, on which the Society's position is as follows:

- We are aware that some of the hospital buildings are no longer fit for purpose, and that there is no grant funding available for the proposed works.
- We would have liked to see evidence of cooperation with the Royal Marsden for the redevelopment of the whole of the land owned by the two hospitals and their Institutions by stages, building on synergies between the two hospitals who could share facilities – and not a piecemeal development by the Brompton alone.
- We believe that the open spaces of Chelsea are fundamental to its character. They are the places where it is possible to see the sky and listen to the birds in the heart of London. One of those open spaces is the Chelsea Farmers' Market and garden centre, but the proposals by the Brompton would turn the whole of this large space into a massive block of "luxury" flats, fronting directly onto Sydney Street and would turn the street into an urban canyon unless set back with open space in front.
- The proposal to build luxury flats would mean the permanent loss of this substantial piece of land for hospital purposes.
- The Royal Brompton owns a very large building on Dovehouse Street, which used to be the nurses' home. We are not

satisfied that this could not be modified for clinical use instead of building on open space.

- It is proposed to construct a new building fronting Dovehouse Street, between the former nurses' home and the former Chelsea Women's Hospital. This could have two storeys above ground and two below, with open space at each end, thus making better use of the available land.
- The proposed hospital building would intrude upon the setting of the Grade I listed St. Luke's Church opposite, and would cast shadow over its gardens in the evening. There is a case for providing more space in the building underground and less space above ground.
- The new block of flats proposed on Sydney Street would be unlikely to provide homes for local people, as they would be sold to the very rich, often from foreign countries. There are too many such developments in Chelsea and not enough housing for local people. Although the profit from the flats would be used for hospital purposes, the new block of flats would contain no affordable or social housing.
- The proposed architecture of the hospital building and the flats is not good enough for the heart of Chelsea. A careful balance is needed to create buildings which are dignified in their own right but do not upstage St. Luke's Church.
- We have doubts about the financial viability of the project. Permission could be granted for residential but the hospital extension might not be built.
- We have since had a meeting with the architects and property consultants acting for the Royal Brompton Hospital, and the Chairman of the Chelsea Society has attended meetings of the Community Liaison Group set up by the

Royal Brompton. The Society will make a detailed comment on the planning applications in due course.

## RBKC Council Meeting re Crossrail2

On 29 June the Council heard a petition presented by Mr Chris Lenon on behalf of more than 1,500 petitioners. The meeting was attended by many members of the Chelsea Society, one of whom wrote to the Leader of the Council as follows:

*"Chris Lenon's presentation was followed by eight - or was it nine - Councillors, some of whom over the next 50 minutes impugned Mr Lenon's integrity, accusing him of scaremongering and being economical with the truth. At the end of it Mr Lenon was given no chance to refute any of the allegations made against him."*

## Letter to Greg Hands MP re Crossrail

On 13 July I wrote to Greg Hands commenting on the letter he had received from Mike Brown MVO, Commissioner of Transport for London. I said that the Chelsea Society fully supports Crossrail 2, but the crucial issue for us is whether the route from Clapham Junction to Victoria should or should not be diverted so as run under Chelsea with a station in the King's Road, and if so, what impact it would have on the character of Chelsea and its quality of life.

I reminded him that The Society has set out on its website at <http://chelseasociety.org.uk/response-to-tfl-consultation-crossrail2/> its reasons for opposing a station on the Kings Road, and for those reasons we ask for his support as our MP.

I made a number of specific points in response to the letters from Mr Hands and Mr Brown and the full correspondence is on the Society's website under Crossrail.

## Crossrail – Housing

On 11 July I wrote to Graham Stallwood, Executive Director of Planning and Borough Development at RBKC as follows:

*“On 14 June 2016 you said at the London Real Estate Forum that a Crossrail2 station in the King’s Road would generate 3,500 new dwellings. We do not see how this could be done and would be grateful if you could explain this figure and indicate where they would be built.”* Mr Stallwood replied that he had said that “Crossrail 2 could support the delivery of up to 3,500 homes over 40 years. This equates to an average of 87 per year within a 2km diameter centred on the proposed station.” He continued, “Many of these may of course occur irrespective of whether Crossrail 2 has a station in Chelsea.”

It seems therefore that the delivery of 87 dwellings per year could not be regarded as a benefit from a Crossrail station in the King’s Road, and is in any event far from sufficient to justify spending a billion pounds on it.

## Natural History Museum

The Museum wish to create a public open space at the corner of Exhibition Road and Cromwell Road with a museum shop and café beneath and an additional connection to the London Underground pedestrian tunnel. The tower adjoining the south-eastern corner of the 1970s building on Exhibition Road would be removed.

They also wish to provide disabled access to the main entrance, and to create a new garden on the western and south-western parts of the Museum grounds. The gate at the south-west corner of the grounds would be opened to allow visitor access through the garden to a new door in the western wall of the modern Darwin Wing, to relieve congestion at the main entrance.

I visited the Museum on 12 July and discussed the proposals with them. I

see no objection in principle to the proposals. I discussed in particular concerns expressed by members about potential damage to the existing wildlife garden on the south-western side of the grounds. Planning permission was granted 26 July.

## Sloane Street

On 15 June I was invited by Cadogan to discuss ideas proposed by them and RBKC for improving the streetscape of Sloane Street, and on 14 July I walked the whole length of the street with Cadogan’s Chief Executive, Hugh Seaborn.

However, the proposals do not mention the issue which causes most concern to local people, namely the traffic jams at the northern end of the street where it joins Knightsbridge. All too often the northbound traffic tails back as far as Hans Crescent and even beyond, and it is much quicker to walk than to stay on the bus.

