



The Kew Society Newsletter • Spring 2021

Welcome

to our Spring newsletter. I'm sure you are pleased that lockdown restrictions are gradually being lifted and hope that you are all feeling safer now the vaccination is being rolled out – and with such efficiency too. Sadly, the relaxation of the restrictions has not come in time to enable the Kew Summer Fête planned for Saturday 19th June to go ahead this year, and so it has been postponed until 2022. But there is much to look forward to and we all hope that life will start to return to normal very soon.

We proudly present

our new website. We hope that it will be live by the time you read this, or shortly afterwards. The website address (URL) will remain the same (kewsociety.org) where you will find all the familiar content. Do let us know if you have any comments.

Kew Retail Park

Recent press articles report that part of the Kew Retail Park has been sold by its present owner – UK Commercial Property REIT – to “a leading UK housebuilder”. The housebuilder is thought to be Berkeley Homes, but that has not yet been confirmed by the company. The area sold is that part of the Retail Park currently occupied by Sports Direct, TK Maxx, Gap, Next and Boots. The reported acquisition does not include the Marks &



Spencer building. There is currently no information about how the site may be redeveloped, and it is likely to be some time before this information is available. The Kew Society will be keeping a close eye on the site and will update members as soon as there is any further information.

Community Awards

The Kew Society was delighted to see so many local people and organisations recognised in the recent Community Heroes Awards 2020, which was celebrated virtually. These reflected the contributions made by many local people throughout the Borough who had stepped up to deliver support and assistance within their community, including those who had done so in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Our own nominations included the Kew Neighbourhood Association (KNA) which, along with the other seven Neighbourhood Associations, won the Community Group of the Year. Their work was recognised as playing a major part in the ongoing voluntary sector response to COVID-19 in the borough. We had also nominated both Squires and Kew Convenience Store for the Business Contribution in the Community award and were delighted to see them shortlisted. See the website below for full details.

https://www.richmond.gov.uk/council/news/press_office/campaigns_and_events/community_heroes/community_heroes_winners_and_nominees

Community spirit blooms in Kew

Last year, Jamie Reger wrote the article below for the Young Reporter scheme run by Newsquest for schools.

Residents of a street in Kew have come together to rejuvenate a neglected patch of land at the end of their road. Over lockdown, people living on Taylor Avenue started a WhatsApp support group which brought the community closer together. One day, a member commented about an ignored, small piece of land at the end of the road that had been left to accumulate rubbish. The whole community rallied around the idea of turning this forgotten patch into a small garden. A committee was set up, and Venetia Harper – the coordinator – sought permission from the Council. She said that “it seemed to me that it was a great opportunity to create something that was a street, community project”. The whole project has had an overwhelmingly positive response, with Richmond Council and the Kew Society being supportive. Over half of the fifty-seven households in the street have donated money towards the project, with many of them also offering to help with the upkeep of the area. Commenting on the enthusiastic response from the whole community, Venetia said “I feel very lucky to live in Taylor Avenue”.



The whole street community has come together in support of the project, with committee member Faith Polya organising the volunteer gardeners. “Faith has been amazing,” said Venetia. Faith organised the volunteers into working parties, who have already cleared the site and planted bulbs. Faith said “it has been great to combine a fresh air workout, a social event and improving an environment.” The project has been important to the community as it has shown how everyone has really come together despite the difficulties presented by the coronavirus. People such as Rinku George – a committee member who drew up a detailed plan for the garden – have contributed their individual skills to create a community garden.

The garden has been created to have a positive impact on the natural environment and biodiversity of the street, with Faith saying “the aim is that, as well as looking pretty, the wildflowers will provide food and habitat for a wide variety of insects.” The planting of wildflowers, a bird nesting-box and a formal shrub area have all been planned for the coming year. Over the coming months, the once-abandoned piece of land will have been replanted and kept clear thanks to their joint effort. The project is set to continue, making it somewhere the entire street can enjoy and be proud of.

We can report that so far this year the spring bulbs have come into bloom to everyone’s delight and the recently planted perennials have been much admired.

Richmond Heathrow Campaign: Department for Transport Consultation on Night Flights

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a reduction in the number of night flights landing at Heathrow in the early hours of the morning (04.30-06.00) from sixteen to just three or four.

