



# CHELSEA SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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[www.chelseasociety.org.uk](http://www.chelseasociety.org.uk)

December 2011

## LAST ORDERS? OH NO IT'S NOT!



*The Cross Keys Public House*

Just when they thought it was all over – that the Council was going to let our pubs go without a fight – the Council has refused planning consent for the Cross Keys to be converted into a mansion and has agreed to review its permissive policy in the Core Strategy to provide greater protection for our pubs.

“Last Orders?” was the prophetic title of the Society’s Exhibition in 2005 on the rise and fall of pubs in Chelsea. Since then, although there were rumours, no applications had been received until this year. This year there were two applications to turn pubs into houses – the Phene Arms and the Cross Keys. The Society opposed both these proposals.

### **Need to change policy**

The Society was concerned after the Council lost a key planning

appeal on the Prince of Wales pub in Kensington because, although they recognise pubs as “social and community uses”, they thought that there were enough places to get a drink in the Borough after counting not only pubs but also bars and even restaurants. Their concept of easy access to a “drinking establishment” was on the basis that residents would walk up to half a mile to pub. The Society disputes this approach and, with the Kensington Society and others, has been pressing for the policy to be reviewed.

### **Problem – High house prices**

The main driver for the changes has been a combination of the pub-owning companies selling off their pubs to people whose

medium-term aim has been to get permission for a change of use to housing. This is what happened to the Prince of Wales – a property developer, who also runs restaurants, bought the property with the aim of changing its use to a house. The same has happened in Chelsea – different companies but with the same individuals involved have bought several pubs with the intention of converting them to houses. The Cross Keys and the Phene (aka The Phene Arms) are just two examples which have surfaced this year – in both cases the intention is to turn them into “mansions” complete with a basement swimming pool!

### **Cross Keys saved?**

The application for converting the Cross Keys to a mansion, with an additional mansard floor, a basement and a rear extension with a roof terrace, came to the

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Planning Applications Committee on 6 December with a recommendation to grant consent. After being addressed by local residents, Richard Burgess and Penny Pocock, who emphasised



*The Phene Arms*

the importance of the pub as a focus for the local community and as an activity that contributes to character of the area, the Committee unanimously agreed to refuse consent. It is understood that the applicant will be appealing against the decision. This



means that the appeal could be heard in the next three months. The community will need to prepare for this.

### **Phene Arms**

There are also two applications for the Phene Arms – one for the change of use and one for the alterations and the change of use. For both cases, PP/11/02421 & PP/11/3352: The Phene Arms, 9 Phene Street, SW10 if you want to object, write to [Sarah.jones@rbkc.gov.uk](mailto:Sarah.jones@rbkc.gov.uk) ASAP. The cases are unlikely to go to the Planning Committee until the New Year.

### **Henry J Beans**

(formerly The Six Bells)

There is a proposal to convert this listed building at 195/197 King's Road to retain the basement and ground floor as a restaurant and convert the three upper floors to six flats. A planning application is expected shortly.

### **The Challenge**

The Council is committed to reviewing the Core Strategy policy on pubs and to protecting our pubs not only as part of our built heritage, but our cultural heritage and as important hubs of our local communities. This is cause where we will be giving the Council our strongest support.

*Michael Bach*

### **Chelsea Art College might have gone but...**



*Children at school*

One of the most famous institutions in SW3 might have upped sticks and emigrated to SW1, next to the Tate, but some people are striving to keep Chelsea's

artistic legacy alive, including a humble but high-achieving state primary school in the very heart of the Borough.

Christ Church School, near the Physic Garden and very near the River Thames (so often an inspiration for Chelsea's most famous artists) has embarked on building a new Arts Wing within their cramped Victorian premises.

This includes a large airy studio under north facing roof lights as well as extensive classroom space below it for other artistic pursuits.

What's more, this facility will also be available for local Chelsea community groups to enjoy, as well as pupils.

Naturally the school has hotly pursued government grants to fund this splendid project but in vain. The local council has been supportive financially but there remains a shortfall of £120,000.

The school's ever-supportive parents, Governors, as well as local well-wishers will strive to raise this shortfall but further donations both large and small are needed to realise this ambitious project, so appropriate for Chelsea and its schoolchildren, and, also, local artistic community groups.

If you would like to contribute to this project, to help ensure Chelsea's artistic future, please send your donation to the School Office below, making cheques out to 'Christ Church School Arts Wing Appeal'.

All donations will be individually acknowledged.

CHRIST CHURCH SCHOOL  
ROBINSON STREET LONDON  
SW3 4AA Phone 0207 352 5708

## THE GROWING PACE OF CHANGE

### **Change? You have not seen anything yet!**

We may be in the middle of a recession but sometimes it is hard to believe. There is so much development in and around Chelsea either under construction or proposed to start in the next five years— more development than has taken place in the last century.

