



THE CHELSEA SOCIETY

Registered Charity 27626

Autumn Bulletin 2023



This Bulletin is printed and distributed to members twice a year, and electronic mailings are sent to members at approx. monthly intervals. If you are not receiving electronic mailings, please contact Secretary@chelseasociety.org.uk or 07803 147654. For more detail, and to keep up to date with the activities of the Society, visit our website at www.chelseasociety.org.uk

The Society now has 1,070 members. This is fantastic, but please encourage your friends and neighbours to join the Society, by visiting our website and clicking on **“Join Us.”** They do not have to be resident in Chelsea. You can also follow The Chelsea Society on Instagram, where we now have 1,069 Followers.

Lord Cadogan

The Chelsea Society announces with great regret the death on 11th June 2023 in Chelsea, of the 8th Earl Cadogan, one of its Vice-Presidents.

The Society sends its condolences to the 9th Earl and his family



FUTURE EVENTS

Celia Johnson Monday 16th October 2023 - 6 to 8pm



Many of us will remember Celia Johnson, who starred opposite Trevor Howard in the wartime film "Brief Encounter" set on a railway station in the steam age, and also in Noel Coward's film about the Royal Navy "In Which we Serve."

Dame Celia Elizabeth Fleming (née Johnson), lived in Tedworth Square in Chelsea, and died in 1982. After her death, her daughter, Lucy Fleming, found the letters that her parents had written to each other during the war, and she will read some of them to us. She will be supported by her own husband, Simon Williams, who will take the part of her father.

Celia never quite knew where Peter was, and told her daughter that it was like "posting letters to the moon."

For more information including payment details, see the Society's website.

AGM

The Annual General Meeting of The Chelsea Society for 2023 will be held at Chelsea Old Town Hall on Monday 13th November 2023 at 6pm.

Members and official guests only.



Gen. Sir Simon Mayall

Lt. Gen. Sir Simon Mayall will speak to the Society on Monday 27th November 2023 at the Chelsea Old Town Hall from 6-8pm on the strategic military situation, with particular reference to Ukraine, and the Middle-East.

He was appointed Assistant Chief of the General Staff in January 2007 and, in 2009, became Deputy Chief of the Defence Staff (Operations). He retired from the Army in 2015.

For more information including payment details, see the Society's website.

The fall of Margaret Thatcher- A whodunnit!

Monday 15th January 2024 - 6 to 8pm

Charles Moore is the authorised biographer of Margaret Thatcher, and his final volume, *Herself Alone*, was published in 2019.

Charles Moore is the authorised biographer of Margaret Thatcher, and his final volume, *Herself Alone*, was published in 2019. Charles will give a semi-dramatisation together with Kate Ehrman, of Margaret Thatcher's last days in office. This will be a fascinating insight into the critical moments prior to the Prime Minister's resignation, based on Moore's unique access to Mrs. Thatcher herself, her papers and her closest associates.

For more information including payment details, see the Society's website.



PAST EVENTS

House of Lords

A tour of the House of Lords was arranged for Chelsea Society members by kind permission of Viscount Trenchard.

We walked in the footsteps of the Monarch and learnt about the State Opening of Parliament in the Royal Apartments which included the Robing Room, Royal Gallery and Princes Chamber. We then entered the House of Lords Chamber where the work of the Peers was explained in more detail.

The tour continued through the Grand Gothic lobbies following the same route Black Rod takes when the Commons are summoned to hear the King's speech in November. We also got to see the statues of Prime Ministers inside the members' lobby.



Chelsea History Festival

A partnership between the National Army Museum, the Royal Hospital Chelsea and Chelsea Physic Garden, this year offered an exciting line-up of events in historic Chelsea from the 26 September to 1 October 2023.

The Festival offered walking tours and open days, family-friendly activities and talks by internationally-renowned speakers, with the world of military history very much at the heart of the programme, along with travel, music, literature and more.