The improvement to life in Richmond and Kew has been substantial. Not since the Icelandic volcano ash air closures in 2010 have early mornings here been so peaceful.

In its recent response to the Department for Transport’s consultation on night flights, the Richmond Heathrow Campaign (RHC) has argued that the current number of flights should not be increased and a total ban on Heathrow air traffic between 23.00 and 07.00 should be introduced in stages and completed by 2024.

In the meantime, starting with the regime in 2022, all unscheduled flights between 23.00-07.00 (other than a few dispensations for VIP and emergency flights) should be banned, and the more noisy types of scheduled flights should also be banned. The RHC can see no reason why arrivals need to be scheduled so early. All are from airports that also have flights landing at Heathrow later in the morning, and other major airports from the same parts of the world do not have night time arrivals into London. Night flights do not enhance Heathrow connectivity and add no clear economic value. There is no economic cost to the UK if all night flights arrived during the day, and this includes unscheduled late-running flights after 23.00 and unscheduled early arrivals before 07.00.

The campaign to end the misery of night flights over Richmond and Kew has been long, but now there are grounds for optimism. The 2015 Airports Commission recommended a ban on all scheduled night flights between 23.00 and 06.30, albeit in exchange for airport expansion. There is a growing awareness of the overall environmental impact of aviation, which is driving more analyses of the wider costs and impact of flying.

The proposal for banning all night flights from 23.00-07.00 is therefore becoming increasingly achievable, and the RHC will continue to pursue it.

To read the RHC’s response in full please go to <https://www.richmondheathrowcampaign.org/nightflights.htm>

Ultra-Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) update

The new boundary of the ULEZ will be the inner side of the South Circular Road from 25th October 2021, as shown in the Kew Society Newsletter, Autumn 2020. If your car is not compliant with the emission standards required, you will have to pay a daily charge of £12.50 if you enter, or live and drive in, the ULEZ. Check whether you are liable at <https://tfl.gov.uk/modes/driving/check-your-vehicle/>. The Kew Society



and Richmond Council have told Transport for London (TfL) that the new boundary will cut Kew in two. The river forms a natural barrier to roads off the inner side of the South Circular (Mortlake Rd and A205 over Kew Green), but they lead to important places like the Crematorium, Townmead Road Recycling Centre, Kew Retail Park, Richmond Medical Group's Surgery in Levett Square and to many residential properties. Nevertheless, these roads will be in the ULEZ. Richmond Council opposes this, and will continue to demand ULEZ boundary changes in Kew. They hosted an online Community Conversation on 1st February, where residents could question Alex Williams, Director of City Planning, and other senior TfL officers about the ULEZ. Over 300 residents attended and many asked questions, challenging the boundary. However, TfL remain intransigent about the boundary position.

Planning

The new London Plan was finally published by the Mayor of London in March 2021. One of the main changes has been an increased scrutiny of the policy on tall buildings. In a

letter to the Mayor in December 2020, the Secretary of State stated: *'I believe boroughs should be empowered to choose where tall buildings are built within their communities'*, and the new London Plan states (D9) *'Tall buildings should be developed only in locations that are identified as suitable in Development Plans'*. This focus

on the importance of decision-making at borough level is encouraging, but sits very oddly with the Secretary of State's decision – as reported in our last Newsletter – not to 'call in' (take over) the Mayor's decision to approve the massive Homebase development in Manor Road, which Richmond Council had refused due inter alia to the site definitively not being in an area they had identified as being suitable for tall buildings (those above six storeys).

In March we reiterated our September 2020 objection to the proposed large-scale redevelopment of the Mortlake Brewery, which would represent a 40% increase in residential units from the earlier designs, swelling the population of Mortlake by up to 90%. This will undoubtedly lead to a substantial increase in traffic levels and associated pollution in an area already consistently over the legal limit for nitrogen dioxide. The GLA planning team will consider the responses to the consultations and make their recommendations to the Mayor.

