

The Kew Society Newsletter • Autumn 2021

Welcome....

to our final newsletter of 2021 – certainly a year to remember, though not necessarily one that many of us would like to repeat. However, we hope that many of you will by now have received your booster vaccinations and feel more confident about getting out and about. We are delighted to welcome Shiona Williams as our incoming Chair following our AGM in October – she is well-known across Kew from her work as trustee at the Kew Community Trust and from having lived in Kew since 1977. We are grateful to Roger Mason for all the work he has done over the last three years, and know that he will continue to support The Kew Society and share his expertise on areas such as air quality. He let us have some of his thoughts with us in a fascinating interview looking back on his time as Chair.

I hope some of you will have seen our new website, and that you approve! Do let us know if you have any comments or requests for issues you would like us to cover in our newsletter or on the website – we are always open to suggestions.



Roger Mason receives a token of appreciation from Mike Adams

We were delighted to see around 110 people attend our AGM and to be able to meet so many people face-to-face. We were, of course, very sad to see our Chair – Roger Mason – leave after a highly productive three years: he gave an excellent presentation on the work that the Kew Society has done over the past year. This included the work of the Planning sub-committee on developments in Kew and in surroundings areas; the work of the environment sub-committee which included tackling the graffiti on the railway bridges; the events organised during the year which, as a result of the pandemic, have been inevitably curtailed and focused on a series of well-attended webinars. The Chair explained how, to keep our members informed and, hopefully, entertained, a series of *Kew Miscellany* bulletins had been sent out by email during the year covering a range of subjects, many of which related to local history. Shiona Williams then introduced herself to the members – we look forward to hearing more of her ideas for the Kew Society.

To conclude, Lord Darroch – former British Ambassador to the United States, who lives in Kew – gave us a fascinating and insightful talk on his time as Ambassador, including some of the challenges that arose at that time, with the opportunity for questions. His book – *Collateral Damage – Britain, America and Europe in the 'Age of Trump'* – sets out far more detail than he was able to include in what was of necessity a brief overview. However, he certainly whetted our appetites and we hope he will agree to come and speak to us again.



Lord Darroch



Shiona Williams takes over as Chair

Roger Mason – a reflection

We thought you would be interested to hear some reflections from Roger Mason about his time as Chair of the Kew Society, so we interviewed him to ask him for his thoughts on the last three years.

Claire Bethel (CB): How did you become involved in the Kew Society?

Roger Mason (RM): After retirement from academic life and medical research, I found other things to do! I became interested in air pollution and its effects on our health. I started to make my own measurements of nitrogen oxides in Kew, and people assumed (wrongly) that I was an expert! This drew me into Kew Society affairs. In 2014, the Society received a report from consultants about whether the forthcoming relocation of Brentford FC Stadium with its large 'enabling development' would affect our air quality. It was very technical, and the Society asked me to help them assess it. After that I became involved in further air-quality activities for the Society, was co-opted on to the Committee and, in 2018, elected Chair.

CB: What would you say have been your key achievements in the last three years?

RM: Half my time in office has been in the COVID-19 pandemic with its restrictions. I am proud to have led the Society through this extraordinary time. The Society has been firing on all cylinders throughout. The support of a strong team of Trustees and other helpers, willing to carry on regardless and sometimes to do things in new ways, has ensured this.

Communication with our membership in the absence of live events has been key to holding the Society together. I introduced *A Kew Miscellany* – a regular email to the membership – with articles and other items on local history etc. early in the pandemic, to keep in touch. This has been remarkably popular and is likely to continue in the future.

I have always been appalled by the lack of facilities for people with restricted mobility to cross the railway at Kew Gardens Station. In 2019, we applied for and were awarded a Community Grant from Richmond Council for a feasibility study to address this problem. Subsequently, with the help of two fellow trustees and senior managers from TfL/London Underground, Network Rail and Richmond Council, who gave generously of their time, we prepared a technical brief, inviting bids from architects and engineers to provide a solution. Eight options were considered, with a new bridge accessed by lifts selected as the best.