Other issues discussed were - Width of pavements and narrowing the road; raised carriageways at the junctions with side streets, appearance of pavements, and street furniture.

## Residents’ Parking

I have written to RBKC about the removal of residents’ cars while residents’ parking bays are suspended. Notices of suspension will be displayed five days before the suspension takes effect.

## Repeat Planning Applications

On 20 May I wrote to the Executive Director of Planning and Borough Development at RBKC to say that it had become common for applicants for planning permission to make applications in rapid succession for the same or a similar development. This makes it difficult for local people, who cannot be expected to be aware of them all and to write to the Council every time a new application is made. It is also an unreasonable burden for the Council’s planning staff. ■

*Other Issues dealt with since the last newsletter, and reported on our website, include:*

## Launderettes

The Council is using the Article 4 process to ensure that planning permission will still be required for such change of use to housing.

## Sloane Square Station

Refurbishment will be done in the Spring of 2017 (before the Chelsea Flower Show)

## Former John Lewis Clearings

Planning permission has been granted for the redevelopment of the site between Draycott Avenue, Denyer Street, and Mossop Street.

## Telecom Masts:

I wrote to RBKC to say that the streetscape is an important amenity of Chelsea, and that long views and attractive rooftops should be preserved.

**A Planning Roundtable was held by RBKC to discuss the process by which the Local Plan is developed, having regard to the London Plan, the National Planning Policy Framework and the Housing & Planning Act 2016. We also discussed the Council’s policy for enforcing planning control, having regard to the NPPG on Effective Enforcement. ■**

# Further development in the Lots Road area

MARTYN BAKER

Despite it being the only Employment Zone in Chelsea, the Council appear intent on packing more, largely residential accommodation into the area between Lots Road and West London Line, although the Power Station site is due to create 420 homes on the RBKC side and 297 on the Fulham side.

## Extra Care Housing on Car Pound site

Early last year Lots Village's Residents' Association responded positively to RBKC's Extra Care Housing proposal to create around 55 flats plus communal facilities on the RBKC-owned car pound site, because this would improve Chelsea's social infrastructure, provided that low-rise/high-quality design is made to harmonise with Lots Village Conservation Area. This May residents were told RBKC's Cabinet had authorised work to start on delivering this affordable extra care housing for the elderly, and to "explore the further potential of the [Pound] site, including possible partnerships with owners of adjoining sites – to build new homes as part of a mixed-use development that could also see new shops and business space added." At present the creation of new homes in the employment zone is contrary to the Council's Local Plan, but the report says that a review of the Local Plan has begun and "includes consideration of employment and housing policies with a new Local Plan envisaged for adoption in 2017".

## Housing vs Employment

The Director of Corporate Property Services' letter referred to "the chronic housing shortage currently afflicting London" and to "the Council's public

commitment to help address this crisis by building new homes on land it owns." It made no mention of the status of the Employment Zone as providing protected employment space nor of the need to create extra workspace for London's fast growing population. His Executive Decision Report for Cabinet on 21 July reveals it had already approved in May the purchase of 61-69 Lots Road (commercial premises adjacent to the Pound), because "the landowner of 71-73 Lots Road no longer wishes to enter into a collaboration agreement and instead wishes to dispose of their property". His Report seeks approval to acquire this current employment space to "provide an excellent opportunity to deliver wider development of the larger site." (Behind these properties RBKC has a freehold interest in an open storage yard alongside the West London Line.)

Having made this further acquisition there will be a strong temptation to press for a dense, largely residential redevelopment of this area (immediately adjacent to the Conservation Area) at the expense of more local jobs/workspace, even though "the power to purchase is only exercisable where the development... is likely to contribute to the achievement of one or more of the following objectives: the promotion or improvement of the economic, social and environmental well-being of the area. The report only talks about supporting a key objective of providing additional affordable extra-care housing as a justification for the acquisition to "enable the Council to deliver a more comprehensive, effective and financially-viable redevelopment scheme". It asserts "the preferred route, subject to planning, presents an opportunity for the Council

to benefit from both capital receipts and long-term investment income to support front-line services." In view, however, of the asking price of £50m for sale of the Thamesbrook site (according to the Evening Standard), it would appear such proceeds should be more than sufficient to build extra-care housing on the Pound site without needing any cross-subsidy from overdevelopment of the adjacent site.

## Fulham Gas Works site



The Conservation Area is now threatened by the proposal to build four skyscrapers across the tracks as part of the dense, 1,375 unit housing development on the Fulham Gasworks site, the tallest of which at 27 storeys being directly behind, and therefore towering over, the planned extra-care homes on the Pound site. The Society has objected to this planning application, as has the Royal Borough, on grounds of the likely impact of a cluster of tall buildings on nearby conservation areas as well as on the townscape. The decision rests with LBH&F and the Mayor of London. ■

# George House, Sloane Street: The new boy on the block

TERENCE BENDIXSON

Expensive shops and money managers are moving in at George House, the Cadogan Estate's latest Sloane Street building. The new building sits diagonally across from Sedding's Holy Trinity and is named after the 5th Earl who oversaw the building of much of red brick Victorian Chelsea.

George House is in three parts: the Sloane Street block, clad mainly in pink Dumfries sandstone, is composed of

managers, who occupy the offices upstairs. Children who discover them will be thrilled. Each one weighs over two tons.

At the time when Cadogan was seeking planning permission it seemed to me that architects Stiff + Trevillion's had designed the Sloane Street façade to emphasise its size. The result was a battleship moored amongst corvettes and



Picture: Michael Bach

repetitive rows of windows set in flat angled bows; the back, in Pavilion Road, consists of a group of gabled shops and a separate restaurant, and is built of two different types of brick with floral iron gates between; the bricks and stone all relate in some way to older buildings nearby, while the gates give on to a very inviting palm-planted courtyard.