Across the river in Hounslow, the large-scale redevelopment

of the Homebase and Tesco sites at Gillette Corner were approved at a Hounslow Planning Committee meeting on 8th April on the back of a positive recommendation by the borough's planning officers. Planning committee members acknowledged the harmful effect of the tall building on local heritage assets, including Kew Gardens, but concluded that on balance this harm was outweighed by the benefit of the additional homes provided. We originally objected in November 2020, but the applicant submitted additional information in January, including assessments of the scheme's impact on views from various additional locations requested by Kew Gardens. The applicant concluded that the scheme would still have no impact on Kew Gardens. Along with over 500 others, we sent a further objection in February, including photographs to demonstrate that the impact would be material, spoiling the historic view from the western edge of Kew Gardens across the meadows of Syon Park and completely blocking the view of the attractive Gillette Tower.

MAYOR OF LONDON

THE LONDON PLAN



THE SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT
STRATEGY FOR GREATER LONDON

MARCH 2021

In September 2019, we fed into a consultation by Hounslow Council on the Great West Corridor Review, which is due to become part of Hounslow's Local Plan. The Great West Corridor – identified in the Mayor's London Plan as an Opportunity Area for extensive development – essentially comprises the mile or so ('Golden Mile') stretch of the A4 leading up to Chiswick Roundabout. Issues we highlighted which could have a great impact on Kew, included tall buildings, pollution levels and transport. The Review will be the subject of a public hearing by a government-appointed Planning Inspector later this year, and we are consulting with other local amenity groups to feed into this hearing.



Events

Using webinars for our talks has been a learning curve for The Kew Society, but the Events Team has just planned our fifth such session and hopes all Members and guests have enjoyed the content and variety on offer. Talks are free to view, then usually recorded and made available on the TKS website. Since January 2021, presentations have covered:

- ***Dental History and Plants – The Good, The Bad & The Ugly*** by Dr. Margaret Wilson, Honorary Curator of the British Dental Association Museum.
- ***The Arcadian Thames – Flood Plains & Sustainability – focus on The Old Deer Park*** by Jason Debney, Co-ordinator, The Thames Landscape Strategy.
- ***Five acres, one rood and four perches – the early history of Kew's Lawn Crescent*** by Stephen Bartlett.
- ***Henry VIII and the Men Who Made Him*** by Tracy Borman, who enthralled us with snippets from her most recent book about the life of this famous King.

The Kew Society would like to extend enormous thanks to The National Archives team and our own Nick Hutchings for their technical expertise in ensuring the smooth running and viewing of our webinars.

Presentations planned in the coming months

Wednesday 12th May 2021 – 7.00pm start: ***The Flowering of Kew Gardens – In Art*** by Chris Mills – who headed up the Library, Art and Archives at RBG Kew until his recent retirement.

This webinar will provide an introduction to artists such as Francis Bauer, Sir Joseph Hooker, Walter Hood Fitch, Marianne North and Matilda Smith, and will conclude with an overview of some of the outstanding women artists of the Twentieth and Twenty First centuries.

Wednesday 16th June 2021 – 7.00pm start: ***Just The Tonic – a natural history of tonic water*** by Mark Nesbitt and Kim Walker, based on the new book by Mark Nesbitt, Ethnobotanist and Curator of the Economic Botany Collection at RBG Kew, together with Kim Walker, RBG Kew and the Royal Holloway College, University of London.

Just the Tonic is an accessible yet informative history of tonic water: its connections to the major disease malaria, the cure discovered in the bitter bark of the cinchona tree and its constituent alkaloid quinine.

Wednesday 7th July 2021, 7.00pm start: ***Connecting Woolf to Kew and Richmond*** by Peter Fullagar. Virginia Woolf – the iconic modernist writer – is generally linked with the Bloomsbury area of central London, but the areas of Kew and Richmond were equally important to Virginia's life and work.

Virginia Woolf in Richmond explores how the town and surrounding areas influenced the writer through her diaries and letters. The book has been published to coincide with, and support the campaign for, the first full-size bronze statue of the writer, to be placed on Richmond riverside.