Meanwhile, the pandemic arrived, the railway companies were severely compromised financially, and further progress has been slow. It is possible that the Government will release new funds in 2024 to improve accessibility at stations. If so, we are ready to press the main stakeholders to bid for funding.

CB: What were the challenges and how were they overcome?

RM: The Council's sudden introduction of the segregated Kew Road cycle lanes under emergency COVID legislation was a major challenge, since it was done without any advanced planning to accommodate the loss of parking and drop off/pick up points for coaches visiting Kew Gardens. The Society has long opposed coach parking on Kew Road and have suggested alternative sites to the Council since at least 2013. We have continued, vigorously, to do this during the pandemic and to offer alternatives to the Council's new one-way system on Kew Green and coach drop off /pick up at the Elizabeth Gate of Kew Gardens. Disappointingly, our efforts have had little success.

Gardening Update

The end of September saw us harvest the hops along North Road, close to the station. We collected four big bags of hops which have gone to Energy Garden – our partners at the station – to be combined with hops from other stations to make 3,000 cans of beer!



At the station, the planting on the Richmond-bound platform has performed beautifully over the summer, with lots of lilac, pink and purple flowers providing a colourful welcome for visitors to Kew Gardens. It's always very rewarding when passengers stop to admire the beds and compliment the gardeners working away. We have recently planted some pink cyclamens along the edge of the woodland bed on the opposite platform: these will complement the purple liriopie to give some lovely autumn colour. Why not walk down to



Hop picking in Kew Gardens Station

have a look next time you are waiting for a train into town?

The Kew Society stalls at the Horticultural Show and the Kew Village market were a great opportunity to chat to local people and for people to find out more about what we do. It's great that several people signed up to find out more about joining the gardening team: the more gardeners we have, the more we will be able to do to make Kew look beautiful and to improve biodiversity.

Richmond Heathrow Campaign

In September, there was disappointing news regarding a third runway at Heathrow when the Government refused to review its approval for expansion at the airport. Ministers had been under pressure to reassess the Airports National Policy Statement (ANPS) amid escalating concerns about climate change.

Last year the Court of Appeal ruled that the government's backing for the Heathrow plan was unlawful because it failed to take account of UK climate change commitments under the 2016 Paris Agreement. The Supreme Court overturned this in December but the government still faced calls to review its policy on airport expansion.

Despite this setback, the Richmond Heathrow Campaign has continued to highlight its concerns regarding aviation's impact on climate change. It has submitted a detailed response to the Environmental Audit Committee's Inquiry into Net Zero Aviation and Shipping, drawing attention to the industry's opposition to managing growth in demand and instead relying on efficiency gains and yet-to-be developed sustainable aviation fuels. It has also responded to a Department for Transport (DfT) Consultation on the development of a framework for its Jet Zero strategy, which aims to support the aviation industry to decarbonise. The RHC's premise is that aviation growth should be shared across the UK and not concentrated at Heathrow and other South-East airports, and it continues to support the case for no new runways in the UK.

Planning

The summer has been a quiet period for planning applications in Kew. Most applications have been for home extensions – typically loft conversions with side/rear extensions. Even these have reduced in number in August and September.

The proposed development of 32 Haverfield Gardens to provide five houses and a turning area for the road was refused by Richmond Council on 5 October. Reasons included damage to heritage assets and to the amenity of neighbours.

A revised scheme for Caxton House – 110 Kew Green – has been submitted and is under assessment. This scheme attempts to deal with the many objections to the glass box roof extension in the previous schemes.

The application for a 20m high telecoms mast with associated cabinets by the bus stop outside Broome Court, Sandycombe Road, has, thankfully, been refused by the Council.

In Mortlake, we were delighted that the Mayor of London turned down the applications for the redevelopment of the former Stag Brewery site at a public hearing in July, citing inadequate levels and type of affordable housing and the unacceptable impact of the additional height and massing on historic buildings, riverside views and neighbouring residents.

