

West London River Group Newsletter Spring 2021

Reports from members and friends

Battersea Society

The Society brought out its first publication recently, **Discovering Battersea's Open Spaces: a walking guide**. **Written by Dr Clare Graham who chairs the open spaces Committee**, this features six mapped local walks, including two along the Thames Path. The publication has been selling well online or contact Dr Graham for more information.

The Thames Path remains busier than usual, thanks to lockdown! While this has created problems at times, it has provided some interesting new opportunities. Most notably, St Mary's riverside churchyard has metamorphosed into rather a pleasant meeting point for locals and visitors alike, with the church providing extra benches and bins and excellent coffee available from a trailer run by a local youth charity. Well worth checking out if you are in the area.

Looking ahead, The Society also hopes to be able to hold its traditional **Summer Party** in the churchyard on the **15th July**.

Like so much else, our 2020 event had to be cancelled; after nearly a year of virtual meetings, we very much look forward to be able to meet again in real life! Meanwhile our Events committee has been running a very popular series of online lectures for members; these have included presentations by Jon Newman on the River Heathwall (a Thames tributary) and Jeanne Rathbone on the history of Battersea's waterfront industries.

In Nine Elms, our Heritage committee continues to produce information panels about different aspects of Battersea's historic riverside. These are displayed on three community notice-boards and then made available on line. Heritage is also providing historical context within the Arch 42 Project, which will open up one arch of the Victorian railway viaduct carrying mainline trains to Waterloo, to create a new route linking the new Northern Line extension, New Covent Garden Market, the US Embassy and the Thames Path.

Wandsworth Council New Borough Plan. Wandsworth Council is in the process of rewriting/updating the Borough-wide five year Local Plan, to include an Area Strategy for Wandsworth's Riverside. A public consultation was held recently on the 400+ page Pre-Publication version; the detailed submission can be found on the Society's web site www.batterseasociety.org.uk

Moorings. So far as current development activity on the Thames Riverside goes, our planning committee's chair reports that her main area of concern is moorings. My impression is that they are growing like Topsy, extending and not always in a beneficial



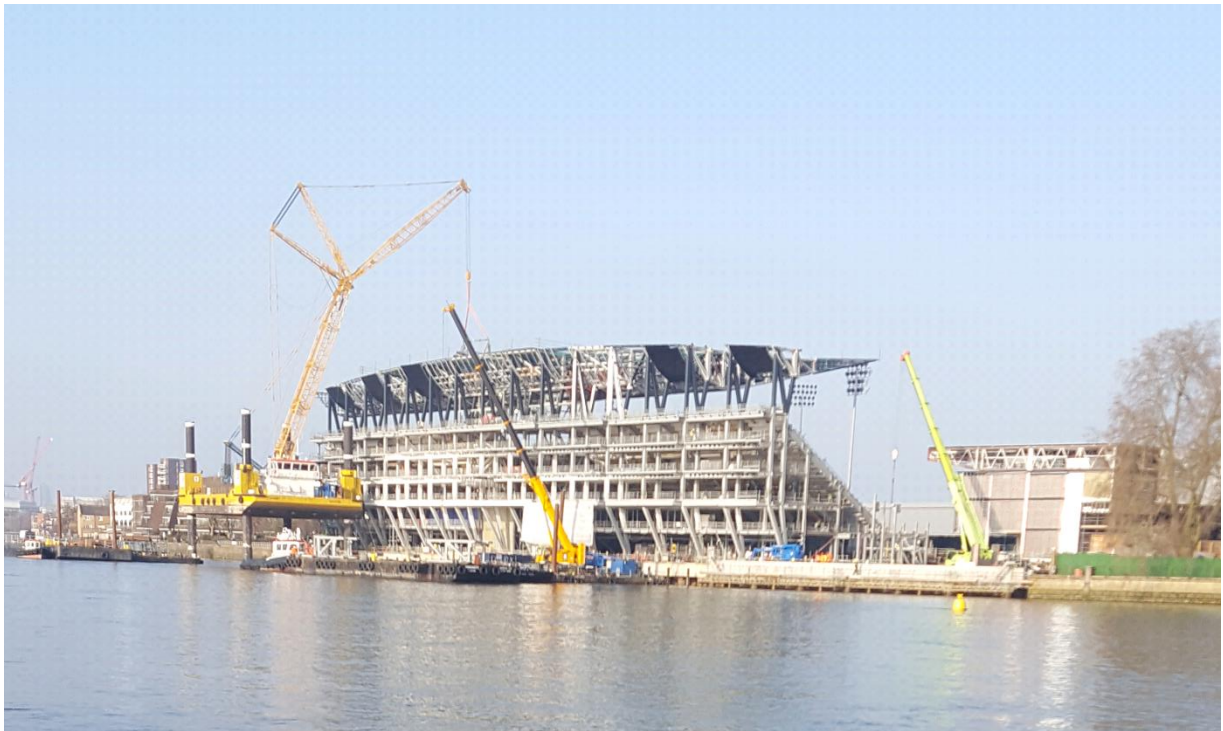
Battersea's Society Walks Booklet

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way... while I am in favour of some residential moorings, we need to be tough about purpose built two storey floating mansions! (See current application for Oyster Wharf, 2021/0457).