Chelsea Barracks, the redevelopment of Manresa Road, Lots Road/Chelsea Creek, the former Kingsley School, the Clearings warehouses in Draycott Avenue and, even, South Kensington Station. But that is just the tip of the iceberg. There are huge developments all round Chelsea, particularly those proposed by the Mayor's London Plan, such as Vauxhall/Nine Elms/Battersea and the Earl's Court/West Kensington Opportunity Areas.

### **Battersea**

The Vauxhall, Nine Elms and Battersea Opportunity Area, which includes Battersea Power Station, proposes a number of high-density, high-rise developments. The plans involve building thousands of new homes, a huge shopping centre nearly half the size of Westfield and lots of offices and entertainment. All of this, however, is dependent on an extension of the Northern Line to Battersea Power Station, but more importantly finding the finance. All a bit speculative you might think – there are doubts whether the £5.5 billion can be found for the Battersea Power Station scheme. It would now appear that the Government could declare an Enterprise Zone and support the extension of the

Northern Line, subject to the developer making a substantial contribution and, perhaps, allowing the Mayor and Wandsworth Council to borrow money to support the scheme.

### **Earl's Court**

The Earls Court/West Kensington Opportunity Area would sweep away everything between Lillie Road and Talgarth Road and the West London Line and North End Road, including the whole of Earl's Court Exhibition Centre and three large Council housing estates in Hammersmith. This scheme has more steam behind it, with major planning applications already in, yet the Supplementary Planning Guidance has not yet been agreed by the two Boroughs and the Greater London Authority, but demolition of the Exhibition Centre will start next autumn.

### **Basements**

And then there are all the bankers building basements! It sometimes feels like we are being besieged by builders. The Council initially saw basements as a way that local residents could extend their houses to allow growing families to stay in the Borough. The nature and size of many of these basements, however, often to accommodate swimming pools, gyms, saunas and cinemas, turned out to be bonuses seeking projects – often not to live in but to sell on when completed – an investment without tax on the capital gains.

### **Fightback**

Recently there has been a fightback – residents in Markham Square, feeling besieged by

subterranean developments, are working with the Council to produce a new-style neighbourhood plan which they have called “planning for extreme development”. It may sound like a new adventure sport, but this is deadly serious. People are getting increasingly worried about the impacts, especially the cumulative impacts, of basement developments in a densely built-up area, but they are also concerned about the huge disruption caused by the building operation itself. The new-style plan, which would supplement the Council's Core Strategy, would set out new policies to manage the extreme pressures on Chelsea from a wall of money looking for a “home” in Chelsea.

Another fightback is a campaign group attempting to persuade the Government to tackle the impacts of subterranean development, from changing party wall legislation to getting the Government to agree that the disruption of the building operation should be considered when dealing with planning applications. For more see article below.

### **New Government Planning Policy**

But isn't this all going against the grain of current Government policy? But which policy? Before the General Election the Conservatives promised greater local control – localism. Since the election this seems to have been overtaken by a desire to remove the supposed “barrier” that planning represents to economic growth and to make the default setting for all planning decisions to be “yes”.

There is a lot of confusion at the moment. The countryside lobby – the National Trust and CPRE – has grabbed all the headlines about building over the countryside. This has meant that nobody has asked what it might mean for London. On one hand we are lucky – we have the only regional strategy left in the country – the Mayor’s London Plan (adopted at the end of July) - and locally we have the Borough’s Core Strategy which was adopted last December. So that’s OK then?

The whole tone of the Government’s draft National Planning Policy Framework, however, is strongly pro-development and pro-growth, with a strong presumption that growth and development is good for us. This message may well encourage development that is even more ambitious and unsympathetic than the pressures that we are already experiencing. The Government says they are listening, the question is what are they hearing above all the noise from the countryside lobby? Do they really want to hear that you can have too much of a “good thing”?

Our concerns are not that we don’t want change, but that we should have a say about the change we get – we need to be able to shape our own future, not get swept away by the tide.

**Michael Bach**

## Buildings and Places of Chelsea



*The Chelsea Guide*

For a friend who has everything or as a Christmas stocking filler, why not buy some copies of the Chelsea Society’s newest product - the **Chelsea Map**.

The map provides an architectural and historical guide to Chelsea that fits in a small pocket.

We have copies for sale: (send cheques to the Chelsea Society c/o 23 Cortayne Road, London SW6 3QA) £5.00 each.

They are also available from local bookshops.

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## RESIGNATION OF CHAIRMAN NEW CHAIRMAN SOUGHT

Our chairman, Stuart Corbyn, has announced that he will be retiring shortly as he has recently taken on a job managing a major housing scheme as part of the Olympics legacy in East London.