Other Events

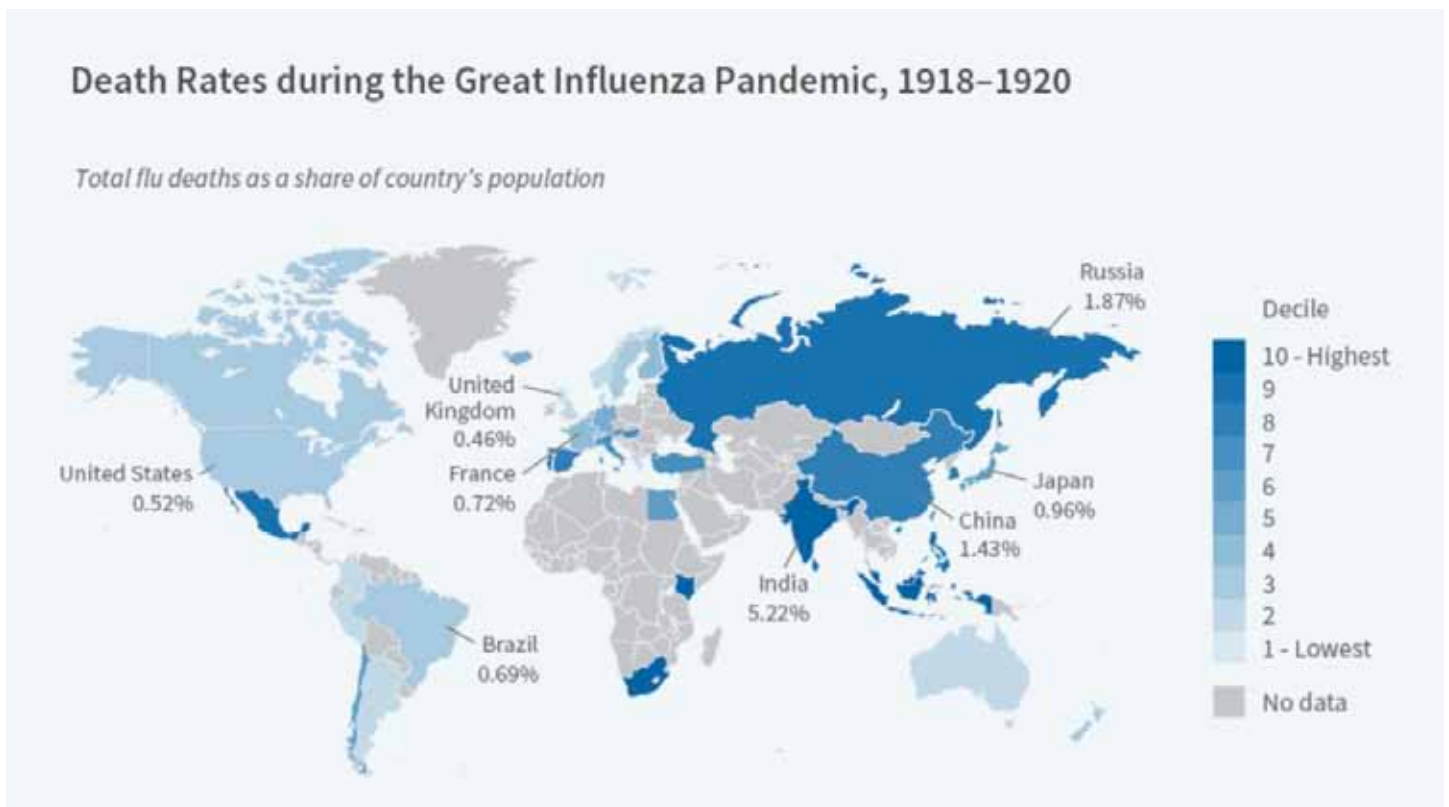
Kew Horticultural Society Show is planned to run on Kew Green on Saturday 28th August 2021.

Walks and guided tours: As lockdown restrictions are lifted, we plan to resume some walks and tours alongside talks and open meetings.

Self-guided walking tour: Finally, we are planning to develop a historic self-guided walking tour around Kew – this is still “work in progress” but a suggested route is available. If there is anybody who might like to assist in forming a fun, attractive map linked to the route, please contact chair@kewsociety.org. We are eventually hoping for a “pick-up trail map” with download availability.

The Spanish influenza epidemic

We asked local historian and member of the Kew Society – John Moses – to compare the impact of the Spanish flu epidemic a century ago with today’s coronavirus pandemic. Here’s what he told us.