Back in Sloane Street, two rare 200-year old teak elephants from Udaipur stand benignly by the door in the office foyer. They are manikins or clothes horses for a maharaja's hunting armour and are there to welcome visitors to Marshall Wace, asset

destroyers and therefore domineering and unneighbourly.

Self-importance would have suited a church or a town hall but for an office block on top of shops modesty would have been more appropriate. Indeed had Mike Stiff used the shop fronts and the floors above them to give shape to the façade, if he had divided it boldly into a row of distinct, narrow bays, it would have made no difference to the offices but created a good neighbour. Around the back, in Pavilion Road, he went for that kind of scale and variety and very nice it is too. ■

## Ward Reports

Ward Representatives on the Planning Committee have reported on the following subjects:

### Stanley Ward - Patrick Baty

- 24 Gunter Grove
- 35 Carlyle Square
- Thamesbrook site in Dovehouse Street

### Royal Hospital Ward - Chris Lenon

- Sloane Street – see above
- Christ Church Chelsea – application for solar panels on roof

### Hans-Brompton Ward Paul Aitkenhead

- John Lewis Clearings – see above
- 60 Sloane Avenue
- Sloane Street and the Natural History Museum (see above).

### Chelsea Riverside Ward – Martyn Baker

- Maximising river transport
- Riley's Pub in the King's Road
- Lots Road Power Station site,
- National Grid Forum - compensation for loss of business while King's Road remains shut westbound
- Chelsea Football Club's Stadium
- Cremorne Wharf Community Liaison Group
- Chelsea Academy

# Pubs – *survival at a price*

Despite the Society's 2012 successes in saving the Cross Keys, the Phene and the Queen's Head, our pubs are still under threat from being cannibalised by developers – stripping away the upper-floor residential space and first-floor dining room, kitchen, function room or billiards room. This is done to "reconfigure" the pub to make it more financially viable. In practice it strips out community facilities, whilst changing the use to a high-value housing.

**Cross Keys:** Since it was not listed, the staircase from the ground-floor pub to the first-floor function room was quickly removed before the application was made to convert the building's upper floors to housing and to add a storey, whilst proposing to move the function room to the basement under the rear extension. The flats have been developed – the function room never materialised. The presence of the function room was part of what helped win the appeal against conversion to a "mansion" – due to its value to the community.

**Water Rat:** This former pub – on the corner of King's Road and Milman Street – was converted into a restaurant, which included a dining room on the first floor. The recent conversion has resulted in the loss of the first-floor dining room as part of the upper-floor conversion to flats.

**Le Colombier:** This former pub became a much-loved restaurant. Then a developer wanted to change the use of the first-floor dining room to a flat and to add a further storey. The Council refused this scheme, which went to appeal and was dismissed, because of its likely impact on the viability of the restaurant. ■

# Tall buildings are just not Chelsea!

MICHAEL BACH

Chelsea has largely escaped the plague of tall buildings started by Ken Livingstone, but really promoted by Mayor Boris Johnson and, especially Deputy Mayor Ed Lister (former Leader of Wandsworth) who was a major promoter of tall buildings.

Looking back, however, the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, its predecessor, Chelsea Metropolitan Borough, and the Chelsea Society have fought successive waves of tall buildings, but unfortunately many of these decisions have been overruled by higher authorities, such as the Government and, since 2000, by the Mayor of London. The history of these attacks is below:

## 1960-70: An attack from the North:

**Hilton Hotel, Park Lane, Westminster (1961)** was called in and granted by Harold Macmillan's Government (1959), despite opposition from Royal Fine Art Commission (RFAC).

**Carlton Tower Hotel, Cadogan Place, Chelsea:** Permission granted 1959 (1961)  
**Knightsbridge Barracks, Knightsbridge, Westminster (1970)** Crown development – imposed by Government.

**Holiday Inn Cromwell Road Kensington:** 1971 dominates the view north from Battersea Bridge

**World's End Estate, Chelsea (1969-77)** 7 tower blocks – dominate the Chelsea's riverside

## 1990-2000: Assault from South West:

Chelsea Harbour, Hammersmith & Fulham, allowed two weeks before the 1986 local elections by the outgoing administration.  
**Montevetro, next to St Mary's Church, Battersea:** opposed by the Society and



Picture: Michael Bach

### Knightsbridge Barracks

called in and allowed by Secretary of State (John Gummer)

## 2000-2015: Assault from within, from East and North West

**Lots Road Power Station (aka Chelsea Waterfront)** included towers 27 and 36 storeys high designed by Terry Farrell,



Picture: Michael Bach

**World's End Estate**

opposed by Society, persuaded RBKC to refuse it, but appeal actively supported by Ken Livingstone, recommended to be dismissed by Inspector, but overturned by Secretary of State John Prescott in 2006. Work has not started on the tower in Chelsea.

### **Vauxhall Tower, One St George**

**Wharf:** Lambeth: (2010) 50 storeys, 181m/594ft tall.

Following advice from the Government's architectural body, the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment, two planning applications were submitted and subsequently withdrawn. A final decision was made by Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott in 2005, and the tower was approved, against the recommendation of the planning inspector and despite warnings from his own advisers that it "could set a precedent

for the indiscriminate scattering of very tall buildings across London". This has been the subject of considerable controversy, owing to the tower's height and its proximity to the Palace of Westminster. Nominated in 2014 for Building Design's Carbuncle Cup – it achieved second place. This building now dominates the down river view from Albert Bridge.