The Society has, therefore, decided to seek candidates for a new chairman, with expressions of interest to be submitted by 30 December to The Chelsea Society c/o 36 Walpole Street, London SW3 4QS. Potential candidates should contact michaelbach@masafish.com

## PLANNING REPORT

### **The revolution at Chelsea Barracks**

Proposals for the site of Chelsea Barracks, recently approved by Westminster City Council, draw not on Le Corbusier but on London's 250-year old tradition of town making. The plans show streets, squares, garden squares and gardens – along and around which are arranged terraces of houses and mansion blocks.

Ever since the original Covent Garden piazza was laid out in 1632, right through to the 19th century plans for Belgravia and the Cadogan Estate, London was formed of streets and squares. Towers set in 'green carpets' became a new norm only after 1945. Now, following the intervention of the Prince of Wales, architects Jeremy Dixon and Edward Jones with Michael Squire and landscape architect Kim Wilkie have re-interpreted London's older, and much admired, way of building.

Westminster City Council granted the outline planning permission for the master plan in June. The outcome of negotiations over affordable housing is still to come. Apart from affordable flats provided on the site, Plan A would involve the conversion into affordable flats of a new residential building in Ebury Street. Plan B would involve payment by Qatari Diar, the developers, to Westminster City Council of a sum in lieu of actual flats. This is the preferred option.

The next steps are for Qatari Diar, the financial backers, to choose architects to design a first phase and apply for permission for the details of this first set of mansion blocks and terraced houses.

### **Royal Hospital South Grounds**

The Council's new Core Strategy has for the first time set out the Council's policy for managing the use of parks, gardens and open spaces for special events, especially those which require large structures and which mean that the spaces cannot be used as open spaces during the period of the event and in the following recovery period.

This policy was originally based on concerns about the scale, impact and duration of events at a number of spaces in Chelsea, particularly the Royal Hospital South Grounds, Burton's Court, and the Duke of York's running track, but also the grounds of the Natural History Museum.

An application has been made for the Royal Hospital South Grounds by Masterpiece London and the Royal Hospital to hold an antiques and works of art trade fair back-to-back with the Chelsea Flower Show in 2011. This is part of the Royal Hospital's long-term plan to reduce the number of events on the South Grounds to two per year and, possibly, to house them in the same building so as to reduce greatly the time when the South Grounds are occupied by commercial events. This could, however, mean that South Grounds would have another event during the summer "recovery period".

536 King's Road - the old Penguin Books office - now proposed for affordable flats by De Vere Holdings for the De Vere Gardens development facing Kensington Gardens, but with large family flats on a traffic-dominated

corner and architecture that looks like a laboratory and in no way relates to its surroundings.

### **Liscartan and Granville House in Sloane Street**

The Cadogan Estate plans to demolish the two 1960s office buildings that are nearly opposite All Saints, Sloane Square and replace them with a single building. If the plan goes ahead there would be, on Sloane Street, six new shops and an office entrance, a row of mews shops in Pavilion Road and a courtyard restaurant in the middle.

The existing 1960s office buildings are ill-suited to their setting. They were too big and their egg-box facades are unrelated to the vertical emphasis of many of the older buildings nearby.

To the Society's sadness, Cadogan's proposed replacement building, though high in quality and made of good materials, repeats, indeed compounds, the mistakes of its predecessors. It is huge and uniform and, in its context, even more out-of-scale. It is hard to understand how the architects, Stiff+Trevilian, could design a façade that is so blind to the qualities of its setting.

The site calls out for a façade that expresses the domestic scale still apparent in Sloane Street where it joins Sloane Square. An all-important policy in the Borough's development plan demands it.

### **The Clearings in Draycott Avenue**

Clearings, the old Peter Jones warehouse in Draycott Avenue, is no longer needed and the John

Lewis Partnership is preparing to sell it. Jeremy Dixon and Edward Jones have been appointed to prepare a scheme for converting it mainly into flats and shops. It is a tricky site because the District Line runs only a metre below ground level at its eastern end. This, the relatively low quality of the existing 1930s buildings, and the need for parking space, which will go underground, makes it likely that Dixon Jones will propose demolition.

### **Lots Road Power Station**

Something is moving on the site of Lots Road Power Station, but it is on the Fulham side of Chelsea Creek and not ours. Never mind. Circadian wants to get on and have had their architect, Sir Terry Farrell, modify the layout of some of the buildings. There will be slightly fewer apartments, more convenient parking and a better relationship to the buildings in Chelsea Harbour.

**Terence Bendixson**

### **The Borough's new Development Plan**

Last December the new development plan – the Core Strategy – was adopted by the full Council and now replaces most, but not all, of the old plan – the Unitary Development Plan (UDP). The development plan – the Core Strategy plus the Mayor of London's new London Plan adopted in July - is the main basis for making planning decisions – the planners are bound by law to determine planning applications “in accord with the development plan unless material reasons indicate otherwise” – to override the new plan there have to be substantive reasons.

The main change from the UDP is that the new document is a plan,

not just a handbook of development control policies, but a vision for how the area should develop over the next 10-15 years, which plans for the growth and change we want over the period of the plan.