Turning to policy, the government has put the brakes on the Planning Bill, which had aroused fierce opposition. This Bill aimed to streamline the planning process, creating three zones. The Kew Society submitted detailed comments on the consultation document, highlighting our concerns that local involvement was being curtailed rather than being improved as suggested.

The Rt. Hon. Michael Gove has recently been appointed to succeed Robert Jenrick MP as Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities – we wait to see what his approach will be. We took the opportunity to write to him immediately requesting that he review Robert Jenrick's decision not to call-in the Homebase Manor Circus decision by Mayor Sadiq Khan to approve the development of a taller and larger scheme. Unfortunately, the reply was that he did not intend to change his decision.

We have also asked him to call in the Homebase/Tesco developments at Gillette Corner which have been approved by Hounslow Council and the Mayor. These schemes would be visible from Royal Botanic Gardens Kew (RBGK) looking westward from the Old Isleworth Gate, thus harming what is a nearly unspoilt view: a



The proposed development at Chiswick Curve

Capability Brown landscape running from Kew Gardens overleaping the Thames to its 'borrowed landscape' of Syon Park.

Also north of the river, the application has now been submitted for Holly House at the Chiswick Roundabout. This effectively replaces the Chiswick Curve scheme, which was finally turned down on appeal by the High Court in March 2020. The Kew Society opposed the Chiswick Curve because of the harmful effect it would have had on the RBGK and Kew Green. The recent application, at 24 storeys, is three storeys higher than the Chiswick Curve. We are reviewing this.

Events

Our last webinar *The Gardens of Windsor Great Park* by John Anderson – Keeper of the Gardens, Crown Estate, Windsor Great Park – offered viewers splendid visual tour, and the Kew Society hopes to follow up with a 2022 visit to soak up this fantastic landscape.

Over summer 2021, our stands at the August Kew Horticultural Society Show and the September Kew Village Market offered a chance to chat with members, residents and visitors. A balmy September evening picnic event was held in the grounds of the National Archives and offered an opportunity to raise a glass to the future.

Twenty seven early-morning risers met at the WWT London Wetland Centre in late September for a guided tour and a viewing of their two 'diva' otters at feeding time!



Kew Society members at WWT Barnes



Sarah Rutherford

Following these tiny steps back to normality, our first 'live' October event was enjoyed by over 55 socially-distanced attendees at the National Archives, with an excellent, thought-provoking presentation by Dr. Sarah Rutherford entitled 'The Finest Panorama in Kew – Defending 'Capability' Brown's Arcadian Thames'.

Future events include:

- **Early November:** Draw-Off of the River Thames walk, Saturday 6th November.
- **Friday 12th November 2021:** *More Than Poppies: Commemorating The Dead Of The Great War In Kew* – talk by Marian Mollett.



Produce Tent at the Horticultural Show

- **Friday 26th November 2021:** *Kew and The East India Museum* – talk by Leila Redpath.

We will burst into 2022 with:

- **Wednesday 19th January 2022:** *A Slice of Eel Pie: Boatyards & Bands, Artists & Inventors* – talk by Celia Holman.
- **Sunday 6th February 2022:** Kew Society stand at Kew Village Market.
- **Wednesday 23rd February 2022:** *Twickenhamshire – The Riverside Gardens and Villas of Eighteenth-century Twickenham* – talk by Chris Sumner.
- **March 2022:** Kew Trees Presentation/Walk (details tbc) – Craig Ruddick, Arboricultural Manager, Parks & Open Spaces.
- **Sunday 20th March 2022:** *Rock 'n' Roll Richmond – Swinging Sixties Bus Tour.*

Enormous thanks to The National Archives team and Nick Hutchings for their help in keeping events going over 2021 and supporting us.

The Events team – Mary, Sue and Jane



Greenhouse gases, climate change and you!