Picture: Michael Bach

**Montevetro, Battersea**

## Since 2010

### **Vauxhall/Nine Elms/Battersea**

Since then a whole wall of buildings, some taller than the Vauxhall Tower, have been permitted as part of the Vauxhall/Nine Elms/Battersea Opportunity Area Planning Framework produced by GLA, Wandsworth and Lambeth on 2008. The height guidelines have been extensively breached and when completed largely due to the relaxed attitude taken by the GLA/Mayor of

London over the last 5 years.

### **Earl's Court/West Kensington**

RBKC/LBH&F: Following the adoption of the Earl's Court/West Kensington Opportunity Area Planning Framework, produced by the GLA, the former administration in Hammersmith and Fulham and RBKC, the developers, Capco, was given permission for two more tall buildings to rival the Empress State Building. They are now seeking to intensify the development.

Fulham Gas Works, Imperial Road: (Hammersmith & Fulham) A planning application is now before LBH&F for a major development including four tall buildings, of 27, 18, 17 and storeys respectively. For such a remote site the scale and density of development would be contrary to the London Plan density and tall building policies.

## Prospects

A lot of damage has been done just beyond Chelsea's boundaries but this is still felt in Chelsea, especially since successive Secretaries of State and Mayors of London have failed to protect the Thames. The legacy of the last two Mayors of London is very visible. It is hoped that the new Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, will listen more closely to what residents, communities and local authorities want. These tall buildings on our doorstep is not a vision that anyone in Chelsea ever voted for. ■



Picture: Michael Bach

**Vauxhall Tower**

# Chelsea Riverside Report: 25 Years On

MICHAEL BACH

In 1991 the Society was very concerned about the state of the Chelsea Embankment. The Royal Borough had taken over responsibility for its maintenance five years earlier when the Greater London Council was abolished.

In order to encourage the Royal Borough to take action, the Society produced a critical report itemising the problems and suggesting improvements.



Picture: Michael Bach

Memorial Drinking Fountain

## Improvements achieved

Among the improvement sought and achieved were the complete cleaning of the listed Embankment, repair and replacement of the “sphinx” benches sponsored by members of the Society, the “completion” of the run of “dolphin” lighting columns on the Embankment Wall – we persuaded the Council to add a further 11 lamp standards toward Chelsea Bridge, relaying the Yorkstone paving, and some

of the monuments were restored. It was an extremely successful outcome, which is commemorated by a plaque in the pavement.

One of the key challenges, and one that has not yet been overcome, has been the user-friendliness of the pedestrian crossings at the bridgeheads, especially at Albert Bridge.

We have waited patiently for most of the last 25 years for the completion of Crosby Hall – at last, after years of “temporary” barriers, the railings along the riverside have been completed.

A major change was the introduction of cycling along the Embankment. Whilst causing some concern at the time, it is now an established shared pedestrian/cyclist route.

Repairing the monuments has been taken up by the Council, most recently the restoration of the Sparkes Memorial Drinking Fountain on the Embankment outside Chelsea Old Church, with funding from Transport for London.



Picture courtesy: Wikipedia

**Fredrick Brown, *An Impromptu Dance: A Scene on the Chelsea Embankment 1883***

Finally, one of the glories of Chelsea Riverside is our Bridges – Chelsea, Albert and Battersea Bridges. The Council has a continuing programme of painting and lighting the first two of these iconic bridges.

Twenty-five years on we still need to improve the pedestrian crossings and restore the Grade II-listed cabmen’s shelter just to the west of Albert Bridge. This could be a project for the Society to mark the 25th Anniversary of the Society’s Riverside Report. ■



Picture: Michael Bach

Cabmen’s Shelter, Embankment

# Chelsea is the brand being devalued?

MICHAEL BACH

Given the current, or is it a perennial concern about the changing character of Chelsea, it is worth looking at what we associate with Chelsea, what carries its name, and the degree to which people have tried to cash in on its "brand" - its reputation.

## Historic Associations

What has carried the Chelsea name over the years has changed from the "village of palaces" along the river, Chelsea institutions such as the Chelsea Old Church (13th century), the Chelsea Physic Garden (1673), the Royal Hospital Chelsea (1692) and its Chelsea pensioners, Chelsea Arts Club (1891), Chelsea Flower Show (1912), the Chelsea Westminster Hospital (formerly St Stephen's Hospital), and most recently the Chelsea Academy (2010).

Other landmarks include the Chelsea Embankment (1874), Chelsea Bridge (1858), Chelsea Cloisters and the Chelsea Potter (it was the Commercial Tavern until renamed in 1956 after the William De Morgan Chelsea Arts Pottery), but they do all have a legitimate association with Chelsea.

Some places not actually in Chelsea have adopted the name – Chelsea Football Club (1905) and Chelsea Harbour (1986-) both in Fulham, and Chelsea Barracks (Westminster).

## Chelsea as a "brand"

More recently the name has been hijacked as a marketing tool for Chelsea Waterfront (Lots Road Power Station) and Chelsea

Island (the peninsula just over Chelsea Creek on the Fulham side) and Chelsea Creek which is a development in Fulham.

Chelsea is also associated with commercial products, such as the Chelsea Bun (early 18th century), Chelsea boots (early 19th century but not named Chelsea boots until 1950s), Chelsea Pottery (1952-1994), Chelsea Girl (1970s shop) and the Chelsea tractor (early 2000s). All of these contribute to the multi-faceted image of Chelsea.