This means that Kensington and Chelsea, unlike many places, is now in a good position to be able to manage the development pressures we face. There are, however, still policies that need to be strengthened at the next opportunity – such as those to enable the Council to resist the loss of pubs, post offices, and petrol stations.

**Michael Bach**

### **The Brompton Hospital**

The hospital has appointed an official, Joanna Axon, to take charge of the re-development of its site. It is expected to seek some kind of partnership with a property development company.

The Sunday Times estimates that the land available for disposal may be worth between £280 and £500 million. The hospital has also made it be known that it is willing to consider amalgamation offers from other trusts – to which it could take its considerable dowry.

All this creates uncertainty and has prompted the Society to ask the Borough Planning Department to prepare a brief, a 'supplementary planning document', indicating what form of development would be acceptable.

The risk is that, unless firmly controlled, developers will seek to build at least one substantial tower. Flats and houses for very rich people are almost certain to be part of any outcome.

**Terence Bendixson**  
t.bendixson@pobox.com

### **Meeting on Subterranean Development**

Subterranean development - building one or more basements under houses and gardens in Chelsea - is a highly emotive subject. The Council has been under pressure from residents to exercise more control over such development for the last 4 or 5 years.

Residents' concerns range from buildings collapsing, damage to neighbouring properties, risk of flooding, sustainability issues arising from the energy implications of digging out so much earth, using so much concrete and from heating, cooling and ventilation of the new development, the cumulative impact of successive schemes, as well as the amount of disruption from the building operations.

Whilst initially some councillors saw this as a means to help families stay in the Borough, by building extra living accommodation, it has become clear that this activity is nothing more than a tax-free haven for bonuses, adding cinemas, gyms, saunas, even swimming pools, rather than extra bedrooms.

### **Residents are revolting**

But this latest attempt to squeeze more space out of Chelsea houses is very different. Conservatories, rear or roof extensions were modest in scale and less disruptive to their neighbours. Excavating and constructing a basement under the house or even the house and garden, involves moving vast quantities of soil, underpinning neighbouring buildings, pouring large quantities of concrete as well as the construction process. This often takes as long as two years, caus-

ing huge disruption, aggravation and disturbance to neighbours, as well as worry about possible damage to their properties. Parking skips on Chelsea's narrow streets has added to the pressures. Residents are saying they have had enough!

Following a public meeting at Chelsea Town Hall a year ago, the Kings Road Association of Chelsea Residents (KRACR) sent a short report to the Council, suggesting some specific courses of action to control the disruption caused by basement building works. A new umbrella organisation was set up to work with Councillors and Members of Parliament to bring about legislative changes.

The second meeting in January brought an announcement that the Council would support local residents in Markham Square to produce a "neighbourhood plan" to deal with "extreme development pressures" for which the Government announced a grant of £17,000 in April.

### **The Council's response**

The Council has strengthened its planning policies – the Core Strategy – adopted last December, and issued their Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) on Subterranean Development. But despite requiring applicants to provide more evidence to demonstrate that their development will meet all the Council's requirements, these hurdles have not proved to be a brake on the wall of money behind these projects. Even a steep rise in the fees for parking suspensions, whilst increasing the cost of keeping skips and materials on the street, needs to be supported by the Council pressing for fewer and shorter

parking suspensions.

The Council, although sympathetic to residents' concerns, appears to have conceded to almost all applications. They have raised the issue with Government ministers, who are either unaware of the issue or regard it as a local problem that need not concern them. It is mainly an Inner London issue.

### **The grass roots response**

The increasing frustration of local residents is likely to put more pressure on the Council and the Government – but with the Council first in the firing line, fuelled by recent decisions by the Planning Applications Committee, where the decision, but more particularly the manner in which it was reached, being the subject of scrutiny.

Increasingly residents are taking exception to the way new neighbours' first step is to apply for an additional basement to increase the value of their property – asking "if they really need a bigger house, why can't they go and buy one elsewhere?". They object to newcomers who see Chelsea houses as a short-term investment rather than seeing themselves as stewards for the time being of Chelsea's heritage.

### **Progress**

Following meetings with DCLG officials and with the Minister, Baroness Hanham, there was a debate in the House of Commons, raised by Karen Buck, the MP for Westminster North and Mark Field, MP for the Cities of London and Westminster. Our MP, Greg Hands, seemed fully up to speed on the issue at the AGM.

So far, the Government seems to have registered the issue

and indicated possible areas of progress as revising the Party Wall Act and considering making the nuisances of the construction process something that can be taken into account when making planning decisions, such as securing stronger conditions.

### **Michael Bach**

### **Thames Tideway Tunnel**

Thames Water is consulting again on the £4 billion sewage tunnel it wants to build 75 metres under the river. The tunnel would have two functions. It would capture a mix of sewage and storm water that now overflows into the Thames; and it would store such overflows until they could be pumped up into the cleaning works at Beckton in East London. The tunnel needed to do all of this would stretch 25 km from Acton to Beckton.