Bishops Park

Fulham Football Club new riverside stand. Construction of the new stand has proceeded apace. The new river wall was completed in the autumn and the structure of the new stand is rapidly nearing completion. The many steel components have been brought to the site by river and lifted into place by cranes on barges, the biggest of which is a massive 600 ton jack up barge, the biggest in Europe, capable of lifting 400 ton sub-assemblies. There now follows the process of adding floors, cladding, seating and the internal fittings and furnishings. The plan was to have the new stand in use by the start of next season but with the delays caused by the pandemic, this may not be achievable.



Fulham Football club

Use of footpaths and riverside path. During the pandemic, Bishops Park and the riverside path to Hammersmith have been particularly busy. The Council has tried to persuade runners and cyclists to avoid the path at busy times, sadly with limited success. Keeping social distancing has been very difficult if not impossible.

Barn Elms slipway extension. An application has been made to Richmond Council (ref 21/0858/FUL) for work to extend the length of the slipway. This is to be financed by Fulham FC as mitigation for the extensive encroachment into the river which has taken place on the

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north bank. While the enlargement of the slipway is to be welcomed, the further encroachment into the tidal stream should be avoided if possible.

Fulham Society

Hammersmith Bridge. The results of the tender to run the ferry have been announced but the service will not be opening until the summer. Initial reports indicate that the operator will use embarkation points close to the Bridge on both banks but various consents are required from the planning authorities and the PLA. Things are never as simple as first they seem!

Work at two large projects, Fulham Football Club's new stadium and the Tideway tunnel continues but at a slightly slower pace in view of social distancing and other measures required. The work will inevitably take a little longer and FFC are still using a section of Bishops Park but both sites are quite well contained with the river being used to deliver materials.

Fulham Palace. The Palace has had to close again but the grounds and café are open.

Bishops Park. There has been some concern about the heavy use of the riverside path from Craven Cottage to Hammersmith. The Council has banned cyclists and runners from 10am to 6pm but not everyone is taking notice of this.

Wandsworth Bridge is still under repair but the work is to the underside so traffic is less affected.

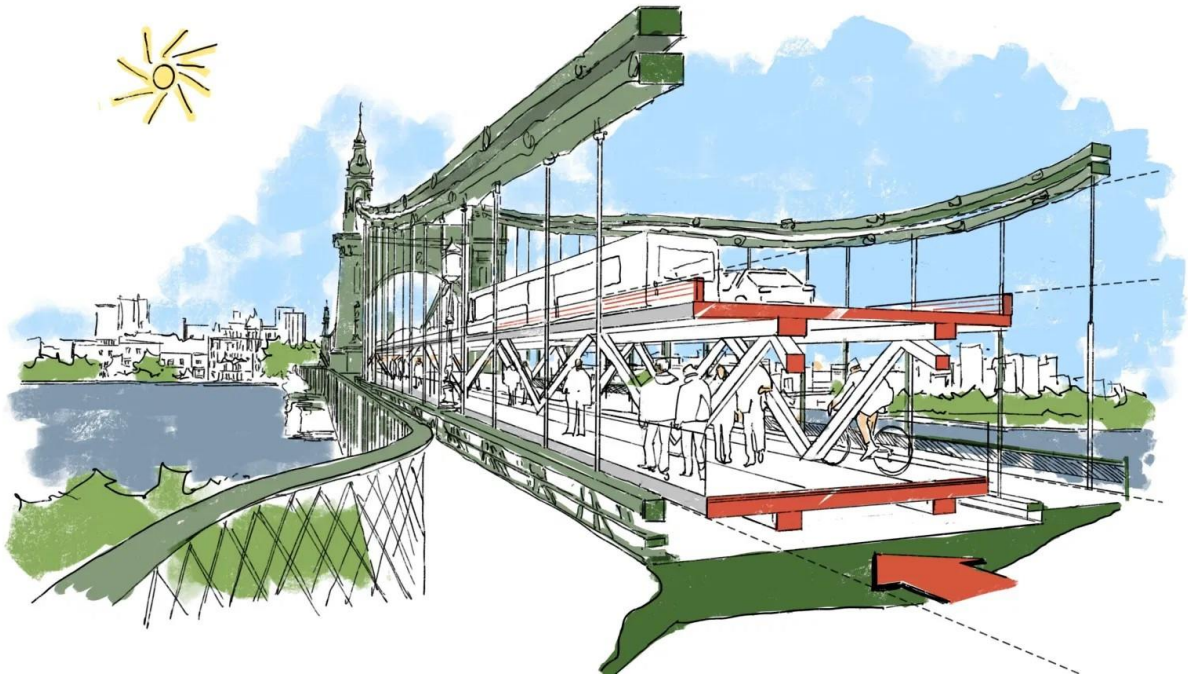
Housing developments. On the Chelsea border, Waterside Reach and Chelsea Creek are nearly complete. Kings Reach is well underway. The former PC World/Currys' site beside Wandsworth Bridge (north side) has an updated planning permission and should start soon.