COP26 – the 26th United Nations Climate Change Conference in Glasgow – is almost upon us. The great and the good (and the not-so-good) will assemble to commit to limiting the emission of greenhouse gases, stopping global temperature from rising above 1.5°C and the consequent ecological catastrophe. Every fraction of a degree above that will mean more communities disappearing, more habitats destroyed, more lives lost.

Carbon Dioxide is the dominant greenhouse gas, produced mainly by humans burning fossil fuels, industrial activity and land use change. Moreover, up to 65% of methane – even deadlier than CO₂ as a greenhouse gas – comes from human activities, including agriculture and waste management.

We often hear people say “what is the point of us trying to reduce our personal contribution to greenhouse gas emissions (GGE) when China continues to open new coal-fired power stations, Australia is mining and selling coal as long as there is a market, and Brazil is turning a blind eye to felling the Amazon forest for grazing land?” That is missing the point. It is people who use the electricity produced by power stations. Its generation accounts for 24% of GGE in the UK. It is people who burn carbon fuels in their cars, and people who eat red meat – creating a demand for more cattle and change of land use to graze them.

If we all try to reduce our consumption of energy-based services, drive our cars less, use public transport more, and change our dietary habits, demand for CO₂-producing activities – such as those listed above – will fall and, with it, GGE. We should at least try.

Here are five ways to make a difference:

1. Leave the car at home

Walk, cycle, scoot, or take public transport whenever possible. A recent study found that in cities, switching just one car trip per day to cycling reduces an individual’s carbon footprint on average by about 0.5 tonnes per year. Transport is the largest greenhouse gas emitter in the UK at 28% of the total.

2. Fly less

Choose holiday destinations nearer to home. Travel by rail if possible. A single trip, London to Amsterdam – city centre to city centre – emits 58kg CO₂ by air but only 3kg CO₂ by rail, and the costs and time taken are not very different.

3. Use less energy at home, saving CO₂ and money

Residential GGE emissions account for 15% of the total in the UK. The Energy Trust reckons that in a four-person household, savings to be made per year include: turning the thermostat down a degree and wearing an extra layer (£55); using smart heater controls (£70); replacing bulbs with LEDs (£30); switching off the TV standby (up to £35) and, of course, making sure your home is well-insulated.

4. Cut back on consumption and waste

Waste management accounts for 4% of our GGE. Avoid single-use items, fast food and fast fashion. Do not buy more than you need, including food. Recycle via charity shops or selling on.

5. Eat less meat and dairy products

Agriculture accounts for at least 10% GGE in the UK. Eat red meat less frequently and in smaller portions. Choose UK and local fresh food products to reduce GGE produced by long transportation and refrigeration.

Air Quality in the Borough and in Kew in lockdown

Richmond Council's Air Quality Monitoring Group met this summer following the publication of the Council's Annual Air Quality Status Report for 2020. The Group includes LBRuT's Environmental Health Pollution Manager [Air Quality], Council air quality officers, Cllr Alex Ehmann, Chair of LBRuT's Transport and Air Quality Committee and representatives of several community groups interested in air quality. The Kew Society is represented by Roger Mason. Generally, air quality in the Borough improved during the lockdown. Only 12 sites in the Borough exceeded the legal limit for NO₂ (40ug/m³) compared with 29 the year before. Richmond Town Centre had the worst air quality, with an annual mean concentration of 60ug/m³ for NO₂. Of the nine sites monitored in and around Kew, Chalkers Corner (46ug/m³) and the Lower Mortlake Road near Trinity Road (41ug/m³) exceeded the legal limit, but other sites on Mortlake Road, Kew Road and Kew Green had legally compliant concentrations between 30-33ug/m³. These sites were generally above the legal limit in pre-pandemic years. The small number of sites in the borough monitored for particulates (PMs) were compliant with legal limits. Officers are concerned that air quality may deteriorate on the South Circular Road as it runs through Kew (Mortlake Road and Kew Green) after October 2021, fearing that supermarket delivery fleet managers will divert their non-compliant vehicles on to the circular roads to avoid a penalty after the introduction of the inner London ULEZ. The London picture for NO₂ is still closely linked to traffic/transport, and greater working from home does not appear to be a complete solution for reducing NO₂ levels in all locations. Car use was still extensive in the latter part of the lockdown even though people were still working from home. With a return to normal traffic levels in recent months, it is likely that NO₂ levels will rise again. We await the 2021 report. PM10 levels across the city were only marginally affected by the lockdown. It is thought that much PM10 pollution is blown in from industrial sites in northern Europe by E or NE winds. This raises a question as to how much LBRuT can do to achieve lower PM10 levels.