Finally, the ultimate hijacking of the brand must be "Made in Chelsea" – a Channel 4 "reality drama follows the lives and loves of a group of socially elite twenty-somethings, who live in some of London's most exclusive postcodes."

So, when you think of the character of Chelsea which, if any, of these "brands" do you associate with it? Are we happy with the image it conveys? ■



Channel 4's 'Made in Chelsea' – The Chelsea brand hijacked



Lots Road Power Station – Now 'Chelsea Waterfront'



is this the 'Chelsea logo'

# Lectures:

## *History of the Chelsea Arts Club*

29 February

DAVID LE LAY

On 29 February Geoffrey Matthews, Secretary of the Chelsea Arts Club gave the second of the Society's late winter lectures. There was a packed audience in the Small Hall of Chelsea Town Hall that included the Mayor and Mayoress of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, Councillor Robert Freeman and Mrs Freeman, and also the Chairman of the Chelsea Arts Club, Mark Wood. The subject of the talk was the history of the Chelsea Arts Club which this year celebrates its 125th anniversary.

David Le Lay, Hon. Vice-President of the Society and also a Club member for many years, introduced Mr Matthews, who has been Chief Executive Officer of the Club, known as the Club Secretary, for two and a half years. The title of his talk was a reference to one of the earliest decisions of the founding members of the Club – that the proposed club should be 'Bohemian in character'.

As part of its centenary celebrations in 1991, a history of the Chelsea Arts Club, titled *Artists and Bohemians*, was written by Tom Cross and published by Quiller Press (now out of print). Although an excellent history, much more has since been discovered about the Club's early history, thanks largely to the Club's archivist, Stephen Bartley, and Geoffrey Matthews was able to draw upon these discoveries in his talk. He gave us an essentially personal view of the Club and its fascinating history. His talk fell into four sections – Formation of the Club, the Clubhouse, Chelsea Arts Club Balls and - for him the most important – the people who have made the Club what it is today. Some of those he mentioned, showing not just paintings or photographs of them but also examples of their work, were Stirling Lee (the first Chairman of the Club) J.M. Whistler, James Christie, Frank Brangwyn, Percy Jacob Hood, Phil May and Freddie Deane.



Picture: Nicka Garrett

**Mrs Freeman, David Le Lay, Mayor Councillor Robert Freeman, Geoffrey Matthews**

His history of the famous Chelsea Arts Club Balls that were held, firstly at Covent Garden Opera House and then at the Royal Albert Hall, was both perceptive and succinct. These balls are now held at

the Clubhouse in Old Church Street, twice a year, when the façade of the building becomes, for a short while, the 'blank canvas' for an artwork linked to the theme of the Ball. These decorative schemes have become so much a part of the London art scene that a blind eye is turned to them by both the Club's neighbours and the authorities.

Questions after the talk revealed that the Club's membership now stands at 3,800 (as opposed to 150 at its foundation) of whom 70% are practicing artists, 1,500 live outside London and about 400 live overseas. David Le Lay thanked Mr Matthews for his illuminating talk which was received with enthusiastic acclamation. ■

## *The Duke of Wellington at Apsley House*

4 April 2016

JOHN DONCASTER

As a follow-up to the visit of the Chelsea Society to Apsley House last October, Alexander Allin spoke to a full house in the Chelsea Town Hall on 4 April 2016. His theme was not the battle of Waterloo which had been extensively dealt with during the year, but, rather, "Wellington at Apsley House", which covered the social circle in which the Duke moved and his life as Prime Minister. He also spoke in detail about how the house had changed over the years.

Apsley House was originally built as the westernmost of several grand houses fronting on Piccadilly. If you had come through the Knightsbridge tollgate on your arrival from the country, Apsley House was the first house you would come to, hence its popular address as No 1 London. Built by Robert Adam in the late 17th century, it was bought in 1807 by Richard Wellesley, Wellington's elder brother, as his town house, which he maintained

for several years until financial problems forced him to sell it to his now more famous brother in 1817.

As a suitable residence for a recently ennobled national hero Apsley House could hardly be bettered, but Wellington wanted to make the house even grander. He commissioned Benjamin Dean Wyatt to add a major extension to the north which included a State Dining Room. When he became Prime Minister in 1828 he felt that the house should be further improved and he added to it yet again. The house became the centre of the social and political life of London.

One of the features of Apsley House of which Wellington was proudest was his collection of paintings. Many of these had originally come into the Duke's hands as loot from the Battle of Vitoria in the Peninsular War, after they had been seized from Joseph Bonaparte's baggage train. However, since some of these had

► been “liberated” from the Spanish Royal Collection Wellington thought it fitting to return them to the King of Spain, who promptly did the equally noble thing by presenting them back to Wellington. The collection is particularly notable for

its collection of 17th and 18th century northern European artists.

We are very grateful to Alexander Allin for giving us such an excellent lecture which illustrated so many aspects of the Duke’s life and times.

His extensive knowledge of his subject, both the historical detail and the amusing anecdotes, made the evening a fascinating one. ■

# Chelsea Society’s 2016 Exhibition: Royal Chelsea: 13-26 June

DAMIAN GREENISH

The biennial Society Exhibition for 2016 was Royal Chelsea. It was not a difficult choice, not least for a borough whose main artery is the King’s Road. As with our Great War exhibition in 2014, the venue was Duke of York Square and over the two weeks, more than two and a half thousand people came to see the very regal history of Chelsea.

The display started with the Mercian king, King Offa, who had a palace in Chelsea and is the reason that Chelsea can boast more synods than most London boroughs. It also included Elizabeth I romping in Cheyne Walk and Prince Charles cavorting in Duke of York Square: a gaggle of royal mistresses: a colony of royal artists and a doctrine of royal physicians.