An evening with Bill Wyman



(photo by Judy Totton)

Bill Wyman has worked in Chelsea on-and-off since joining the Rolling Stones in 1962, and has lived in the area since 1982. Over the past few years, Bill has walked every street of his beloved neighbourhood, photographing anything unusual that caught his eye: bridges, churches, pubs, shops, houses, monuments, decorative wall plaques, blue historical plaques, statues, weather vanes, front doors, street signs and coal hole covers.

Bill Wyman's Chelsea is the result of this work: a comprehensive and informative guide to a London borough steeped in culture and history, as seen through the personal and affectionate lens of a long-standing resident, who himself plays a part in the history of the area. Complete with walking tour itineraries, maps, an A-Z of streets, historical information, over 300 of Bill's photos and knowledge from an insider; Bill has produced what can confidently be called the 'Master Book on Chelsea'.

Bill Wyman was born in London in 1936, and joined The Rolling Stones in 1962. Although best known for his music, Bill has pursued many other interests since leaving the Stones in 1993. Bill is considered the unofficial archivist of the band; he is a prolific collector, photographer, and has kept diaries from an early age. He also has a great interest in history, archaeology and metal detecting. Bill is a published author of twelve books including *Stones From The Inside*, *Stone Alone*, *Wyman Shoots Chagall*, *Bill Wyman's Blues Odyssey* and *Rolling With The Stones*.



PAST EVENTS

Spencer House



Members of The Chelsea Society enjoyed a private visit on Wednesday 21st June 2023.

Royalty, artists, poets, writers and politicians all visited Spencer House. The House remains in the ultimate ownership of the Earls Spencer, the current freeholder being Charles Spencer, the 9th Earl and brother of Diana, Princess of Wales.

The visit included the State Rooms and Vardy's Palm Room with its screen of gilded palm trees. The rooms reflect the eighteenth century fashion for classical Greece and Rome, gilded furniture and fine collections of paintings.

Traffic in Chelsea

This was a chance to talk with TFL and RBKC about traffic problems in Chelsea.

Chelsea, like much of London, suffers from traffic. Residents are concerned about congestion, pollution, and safety for pedestrians and cyclists. Recent fatal accidents at the junctions of the Embankment and Albert Bridge and Battersea Bridge have crystallised these concerns, shown by the massive response to the petition to improve pedestrian safety. The Chelsea Society does not have the answers to all these issues, but believes we needed to debate the best options.



Mercers Hall

Members enjoyed a private tour of Mercers' Hall. 6 Frederick's Place, London EC2.

Tours of the Hall are very limited so this was a rare opportunity to see one of the great Livery Halls. The Worshipful Company of Mercers is the City's premier livery company. Its first charter was granted by King Richard II in 1394, though its history goes back much further. Mercers were dealers in textile fabrics, especially silks, velvets, and other fine materials.

The Hall has a fine collection of sixteenth century portraits and has the only chapel of any livery hall. The tour was led by Guy Fairbank (who also leads the Chelsea walks). Guy is a Blue Badge Guide, City of London Guide and a Freeman and Liveryman of the City of London.

The Chelsea Arts Club

Members enjoyed a private visit to The Chelsea Arts Club at 10am, and a talk about the club by its Secretary, Geoffrey Matthews.

The Club is well known to us and some are members. It is a private members' club located in the former Bolton Lodge at 143 Old Church Street, with a membership of over 3,800, including artists, sculptors, architects, writers, designers, actors, musicians, photographers, and film-makers. The club was established on 21 March 1891 (in Chelsea), as a rival to the older Arts Club in Mayfair, on the instigation of the artist James Abbott McNeill Whistler, who had been a (sometimes controversial) member of the older club. The Chelsea Arts Club has an interesting collection of paintings by its members, and serves as a host for many functions, from instrumental and choral performances to visual arts exhibitions, literary talks, and weekend artist lunches.



NEWS

Death on Chelsea's roads

The Chelsea Society has been campaigning and will continue to campaign to make our streets safer for pedestrians, and we have held a public meeting. Speed-limits alone are not the answer – some junctions need to be redesigned.