Thames Water held a consultation on the tunnel works at the new Chelsea Academy, Lots Road, SW10 0AB on Friday 25 and Saturday 26 November. Written representations may be made until 10 February 2012 by email to [thames.tunnel@thameswater.co.uk](mailto:thames.tunnel@thameswater.co.uk), by calling 0800 0721 086 or by post to Thames Tunnel Consultation, Freepost SCE 9923, PO Box 522, Swindon SN2 8LA

Chelsea will be affected by these plans in several ways. If the tunnel is built old Father Thames will become much cleaner, though he will always be brown and muddy; the existing river wall will be bulged out to provide a works site across from the Royal Hospital - and then the bulge will be made into a paved belvedere; another works site will be opened up within the nearby Ranelagh Gardens; and all the buildings on Cremorne Wharf, adjacent to Lots Road, will

be demolished, the site used for works, and then new sheds built for the Council.

Controversy has been generated by these plans. The Borough Council's objections on Cremorne Wharf have been largely met. But their concerns about the closure of a traffic lane along part of the Embankment, damage to the ecology of the foreshore and to the amenity of Ranelagh Gardens remain.

More powerful and sustained are the criticisms of the plan made by

Stephen Greenhalgh, Leader of Hammersmith & Fulham Council. He says that Thames Water exaggerates the seriousness of the 39 million cubic metres of polluted water that annually overflow into the river. He argues that it is mostly storm water. TW say this is true on some occasions but on others, particularly after dry weather, 90 per cent of the overflow can be composed of sewage and other foul detritus.

Thames Water also say: 'A clean healthy River Thames is essen-

tial for the prosperity and global reputation of Britain's capital city.' And, if the river were not cleaned, we would all be at risk of 'hefty' fines under the 'Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive'. That, of course, means Brussels.

The cost of the tunnel for London households would be considerable. TW estimate this at £80 p.a. (at current prices) for every London household for several years starting in 2013.

**Terence Bendixson**

t.bendixson@pobox.com



*Proposed Thames Tideway tunnel under the Chelsea Embankment*

## TRANSPORT AND PUBLIC REALM

### Albert Bridge

With all the bridge closures between Chelsea Bridge and Hammersmith Bridge, the traffic jams on the few that are not subject to repair work, and the difficulties of crossing the Thames, Chelsea residents have been concerned about progress on Albert Bridge.

Contrary to rumours circulating about delays and the completion date slipping well into 2012, Albert Bridge reopened to traffic on 2 December.

Long term, however, Albert Bridge cannot keep taking the pounding it gets from 58 million vehicles a year. The recent major strengthening might keep it going for a bit longer – otherwise it would have had to close permanently. Originally it seemed the weight limit would be raised significantly from 2.5 tonnes, but it will still be raised to 3 tonnes to accommodate Chelsea tractors which exceed the former limit.

For the full story see:

<http://www.rbkc.gov.uk/newsroom/councilstatements/albertbridgeclosure.aspx>

### King's Road/Sloane Square Pedestrian Crossing

As part of programme for improving the pedestrian crossings in the King's Road – getting rid of the sheep pens in the middle of the road and producing direct, one-stage pedestrian crossings – the Council has now improved the pedestrian crossings at the south west corner of Sloane Square at its junction with the King's Road and the crossing(s) at the Lower Sloane Street junction.

These were the legacy of a former

Borough Engineer who took the view that the main thing wrong with the King's Road and, in particular, the crossing of Lower Sloane Street, was that pedestrians held up the traffic! Hence the unique two-stage, zig-zag crossing. Sweeping that away has made Sloane Square more people friendly. This is another step on making it easier for pedestrians to walk round the edge of Sloane Square.

### Boris Bikes

The Mayor's blue bikes-for-hire are now part of Inner London's scenery and Chelsea, with its flat terrain and many safe side streets, is an almost ideal place for them.

Ten weeks after the start the bikes had been used a million times and, because the first half hour is free, only 5% of riders rode for longer. This means that the bikes may be counted a political and marketing success but not a commercial one. Much of their £104 million cost falls on council tax payers.

Hitherto only registered riders have been able to take a bike but from the beginning of December that has changed. Anyone can obtain a bike by swiping a credit card through a docking station. Such unregistered users will pay £1 per day or £5 a week. All you do is tap in a five-digit code which is displayed when you swipe your card.

The bike scheme is a huge marketing success but a commercial failure. As you say, most people use them free and this means that much of the cost of them – some £18 million a year – falls on Council Tax payers.



Albert Bridge



Albert Bridge



Albert Bridge width restrictions

## VISITS

### 15 September 2011: Founders Hall

The Chelsea Society organised a visit to Founder's Hall on 15 September 2011 -it was so popular we had to add an additional visit in October.