The exhibition was wonderfully supported by Chelsea residents. Approximately 35% of visitors lived within the postcodes of Chelsea and another 35% travelled from only a short bus ride away. The rest of the UK and the world beyond accounted for our other visitors. The comments written in the visitors’ book give the clearest endorsement of the success of the exhibition; nobody who visited went away without learning something new. The exhibition seemed to score a particular hit with the children. We handed out quizzes, the answers to which were all somewhere on the boards. In total, just under 100 children filled in the quiz, and it was not easy. It generally took each child about 45 minutes to find the answers and their only reward was satisfaction



Picture: Michael Bach

and a Chelsea Society pencil. The history teachers of Chelsea should be proud of the interest levels of their pupils.

Talking of pupils, the choir of the Hampshire school came and performed God Save the Queen. Not only were they watched by parents and visitors to the exhibition, they were saluted by a trio of Chelsea Pensioners. We hosted a Royal Hospital Day when In-Pensioners, resplendent in their familiar, scarlet uniforms, chatted with all our visitors while guarding the Sovereign’s Mace.

With a continuing emphasis on youth, teenage police cadets handing out flyers outside Sloane Square tube station made an appreciable difference to our marketing. Many a Chelsea tourist was spotted clutching a flyer as they entered the marquee. The impact of using social media as a marketing tool was also well demonstrated.

Our sincerest thanks are due to the

Chairman of the Exhibition Committee Camilla Mountain and the members of her Committee for their tireless hard work and dedication in organising, preparing and mounting the exhibition. Particular thanks are also due to the Cadogan Estate, who not only allowed us the use of the running track at Duke of York Square to stage the exhibition, but were also one of our major sponsors, along with Sloane Stanley, Pemberton Greenish and Martin’s Properties. Without our generous sponsors, the exhibition would not have been possible. Our volunteers were, as always, amazing and it is a true testament to the dedication of our members that so many are prepared to give up their time to work for Chelsea and to promote the Society’s objects.

The exhibition was an outstanding success and a fitting tribute to an institution which has had such a significant impact on Chelsea. ■

# Summer Annual Meeting: Petyt Hall: 12 July

TERENCE BENDIXSON

This year we went back to Petyt Hall for our Summer Meeting as last year's event had been such a huge success. Although we didn't get another heat wave, the torrential rain which had swept by earlier in the afternoon miraculously disappeared and we enjoyed a very pleasant warm evening. There were over a hundred members present and we were able to spill out into the beautiful courtyard garden.

We were very pleased to welcome Deputy Mayor Will Pascall and also Greg Hands MP.

Dr Fiona Haughey, a well known Thames Archaeologist who will be giving a lecture in September, brought along some of the artifacts which she had collected on a recent walk along the foreshore and

explained the history of each object. We also had a table with books about Apsley House which members found very interesting after the fascinating lecture that Alex Allin had given us in April.

I would like to express our thanks to all the staff at Chelsea Old Church, without their help the events which we hold at Petyt Hall would not be possible. It is a charming venue and the extra trouble they take to assist us is very much appreciated. I would also like to thank Penny Pocock who spends so much time looking after the delightful garden at the church, we are very fortunate to be able to enjoy such a wonderful oasis in the heart of Chelsea. ■



Picture: Michael Bach

David Le Lay, Cllr Pascall, Damian Greenish

# *The Chelsea Society v The Chelsea Arts Club* Cricket at Burton Court: 7 September

TERENCE BENDIXSON

What a day! The thwack of willow on leather; the majestic figure of the Society's President at the crease; a great flowing of Pimms; cranes bowling and weaving over the site of Chelsea Barracks; shouts of 'heads' from the pavilion as a six dropped out of the branches beyond the Panama-hatted spectators; two painters at their easels, and the weather fine and sunny beyond all our dreams.

The artists batted first and scored a resounding 297. Painter and opening batsman Jonathan Small scored over a century. The Society, with a team that included eight members and two sons of members, did less well but held their heads high with 210 runs.



Picture: Damian Greenish

Damian Greenish, the Society's captain, batted stylishly and was caught on the last ball of the game. He will be remembered for having had the idea of

the match and for an occasion which no one can recall ever happening before. It was painted by Lynda Minter and Richard Foster. ■

## New Blue Plaque: *Elizabeth David, Cookery Writer*

DAVID LE LAY

Elizabeth David changed Britain's tastes forever, and is largely credited with introducing Mediterranean food to the UK. Today she is being honoured with a blue plaque at 24 Halsey Street where she lived for 45 years, as a part of the 150th anniversary of the London Blue Plaque scheme.

Jill Norman, Elizabeth's editor at Penguin books, said: "It is a very well deserved plaque, putting Elizabeth in place in terms of the quality of her writing, as well as what she changed in British food".

Elizabeth David championed the use of new and exotic ingredients such as

aubergines, olives and saffron, and her books captured the imagination of cooks across the country, selling over a million copies worldwide.

Rosemary Hill, a member of the English Heritage Blue Plaques Panel, said: "Elizabeth David was taken seriously in a way that no English food writer had been before. She turned the traditional image of Mrs Beaton into a much more glamorous, cosmopolitan idea of what it meant to cook." ■



Picture: English Heritage

## Lost World

### *The Untold Story of London's Stamford Bridge Studios*

by Austin Wormleighton – Published 2012 by Stockbridge Books

DAVID LE LAY

This is a fascinating little book about a group of artists' studios in the northwest corner of Chelsea that were demolished in 1959. Fortunately a comprehensive set of photographs, now lodged with the City of London Metropolitan Archives, taken just before demolition, record this picturesque group of somewhat 'ramshackle and tumbledown' studios. (There were also similar groups of studios in Manresa Road, known as Wentworth Studios and Trafalgar Studios but they too were demolished at about the same time.)