Hammersmith Society

Hammersmith Bridge Repair. The main news in Hammersmith on its river frontage continues to be the sad saga of the closed bridge. Little progress has been made in progressing repairs, even to the extent of it being safe to reopen for pedestrians and cyclists or for boats to go underneath. It is now two years since it closed for vehicles and since last August to pedestrians and cyclists.

A ferry had been promised for this spring but this is now unlikely to be in operation until late summer. There is ongoing discussion still as to the passenger points of access on both sides of the river. (A zip wire or tank landing craft have been suggested!) A temporary solution for opening the bridge has been proposed by Hammersmith and Fulham Council and a toll to drive across as a means of funding the full repairs. These proposals have yet to be considered by the Task Force to get the bridge work done which was set up by the Government under the chairmanship of roads minister Baroness Vere.

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Hammersmith Bridge: An artist's impression of what might be! (Courtesy of Hammersmith Society)

Hammersmith Riverside. The Hammersmith riverside walk continues to be very busy as a popular place to exercise during the Covid 19 shutdown, to such an extent that it was impossible at busy times to ensure that walkers, cyclists and joggers could ensure "social distancing". Therefore cyclists and joggers are discouraged from using it from 10am to 3pm each day.

Hammersmith Town Hall. Building work is well under way to refurbish the 1930s Town Hall to be replaced with a Civic Square, flats, some office space and a new cinema.

Kew Society.

The towpath has been upgraded along the Kew Meadow Path from the Cemetery to beyond Chiswick Bridge.

There has been an increase in the amount of graffiti particularly on Kew Bridge and Chiswick Bridge which the Council is struggling to keep on top of.

Old Chiswick Protection Society.

Chiswick Eyot. Pollarding of the Chiswick Eyot was undertaken by professional tree surgeons in November 2020. We used to arrange pollarding in January but experience has taught us that earlier in the winter is preferable as the river can flood by January and crossing to the Eyot becomes impossible- as indeed happened this year.

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We then organised 14 volunteer days in November and December to bundle the cut withies, to pollard uncut trees for fresh withes to plant, and to work on the defences around the reed beds on the far side of the Eyot. We had about 40 volunteers, some old and some new, with ages ranging from 8 to 82! We obeyed social distancing rules and all were delighted to be out doing physical work.

Spacehive Funding. Of the Spacehive crowdfunding money raised in 2018/9, £2,000 has still not been spent.

Thames 21 are putting together a plan of work with volunteers, for which they will claim the £2,000 when the work is completed.

Last summer, there were a great many visitors to the Eyot- people walking along the Mall getting their daily exercise during lockdown and being intrigued by the island. OCPS were concerned about the footfall and put up signs asking people to keep off, in order to not disturb nesting birds. It was not clear that the signs had any effect.

This year we sought advice from the London Wetland Centre, who were not sure whether any birds would nest on the Eyot because it floods daily. They suggested that we ask the RSPB to carry out a survey during nesting time, but they have so far failed to reply to emails- we are chasing. In the absence of any evidence that birds do nest there or that signs limit footfall, we have decided not to put up signs this year. This will be kept under review in future years.

Putney Society.

River Races. This time of year should be a busy one for Putney with a celebration of the big rowing races. However the Head of the River Race has been cancelled and the Boat Race happened behind closed doors on The Ouse at Ely in Cambridgeshire on the 4th April. Apart from Covid restrictions, there is of course the fact that passage of boats under Hammersmith Bridge is now almost totally restricted. We are hoping that the Totally Thames Festival scheduled for September will be able to take place.

Putney Embankment. Although the Rowing Clubs are quiet with no rowing at the moment, The Embankment and Towpath are very busy with cyclists, joggers, pop-up coffee stalls walkers and dog walkers, with the inevitable clashes of interest. Although not in our immediate area, we were saddened by the death of Freddie the Hammersmith seal, who was savaged by a dog which was off the lead at the time. However one piece of good news for the embankment has been that Ranelagh Sailing Club has put in a planning application to remove their 1960s and 1970s additions and return their façade to its original more attractive appearance. A plus for the Conservation Area.