Architect Jonathan Goode gave us a fascinating talk about taking on the derelict church and converting it for the school, whilst conserving the building's fine structure. Considering that this all had to be done in under twelve months, it was a huge undertaking, but one that ended with a beautifully restored hall.

### Derelict church reopens as state-of-the-art school Founders Hall before and after conversion.

Hill House International Junior School, the well-known prep school, formally opened its first privately-owned site in London in February in the former Welsh Congregational Church at 2 Radnor Walk, just off the King's Road. This Grade II listed Regency building, has been converted into a fine assembly hall with a beautiful, pale blue covered ceiling and dynamic sport, music, drama and art facilities.

David Le Lay Architects took just a year to renovate the building, which has revealed details of a colourful history hidden behind the building's unassuming facade. Excavations show this is likely to have been the site of London's earliest commercial baths. From great beginnings the building went on to have a life as a theatre, a dance hall, and a pub connected by a secret door to a Methodist chapel, before being

converted to its current use as a prep school.

Architect Jonathan Goode says, "This building is a rich seam of Chelsea history. Above all we wanted to preserve the beautiful hall structure with its striking, ribbed ceiling, which the darkly painted walls had all but masked. The school is a very natural fit for the building and we're delighted with the result."

The fast turnover of use of this single, seemingly modest site testifies to Victorian commercialism and the pressure on land use in London at that time, similar in feel to today. Entrepreneur and gambler Richard Smith first saw a gap in the market to build The Manor House Public Baths here in 1838, for Chelsea's growing working-class population.

Smith shortly after converted the baths into a theatre on the same site, which he called The Royal Manor House Theatre, but like the baths it too failed. Capitalising on Chelsea's reputation for entertainment, Smith renewed his license to open a tavern as well as an adjacent dance hall which became a popular venue for up-market military balls in the 1850s. The use of the building changed radically again when it became a Non-conformist place of worship reflecting the local artisan community. The South Kensington Primitive Methodists bought it in 1860 and in 1880 it was bought by the Welsh Congregational Church who used it until 2008.

The rapid change of use of the site testify to Victorian commercialism and the pressure on land use in London, similar in feel to today.



*The Founders Hall in 2008*



*Before conversion in 2008*



*After conversion in 2011*

Architect Jonathan Goode spoke about taking on the derelict church, conserving the building's fine structure while converting it for the school in less than twelve months.

The building was the subject of Chelsea Society visit in May, led by Jonathan Goode, describing the conversion project from a derelict church to a beautifully-restored hall.

**Paulette Craxford**

### **17 November 2011: Visit to Sussex House School, 68 Cadogan Square**

About 20 years ago I was shown around Sussex House School, at 68 Cadogan Square, by the then Headmaster. Everything was white gloss paint and fluorescent tubes, typical of a boys' Prep School. Once grand rooms were sub-divided by plasterboard partitions crudely cut into elaborate period mouldings. Since he took over as Head, 17 years ago, Nicholas Kaye has set about improving the school, a crucial part of his plan being to restore the building to its former glory. Nicholas is passionate about late Victorian architecture and design.

68 Cadogan Square, completed in 1878, is one of the finest houses designed by Richard Norman Shaw in his 'Queen Anne with Dutch gables' style. It was built for Laurence Harrison, a successful stockbroker, and typical of the 'nouveau riche' of the period, it is grand and pretentious with a Hollywood approach to interior design. There is an Adam-style drawing room, a dark mahogany-panelled dining room and the ballroom is Jacobean, complete with inglenook. It is a deep building with a comparatively narrow

street frontage, but it is immensely tall, rising through a total of 7 floors, without a lift.

The Society visited the School on 17 November. Nicholas was the perfect host - not only did he personally show us around the main rooms, but he allowed us to wander into all the classrooms and even to visit his private flat. He generously provided excellent wine, which gave us an opportunity to socialize with other members of the Society in the splendid setting of the fine ballroom, now used for assembly, concerts and receptions.

The sight of sloping-topped desks, with tip-up seats, makes it clear that the education received at Sussex House is of the traditional kind. One wonders what impact the fine-framed paintings and William Morris wallpapers that are used throughout the building have upon young minds. The School strives for excellence in every aspect of education and their unique building is an essential part of that mission.

Nicholas Kaye's flat occupies the top floor of the building, originally where the servants slept. It is the very antidote to the modern craze for minimalism, being filled with a multitude of objects and furniture to give an air of High Victorian clutter. It struck one as being supremely cosy and comfortable.

It is usually contended by heritage bodies that the best use for a historic building is that for which it was originally designed. 68 Cadogan Square demonstrates that this is not necessarily so. This former house makes a wonderful school with a special character and this has been achieved by fully respecting the structure and design of this historic building.

Had it been restored to residential use, the requirements for endless bathrooms, not to mention a lift, would have been much more damaging to the original character and historic fabric.

The Society is especially grateful to Nicholas Kaye for allowing the Society to visit this important and historic building that he has so splendidly restored.