Stamford Bridge Studios were located on the west side of the West London Railway line, between Stamford Bridge,

which is that part of Fulham Road that goes over the line, and a former station called Chelsea and Fulham. The entrance to the studios, as to the station, was from Wandon Road. When the site was re-developed by Chelsea Borough Council with a tall block of flats, the Council incorporated some artist's studios, not only to compensate for the loss of the Stamford Bridge Studios but in compliance with their policy that any development of public housing must include non-residential artist's studios.

Mr Wormleighton interweaves the story of the studios with his own family history. This is appropriate, the studios being built by his grandfather and they

were the very life-blood of the whole family, his father and his uncle being both artists and lived at the studios. There were just 10 studios and artists could either live there or not, as they chose. Amongst the more famous to live there were Roland Pitchforth, George Belcher, the sculptor Leonard Merrifield and, most famous of all, the young Jacob Epstein. These studios appealed to young artists at the beginning of their career, as the accommodation, though sub-standard, was cheap.

The book is extremely well written, it includes a comprehensive list of the artists who lived or worked at the Studios and many splendid illustrations. ■

# The Chelsea Society Architecture Prize

JAMES THOMPSON

The Chelsea Society often finds itself turning down proposed development plans, saying that they do not reflect the character of Chelsea. Many planning applications do not get our support, and it is right that we oppose them. However, this raises the question: when buildings not worth saving come up for replacement, what would we like to see go up instead?

Some buildings which were allowed to be built in past decades have not endeared themselves to us, and Chelsea would be a better place if more attractive buildings replaced them. Which buildings in Chelsea would you like to see demolished and replaced with a building more in keeping with the character of Chelsea? Send your examples to the Society, giving an address and, if you like, a description of what

qualities and characteristics you would like to see in a replacement.

We plan to choose a building for re-development (these are just examples, not sites we own) and then encourage architects to show what they would put in their place. The idea is to get architects to show us how they would interpret “the character of Chelsea”.

The prize of £10,000 will be awarded for a proposed building or set of buildings at a location in Chelsea chosen by the Society, even if it currently does not have planning permission and regardless of ownership i.e. the Society will identify a set of buildings it would like to be redeveloped, and will invite architects to develop a plan for new buildings. Society members will choose the areas or specific buildings they would like to see re-developed, and will

also comment on the plans submitted by contestants. The applicants will retain all intellectual property rights on their materials. The Society reserves the right not to award a prize if the Judging Panel decides not to make an award.

The Judging Panel will comprise: The Chairman of the Chelsea Society; The Chairman of the Chelsea Society Planning Committee; A Member of the Chelsea Society Council; an Architect appointed by the Sponsor; The sponsor. Cadogan have agreed to sponsor the prize.

We hope that this prize will lead to a new approach to developments in Chelsea, in which architects, including those at the early stages of their career, have a chance to present their ideas and to engage with us about the character of Chelsea. ■

# What's behind house prices in Chelsea?

TERENCE BENDIXSON

*'I believe in de brick. I believe in de brick.'*

These words, which I heard spoken by an Italian businessman living in South Kensington in the 1980s, have never left me. He was a charming, urbane oil executive but, as his words clearly show, he was at heart a peasant. And no one clings more limpet-like to land than a peasant. Land is life: life is land.

I tell this tale because it is part of the explanation why the cost of houses in Chelsea goes on rising. Many are, whether we like it or not, bought by wealthy foreigners as a way of safely banking money – because they too “believe in de brick”. (And who knows, many may themselves be only a generation or two away from living on the land?) On top of this they are, of course, aware of the effect

on values of London's shortage of supply and that Britain's respect for property rights (is it that Anglo Saxon property law in some way enshrines our sense of freedom?) make it highly unlikely that their houses will be arbitrarily confiscated.

Furthermore, and this is less well known, real estate is the world's biggest ‘asset class’ or store of value. More wealth is tied up in it, and in houses and flats in particular, than in the totality of gold, stocks and shares and in the kinds of debt that are bought and sold – commercial mortgages, car loans, credit card borrowing and the like.

Savills estimate that property worldwide – homes, commercial premises and farm land - is worth 217 trillion US dollars.\* That is 217 with 12 noughts.

(Workshops, small businesses and shops in Africa and other property are excluded because no one has any way of calculating their value.) And the lion's share of those trillions is in North America and Europe.

Savills also observe that London continues to be highly attractive to investors and that, since 2008, residential property has gained in popularity against its commercial rival. Will Brexit make a difference? In so far as it has weakened Sterling it will probably make that big house near yours even more attractive to buyers from abroad. Will anything be done about it? Given that foreign investment in houses and flats counts as an export, it is very unlikely. ■

\*Around the world in dollars and cents, Savills World Research, 2016.