At 8am on 10th August 2023 a truck crushed a female cyclist to death on Battersea Bridge.



Also, at 6.30 am on 14th May 2022, Olivia Riley was walking her three golden retrievers when she was knocked down by a car and killed. All the dogs were also killed.



Not long before, on 13th January 2021 another pedestrian, Jack Ryan, was knocked down and killed – at the north end of Battersea Bridge.

Marks & Spencer Building



A new Application (PP/23/00968) has been made for the redevelopment of this site, which has attracted more than 1,000 objectors.

The Chelsea Society has objected but on 19 June 2023 the applicants submitted revisions to their proposal, and their application was granted by RBKC on 5th October 2023. The Chelsea Society had objected to the application as follows:

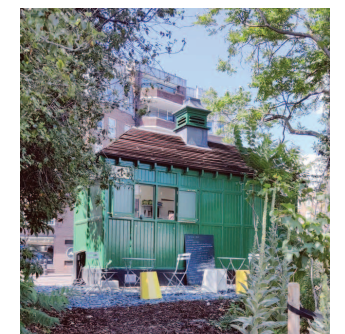
The proposed building would be incompatible with a number of Council policies; would be damaging to the character of the King's Road and the conservation area opposite which it is situated; and would be disruptive to the privacy of neighbouring residents. In addition the construction traffic management plan would involve an unacceptable level of increased congestion and inconvenience in the King's Road. For details see the Society's website. We do not yet know when M&S will be moving out, nor whether they will be moving into temporary premises on the Kings Road.

Cabmen's Shelter

The cabmen's shelter near Albert Bridge which we saved from dereliction, has now opened as a café.

On 24th January 2021 The Chelsea Society proposed to Historic England that the cabmen's shelters in Pont Street, and near the Albert Bridge, be listed. Our application was supported by the MP, the GLA member, the Cheyne Walk Trust, MISARA, the Brompton Association, and RBKC.

We are delighted to report that our proposals were both accepted and that the shelters are now listed Grade II. The third cabmen's shelter in Chelsea, opposite the Victoria & Albert Museum, was already listed, so all three are now protected.



Make Battersea Bridge Road Junction safe - TFL Consultation

The considerable traffic dangers at the Battersea Bridge/Albert Bridge/Embankment junctions have been a major concern of the Chelsea Society and Cheyne Walk Trust for many years. After several fatalities and some 70 accidents over 5 years (2017 to 2021) highlighted in a major public petition, TFL eventually installed a controlled pedestrian crossing at the northern end of Battersea bridge.

Responding to the TFL Consultation Report, The Council for RBKC together with Chelsea amenity associations, supported by Greg Hands, MP for Chelsea & Fulham, welcomed TFL's commitment to improve the 3 unsafe arms of the junction by installing controlled crossings, and to review the banned left turn southbound at Chelsea Bridge, but expressed serious concerns over TFL's Cycle Superhighway plans for:

- A left turn ban at Beaufort St for vehicles approaching the junction from the west, creating renewed pressure on other roads north into Chelsea including Oakley St, Royal Hospital Rd and Tite St. and the heavily used Kings Rd.
- New sections of traffic-constricting westbound and eastbound bus lanes on the Embankment from Chelsea Bridge to Battersea Bridge. This would just provide lanes for the infrequent 170 bus, even though TFL have cut the frequency of this service by reducing it from every 7 minutes to every 10 minutes.

The Chelsea Society, Cheyne Walk Trust and residents' associations are working closely with RBKC to ensure that Chelsea's interests in securing safety at the Battersea Bridge junction is achieved without unacceptable and unnecessary detriment to traffic flows for those who live in Chelsea.



Chelsea Boats

For many years the Council of RBKC used their planning powers to control the size and appearance of boats in Chelsea, and very many applications for planning permission for individual boats have been made and determined.