**David Le Lay**

### **Visit for Spring 2012**

The English Gardening School have kindly agreed to us visiting them in their new premises in Lots Road. We will be able to view the designs that their students have been working on throughout the year; this will complement the Chelsea Society's Exhibition 'Chelsea at the Heart of Gardening' which opens in May 2012

## **DIARY DATES**

### **Chelsea Society Winter Lectures**

#### **23 January:**

Ken Howard - *Inspired by Light*.

#### **20 February:**

Kim Wilkie - *Garden Squares, Courtyards and Public Spaces*.

#### **5 March 2012:**

Franny Moyle - *The Tragic and Scandalous Life of Mrs. Oscar Wilde*.

## CIVIC SOCIETY

### City Living, Local Life: Ward Working Initiative

As part of the Council's interpretation of the Government's proposals to promote Localism – pushing decision making down to the lowest appropriate level, from Government to local authorities and from them to local communities and individuals – the Council has introduced a new initiative called "City Living, Local Life".

The Council has challenged Ward Councillors and local communities to develop a programme of small projects up to a total budget of £20,000 a year for the next three years. As an example of some of the ideas coming forward, here are the ideas generated by three Chelsea wards – Brompton, Cremorne and Royal Hospital.

In **Brompton** the residents and councillors are proposing:

- a user-friendly smartphone-compatible website to allow residents to check the conditions on the licences of licensed premises, whether a breach is occurring and to report any such breaches instantly via their smartphones.
- several small-scale streetscape improvements.
- support our campaign to give residents a voice in any redevelopment of South Kensington station

**Royal Hospital Ward** are proposing several initiatives centred on promoting community engagement, cohesion and involvement by:

- linking young people with elderly residents
- providing assistance to resi-

dents' associations to organise celebrations of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee

- funding equipment for Baby and Toddler, Sunday School and Youth Clubs
- environmental enhancements, particularly on social housing estates, to provide landscaping and planting
- equipping the Community Arts Centre at Christ Church School, which was built with a contribution of £60,000 from a former Ward Initiative scheme

**Cremorne Ward** are considering:

- **Community noticeboards** If suitable sites can be found, and volunteers willing to act as custodians - noticeboards could be used by local people to publicise local events, services etc.

• **Cremorne Festival** As a hub for street parties and neighbourhood gatherings to mark the Queen's Diamond Jubilee in June 2012

- **Parent and toddler group** Some parents feel isolated and would welcome the opportunity to meet, give mutual support and offer other parents opportunities to make new connections and friendships.

• **Outreach work** with isolated older people e.g. schemes to link volunteers with older people who need friendship and support, coffee mornings and other activities, pairing younger and older people to teach each other skills and local history projects

• **World's End 'pillar'** Work with the Friends of World's End Place on a project to decorate the cen-

tral pillar to make it an attractive focal point.

### Civic Day 25 June 2011

To celebrate the role of civic societies, Civic Voice – the successor to the Civic Trust - encouraged civic societies across the country to hold a Civic Day on 25 June. The Society secured the support of the Cadogan Estate to have stall and display on Duke of York's Square.



*Terence Bendixson*

The event, co-coordinated by Terence Bendixson, with support from various members of the Council, set up:

- a stall to publicise our work
- a display of plans for current developments
- a petition on subterranean development
- a photographic competition called:

**"King's Road Faces 2011"**

View the Chelsea Society Website for details at:

[www.chelseasociety.org.uk](http://www.chelseasociety.org.uk)

### King's Road Faces 2011



*Kings Road Face 1*

The event was a good opportunity to make Chelsea residents more aware of current issues, what the Society does and to encourage them to join.

**Michael Bach**



*Kings Road Face 2*

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### Cadogan Estate - Christmas Lights - 5 November



*Duke of York Square*

For a number of years, while the rest of the Borough has had very modest Christmas lights, the Cadogan Estate has funded the illuminated Christmas trees on lampposts.

This year they went one better, with an impressive display in Duke of York Square and on the running track area in front of the Saatchi Gallery.

There was even a launch event to turn on the lights on 5 November. We need all the pizzazz we can get in these times!



*Running Track*

## CHELSEA SOCIETY'S 2012 EXHIBITION

### Chelsea at the Heart of Gardening: 22 May-2 June 2012

Key themes:

- How plants were found in the four corners of the globe and the men who found them and brought them to Chelsea, such as Joseph Banks and E H 'Chinese' Wilson.

A special feature will be a map of the world featuring the plants, the collectors and the stories of their adventures.

- The places they were brought back to, including Chelsea Physic Garden and the 26 nurseries which lined the King's Road, in particular The Royal Exotic Nursery.

- The Chelsea gardens in which they were displayed from the 16th century to today, showcased by historical paintings and photographs and the work of contemporary designers.