## We have Social Issues – how do we attract younger members and volunteers?

SARAH FARRUGIA

Research in 2015 by Ipsos Mori (on behalf of Step Up to Serve) found that 42% of young people aged between 10 and 20 years participated in 'meaningful social action' in the UK. (Source: *Community Life Survey (2015/16)*)

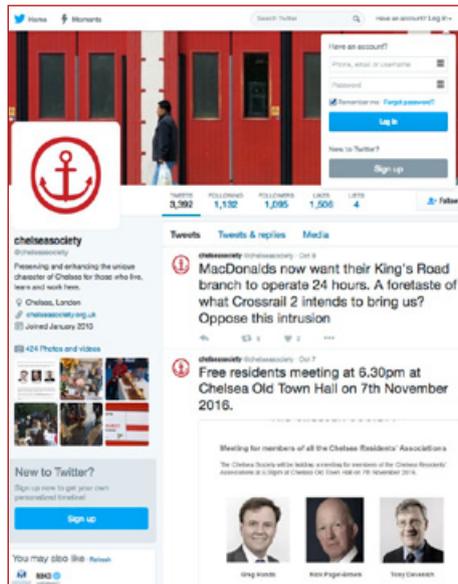
Demos, the leading cross-party think tank, published a report in 2014 entitled *Introducing Generation Citizen* with the conclusion that 'today's teenagers are more engaged with social issues than ever...'

### Who volunteers?

Yet one of the main challenges facing amenity organisations, such as the Chelsea Society, is their sustainability. It is the volunteers who spend countless hours – well into the thousands – organising activities, handling enquiries and reviewing planning proposals. These hours are voluntary. Some of the necessary skills are straightforward and administrative in nature, some are technically challenging, some require technological knowhow and some are creative and imaginative.

However, we can no longer rely on the same groups of volunteers as we have in the past.

Since the 1950s social norms in the developed world have changed entirely. Those who used to volunteer when they retired now spend an increasing amount of time with their grandchildren supporting busy working families, tend to second homes and visit extended families around the world, as well as making hay while the sun shines on a wide variety of travel well into their twilight years. They are also often less interested and able when it comes to technology and modern communication channels.



Twitter: @chelseasociety

### How do we engage a new generation?

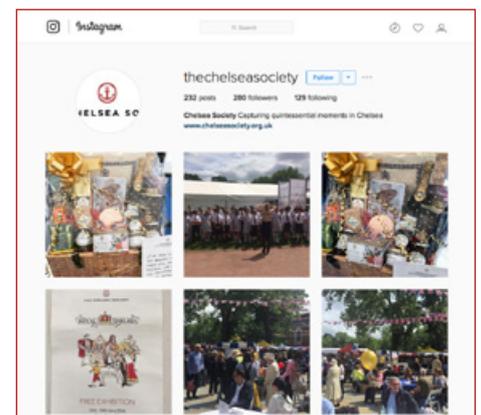
There is now a growing chasm to bridge in order to attract new support and citizens who can volunteer in the technological age today.

The younger generations also have fresh views and perspectives as they experience a very different world to the one most of our membership grew up into. They are 'connected' to their friends and family in a kaleidoscopic way. They see and hear about news from around the globe. They embrace different cultures naturally because they have grown up in a global community. They cherish fairness and abhor prejudice. The fact that they are more interested in social issues than at any time in recent history is clearly evidenced by their interest in the recent EU debate, the Labour leadership elections and the Scottish Referendum.

However, the young engage very differently to older generations. The young

engage virtually as much as in person. They use social media to keep in touch and stay up to date and to connect with others from around the globe. They respond to big brands and to social enterprises and they flirt between causes and have short attention spans. Many prefer to watch video and are visual rather than read long texts. They want to be change-makers, see barriers tumble and are future focused. They embrace all creeds, classes and races.

For an organisation like the Chelsea Society to attract and be relevant for generations to come it is essential they adapt to new communication channels. It is vital that even language and imagery reflects a more open and welcoming future-focused approach.



Instagram: thechelseasociety

Although the Society has made headway into social media, with over 1,000 Twitter followers and established Facebook and Instagram streams, there is a lot more that needs to happen to ensure the Chelsea Society is interesting and its aims are relevant to a broader age and social demographic. Constantly renewing our support base from the new generation is essential. This will not happen overnight and depends on continued focus over the coming decades. ■

## Dates for your Diary

### Dates:

RBKC Review of Local Plan: 6-week Consultation begins	13 October
Hugh Krall Exhibition*	24 October
Farringdon Collection*, 28 Brompton Square	31 October
Chelsea Residents' Associations Meeting	7 November
AGM: Chelsea Old Town Hall	21 November

\*Events requiring tickets

## Chelsea Residents' Association Meeting

The Chelsea Society will be holding a meeting for members of all the Chelsea Residents' Associations at 6.30pm at Chelsea Old Town Hall on 7th November 2016.

We have invited Rt. Hon. Greg Hands MP, Cllr. Nick Paget-Brown (Leader of RBK&C), and Cllr. Tony Devenish (GLA) to speak on matters of local interest from the perspectives of the Government, the Borough Council, and the Greater London Assembly. Comments and questions will then be invited.

Please let the Society's Secretary, ([secretary@chelseasociety.org.uk](mailto:secretary@chelseasociety.org.uk)) know if you would like to attend and indicate to which Residents' Association you belong. Members of the Society who are not members of a Residents' Association will also be welcome.

## Sad Loss to the Society: Leonard Holdsworth

Leonard Holdsworth a long-time member of the Council of the Chelsea Society died earlier this year. He had been a member of the Council for some 20 years and epitomised all that was good about Chelsea. He made no compromises in life and never felt inhibited in expressing his heartfelt views about the place that he loved so much.

He will be greatly missed by the Society; quite simply, he will be irreplaceable. A fuller appreciation will appear in our Annual Report. ■



Picture: Michael Bach

## Get in Touch

We want to be able to communicate with you, especially 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](mailto:membership@chelseasociety.org.uk)

We are able to print and distribute this Newsletter three times in each year, but the Society's website is updated on a regular basis. If you want to see the latest news, do visit our website at least once a week at <http://chelseasociety.org.uk/>

Our website is at:  
[www.chelseasociety.org.uk](http://www.chelseasociety.org.uk)

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