Traffic on the South Circular

See the 2020 report at https://www.richmond.gov.uk/media/21482/annual_status_report_2021.pdf

Kew Gardens, Community Open Week

From 12th to 18th July, The Royal Botanic Gardens Kew hosted a fun-filled week of hands-on activities for local communities. Activities were free and designed to be accessible for everyone, including a creative writing walk around the Hive, youth-led scavenger hunts in the Temperate House, workshops at the Community Allotment, family 'nature school' sessions, sensory tours and a community leaders' day.

This was an excellent opportunity to welcome old friends back to the Gardens, as well as new groups.



We had over 1,000 participants throughout the week. Everyone had a brilliant time and we have received so much positive feedback. For example:

"I am so appreciative of this community week; I have felt free to express myself creatively through prompts and the whole experience of being in the space. Kew is a huge inspiration just to be surrounded by nature and flowers and plants."

Richmond Climate Week 2021

Since Richmond Council declared a climate emergency in July 2019, it has been working hard to help make the borough a greener and better place to live and to reduce the carbon emissions from Richmond upon Thames in its quest to help tackle climate change. As part of its commitment to taking positive climate action, it has teamed up with its partners at *Habitats and Heritage* to deliver a week-long programme of practical activities, talks, and educational events during Richmond Climate Week, which will run from 1st to 7th November 2021. The aim is that Richmond Climate Week will help the residents, businesses and communities to learn about climate change, understand what can be done to help prevent it, and to inspire everyone to take action. Accordingly, the Council has arranged the following events: for timings and more details, see the website at richmond.gov.uk.

- Monday 1st November** What happens to recycling? The journey of waste Online
The Waste Team & West London Waste will give a discussion on the journey of your waste and recycling.
- Monday 1st November** Food waste cooking demonstration Online
Local Chef Livio from Twickenham Italian restaurant *Masaniello* will show how to put together two delicious meals from common food waste items
- Tuesday 2nd November** Energy Café Whitton Community Centre
Find help to reduce your energy consumption, reduce your carbon emissions and help you save money too.
- Tuesday 2nd November** Cargo bike event Holy Trinity CE Primary and Nursery School
A chance to try out some eco-friendly cargo bikes at this pop-up event
- Wednesday 3rd November** Primary & Secondary Schools Climate Summit York House, Twickenham
Schools have already signed up for these two events for their pupils interested in climate change.
- Wednesday 3rd November** Marble Hill Park Heritage Landscape Tour Marble Hill Park
A stroll around Marble Hill Park to learn about its heritage & history and the effects of climate change.
- Thursday 4th November** Advice on Period Properties and the Climate with Society for the Protection
of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) Online
Period properties hold important historical value and are under threat from changing and more extreme weather patterns in the UK. Find out how to protect these heritage homes in the wake of the climate crisis.
- Friday 5th November** Stepping out of the car Online
Explore the diverse ways parents of babies, toddlers, and other children gain support away from the family car.
- Saturday 6th November** Net Zero and Climate Change Open Forum Orleans House Gallery
An open forum with stalls from local climate groups, community groups and charities. Children welcome.
- Sunday 7th November** Thames Foreshore Litter Pick Whittaker Avenue, Richmond
The Draw Off Litter Pick is a clean-up of the River Thames foreshore when the water is at its lowest level. Bring wellington boots, gloves and clothes that are okay to get muddy.