The Councillors say that they recognise the fact that the boats moored at Chelsea Reach and Cadogan Pier are part of the essential character of the Thames Conservation Area and that they do not wish this character to be eroded with the introduction of larger vessels that do not resemble a traditional houseboat.

They were however in doubt as to their legal powers, Therefore, on 18th August 2023 a meeting was held between King's Counsel acting for The Chelsea Society, the Cheyne Walk Trust, and the Chelsea Reach Boatowners' Association, and King's Counsel acting for RBKC, at which it was clarified that RBC does have legal power to control the size and appearance of boats at Chelsea Reach and Cadogan Pier.

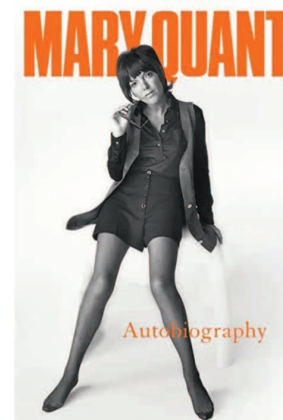
The three local organisations are concerned that the replacement of traditional boats by large box-like floating structures will destroy the character of Chelsea's riverside, and call upon RBKC to use its legal powers to prevent it.

Mary Quant

Dame Mary Quant died on 13th April 2023.

In October 1955, Mary Quant, her boyfriend, later husband, Alexander Plunket Greene, and Archie McNair, a former solicitor turned photographer, opened a dress shop called Bazaar on the King's Road, Chelsea. This was just ten years after the end of World War II, when a blitzed and broken London had hardly started rock 'n' rolling, let alone swinging.

Both they and the shop were instant successes. King's Road would become synonymous with Swinging London and the Markham Arms was a watering hole of the Chelsea Set of that period.



The Chelsea Society has a long history of involvement with architecture, land use and infrastructural planning locally and plays a key role in the decision making process.

The Constitution of the Society requires it to preserve and improve the amenities of Chelsea by:-

- stimulating interest in the history, character and traditions of Chelsea;
- encouraging good architecture, town planning and civic design, the planting and care of trees, and the conservation and proper maintenance of open spaces;
- seeking the abatement of nuisances;
- making representations to the proper authorities on these subjects.

The Chelsea Society exists because its members have for nearly 90 years loved Chelsea for its character, its style, and its charm, and wish to maintain those characteristics for themselves and future generations. We recognise of course that change is inevitable but the Society will seek to influence change so that it does not impact adversely on those characteristics. The Society will therefore encourage the design of new and altered buildings so that their size, proportions, architectural style and setting are compatible with the characteristics of Chelsea.

Where changes of use are proposed, the Society will seek to maintain the balance which has been achieved in Chelsea between residential accommodation for people of all income-groups, shops, offices, restaurants, schools, hospitals, open spaces, and other uses.

The Society values the relationship it has established over many years with the Councillors and Officers of the Royal Borough, and the Committee will seek to maintain and enhance that relationship, and with the Mayor of London. The Committee will nevertheless engage in constructive opposition to the policies and actions of the Borough Council and the Mayor whenever necessary. The Society is always willing to engage with architects, planning consultants, and their clients, and we find that if engagement takes place at an early stage the result is more likely to be beneficial both for Chelsea and the developer.

The Society is not a Residents' Association nor a Trade Association but it recognises the valuable contribution made by the many Associations in Chelsea in relation to their immediate locality and their particular interests. The Planning Committee envisages a relationship of mutual support between the Society and the relevant Associations whenever possible.

The Committee will also work with similar societies in Greater London and nationally in appropriate cases.



THE CHELSEA SOCIETY

FURTHER INFORMATION

Please encourage your friends to join the Society by visiting “Join Us” on the website, and to become a “Follower” on Instagram.

Our Secretary, Clare, can be contacted on secretary@chelseasociety.org.uk or 07803 147654. Please make sure she has your current e-mail address and telephone number.

Our mailing address is: 30 Paradise Walk, London SW3 4JL

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