Litter picking. The Putney Tidy Towpath Group covers the towpath and foreshore from Queen Elizabeth Walk to Putney Bridge. They have been unable to go out litter clearing as a group during lockdown for reasons of insurance, although individuals, including Duke of Edinburgh students have been keeping up the work. Their bi-monthly group outings will

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begin again in April. Both Wandsworth and Richmond Councils have kindly responded to the Group's requests for more bins and daily collections to deal with the increased number of visitors using the area with the consequent mounds of litter.

Wandsworth Park. As has been the case in other Parks and open spaces, Wandsworth Park has had its share of dog-stealing scares. The Police have been involved and thankfully nobody has actually lost their dog, but dog walkers are warned to be careful. The Friends of Wandsworth Park are to be commended on their initiative to attract swifts to the area by providing nesting boxes for houses in the streets around the Park.

Port of London Authority. The PLA held their Upper Tidal Thames public meeting on Zoom on February 11th. Many topics were covered including much on Hammersmith Bridge. Slides and Qs and as covered at the meeting are available on the PLA website.

Tideway Tunnel. Tideway's teams at Barn Elms and Putney Bridge have continued to work, albeit with Covid measures to protect the workforce. Inevitably timelines have slipped and at present the date of completion for the whole tunnel is sometime in 2025. The next virtual Community Liaison Group meeting will be on the 22nd April at 5.30pm

Wandsworth Council public realm improvements. As part of the Council's plans to improve Putney High Street, the Council is anxious to facilitate connections to the riverside. The pedestrian crossing to the south of Putney Bridge is to be reconfigured with other plans to be finalised.

Tow Path Group

A zoom meeting was held on the 10th March which covered many matters of concern to the Group. The LBRuT confirmed that the joint Tree Survey has been delayed again possibly until the end of May. The survey needs to be coordinated with the PLA in the tree and management survey. It is important to look at trees on the Tow Path in your area which have been renumbered and identified and those that have been missed!

During a recent inspection of trees at **Mortlake**, the reporter was concerned that a number of the landside trees had not been numbered. We will endeavour to find out the reason. The extensive and increased use of the towpath was discussed, as reported elsewhere, with evidence that significant parts of the path have suffered from the soft/rough edge being destroyed and flattened into mud with no habitat remaining for wildlife. It was noted that there appeared to be a significant decline in wildfowl of ducks, gulls and geese.

The PLA revetment repairs continue, with stonework being replaced where possible, however where holes remain after the removal of trees these appear to have been filled with concrete.

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Wandsworth Society

Thames Path. Much of the Thames Path along the Thames riverside which in our area is paved, has been used very heavily during the last few months as people continue to exercise. A similar problem, as experienced elsewhere, is the continuing conflict between users, as cyclists seem to feel that they have somewhat greater priority, with perhaps more speed than care, for other users. The writer is surprised that there have not been more accidents reported.

The writer was pleased to see "wardens"(on bikes) on the Putney/Hammersmith section in recent weeks although their effectiveness may be questioned, as they seemed to be constantly on the telephone.

Wandsworth Bridge. As another report has stated Wandsworth Bridge remains under repair beneath the carriageway but traffic use does not appear to be causing much delay.

Wandle Delta Masterplan. The Society has been involved recently in preparing a submission to Wandsworth Council in response to The Wandle Delta Masterplan. This covers a significant area between the existing town centre and the confluence of the Rivers Thames and Wandle.

The proposals are for the mixed use of the land for residential and commercial purposes but most importantly it is proposed that a new "**Green Corridor**" along the River Wandle will be provided with improved pedestrian and cycle ways to the Thames Path.

The PLA has responded most strongly in their submission that the safeguarded wharves of Cringle, Kirtling, Middle, Smugglers and Pier which are subject to Ministerial Direction should be maintained for commercial use. In addition Feathers Wharf on the eastern bank of the Wandle with the Thames, should be maintained for future use if required, in the meantime the proposals show the northern section of this wharf to become a public open space/park, an objective which the Society has long sought.

Improved access to both the Wandle and Bell Lane Creek will be provided by new pedestrian bridges which could enable more active use of this area for water based activities.

A small link in the Thames Path at high level over the Waste Transfer station (already in place but not open for use) is also sought but this has long been delayed and we understand will rely on funding from the redevelopment of Cringle dock in Battersea.

Dock at Oyster Wharf, Lombard Road. The only other matter brought to our attention recently is another application for the small dock at Oyster Wharf (2021/0457). This is for a permanent residential floating structure. A previous application had been refused by the planning authority but granted on Appeal. The current application is required to keep alive the Appealed application as it would become time expired without this current application. We have decided that no objection will be made.