Interview with Alison Greenwood

Our editor spoke with Dr. Alison Greenwood who runs a local charity – *Dose of Nature* – to find out about what the charity offers to people in Kew. Alison is a psychologist by background who has lived in Kew for over 30 years. She worked as a psychologist in the NHS for many years until she decided to set up a charity to promote the mental health benefits of engaging with the natural world. Although based in Kew, *Dose of Nature* delivers its ‘nature prescriptions’ across the whole of the Borough.

Claire Bethel (CB): I wonder if you would tell our readers what inspired you to set up *Dose of Nature*?

Alison Greenwood: (AG): I’ve studied and researched the mental health benefits of engaging with nature for many years, and wholeheartedly believe that spending more time outside in natural environments is not only an effective way of treating mental health issues, but is essential for the wellbeing of us all. However, within the NHS it is not always easy to introduce new ways of working, so in 2018 I decided to leave the NHS to set up *Dose of Nature* to develop our ‘nature prescriptions’ and demonstrate how effective these can be in helping people suffering with all kinds of mental health issues. Although we’re a charity, we still work directly with the NHS, and all our referrals are from GPs or other mental health professionals.

CB: How would you summarise some of the key benefits of nature for people’s mental health and wellbeing?

AG: Spending more time in nature has a positive impact on both our physiological and psychological processes.

When we're outside in natural spaces, our blood pressure, heart rate and cortisol levels all reduce and we feel less stressed. Our alpha wave activity in our brains – an indicator of a wakefully relaxed state – also increases, lifting our mood, and leaving us feeling more alive and motivated. Spending more time in nature also boosts our immune functioning by increasing our natural killer-cell count in our blood, and this has a positive impact, not just on our physical health but our mental health too.

CB: How does the charity encourage people to spend more time connecting with nature?

AG: Explaining the science behind why nature is so beneficial to our mental health seems to be a great motivator for everyone. Beyond that, we tailor our ten-week nature prescriptions to people's individual needs and preferences, so everyone's experience will be different. Whilst one person might be encouraged to spend more time outside by being active in nature, going for walks or taking up a new sport, another might enjoy being creative, discovering their inner artist, taking nature photos, writing a poem or creating music outside, inspired by the nature around them. Some people love to increase their knowledge about the natural world, learning to recognise birdsongs or identify trees, whilst others prefer just to 'be' in nature, enjoying more meditative and mindful activities. Some people arrive ready to embrace their 'inner hippy', whilst others are reluctant to even touch a tree, let alone hug one! I think the key to the success of our programme has been to understand that we are all different, and that everyone arrives with different experiences of nature, and as a consequence will likely want to engage in different ways.

CB: Can you tell our readers how they might go about getting a Dose of Nature prescription and what might that entail?

AG: It's quite simple: you just need to go to your GP and ask for one, and they will be able to refer you directly to our service. Once we receive your referral, you will have an initial appointment with one of our psychologists, who will explain the programme in more detail and find out more about your situation. If together we decide that a *Dose of Nature* prescription would be helpful for you, we then match you with one of our trained *Dose of Nature* guides to begin the ten-week individual programme.

CB: How do volunteers contribute to the work of Dose of Nature and how do people become volunteers?

AG: Our fabulous, enthusiastic and compassionate *Dose of Nature* guides are an essential component of our nature prescriptions, meeting individuals on a weekly basis for a period of ten weeks in natural spaces accessible to them. They explain the science behind the mental health benefits of engaging with nature, and find ways to increase individuals' connection with the natural world.

If you would like to find out more about training to become one of our *Dose of Nature* guides, then take a look at our website – www.doseofnature.org.uk – or just get in touch at info@doseofnature.org.uk.



Alison Greenwood



A Group examining Nature

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