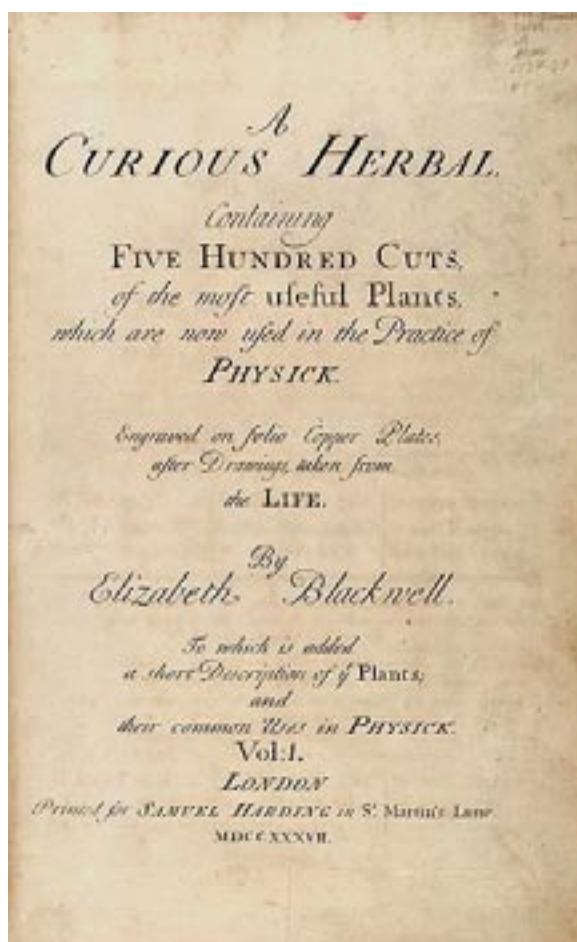
Also featured will be Chelsea's garden squares and the Borough's parks and open spaces, including plans to restore St Luke's Victorian garden

- Botanical drawing from Elizabeth Blackwell and her Curious Herbal to graduates of the English Gardening School at Lots Road, including examples of their work and a demonstration of contemporary drawing.

- Chelsea Flower Show in the Royal Hospital Grounds



*The Royal Exotic Nursery*



*Elizabeth Blackwell Herbal*

## CHELSEA CARDS

Hugh Krall has produced another of his exquisite watercolours of Chelsea Riverside entitled Cheyne Walk, Chelsea (See the Cards below of Albert Bridge, Cheyne Walk and Canaletto)



*Albert Bridge Card*



*Cheyne Walk Card*



*Canaletto Card*

## DEDICATED SERVICE

Seven former councillors were honoured for dedicated service to Royal Borough residents, when they were appointed Honorary Alderman on Monday 4 July 2011. Among them were two former Chelsea councillors: John Corbet-Singleton, C.B.E. - 42 years' service and Priscilla Frazer - 20 years' service.

The Mayor of the Royal Borough, Councillor Julie Mills, said: "It was a great pleasure to be able to mark the many years of dedicated service given to the Borough by these former councillors."

**John Corbet-Singleton**  
C.B.E. (42 years' service)



John Corbet-Singleton served from 1956 until 1964 as a Member for the Metropolitan Borough of Chelsea, during which time he chaired the Works and Highways Committee. From 1964 until 1978 he served as a Member of the Royal Borough Council. He was Chairman of the Works Committee between 1969 and 1973 before stepping down in 1978 owing to work commitments. He was re-elected to the Royal Borough in 1990 and served until May 2010. He was Deputy Mayor in 1992-93 and Mayor in 1996-97. In between he served as Chairman of the Highways and Traffic Committee from 1994-96. He served on numerous other committees, including Licensing and Planning and Conservation. He also served as Chairman of the Social Services Committee and the Appeals Panel. He was until May 2010 a Member for the Royal Hospital Ward, but he previously represented Cheyne Ward for many years before the ward boundary review in 2002.

**Priscilla Frazer**  
(20 years' service)



Priscilla Frazer was elected in May 1990 as a Member for North Stanley Ward. She served on the Highways and Traffic Committee, Environmental Services Committee, Environmental Health and Leisure Committee (which she chaired from 1994-96) and the Corporate Management Committee as its Chairman in 2000-01. She was Deputy Mayor in 1996-97 and Mayor in 1999-2000. Mrs. Frazer served as the first Cabinet Member for Corporate Services from 2001-04. She was Chairman of the Holland Park Consultative Committee from 1994 until 1998 and chaired the Holland Park Advisory Group from 2005. She also chaired the Licensing Committee from 2000 and the Public Transport Advisory Group from 2007.

### KEEPING IN TOUCH WITH YOU

We want to be able to communicate with you by email.

If you have access to email, please send your address to: [honsecretary@chelseasociety.org.uk](mailto:honsecretary@chelseasociety.org.uk) simply stating "this is my address" and giving your name.

Our website is at:

[www.chelseasociety.org.uk](http://www.chelseasociety.org.uk)

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