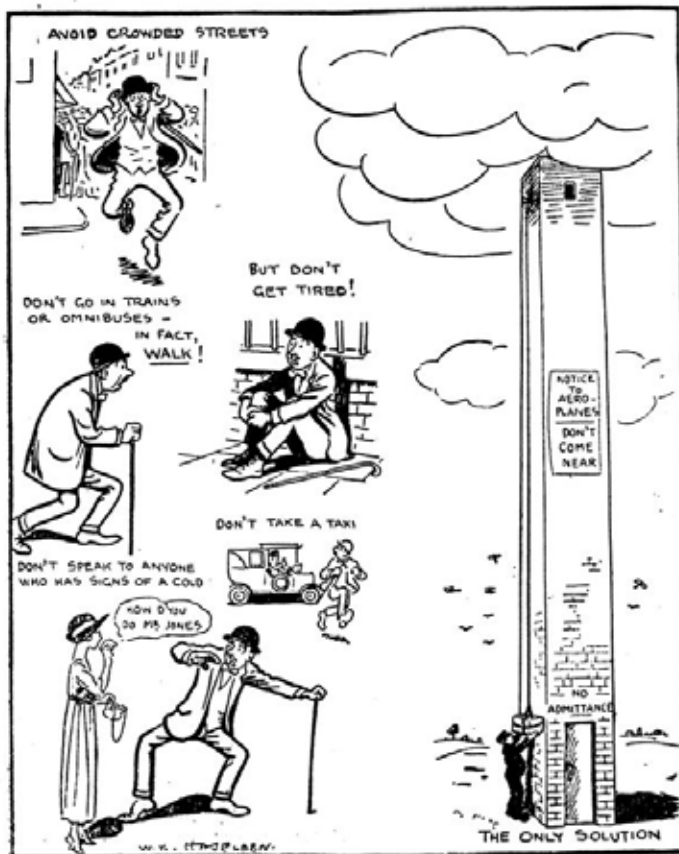


It is estimated that 228,000 people died in this country from The Spanish Flu. It is not known how many died worldwide in this pandemic, but it is estimated that it may have been 50 million, and some experts say it was many more. This epidemic lasted in this country from 1918 to 1919; and while it is called Spanish Flu, it is clear that it did not originate in Spain. It is believed to have originated in Kansas in USA, but this is still disputed. Because of the wartime censorship, the press could not initially report the outbreak in this country, but could do so when reporting about Spain, which was neutral.

While this is a local Newsletter, to get a proper perspective of this epidemic, I propose to consider how the epidemic hit London. However, the epidemic affected the whole country, and many of our leading provincial cities, such as Manchester, Birmingham and Glasgow were almost as badly affected as London.

While we now know that the virus was usually spread by people mixing, this was not known at the time, and several different theories were put forward. One of the issues which appear to have been raised throughout this epidemic was the wearing of masks. The Times, in December 1918, reported that a large general hospital in London was making the wearing of masks and gowns mandatory and isolating those who had the disease. As a result, no other patients were affected. In February 1919, the Local Government Board advised the use of masks in public places, pointing out the importance of wearing the masks on public transport, as

HOW TO AVOID SPANISH INFLUENZA.



The expert say in effect: "Don't talk to anyone, don't go near anyone, and you are safe!"
No doubt. But is not this a little difficult;

A Topical Political Cartoon

Metropolitan Police, 46 constables, 13 sergeants and two inspectors had died of the virus. Again in November, two women – employed as gardeners in St. Paul's Cathedral churchyard – died and were buried on the very day that they were to have been married.

With Covid-19, the group most at risk, as we know, are those over 65, particularly those over 80. While teenagers might suffer minor symptoms and children under 11 have (so far) hardly been affected at all, as the present pandemic has developed, it now appears that a growing number of those under 40 have become very seriously ill with Covid-19, but it is still the elderly who are most at risk. However, the way this present epidemic spreads is very similar to the way the Spanish flu epidemic spread.

While censorship may have initially prevented the reporting of the pandemic, *The Times* regularly reported the outbreaks from June 1918 onwards, usually weekly.

This is against the background of the final stages of the First World War, when the German Spring offensive was beginning to peter out and the war was decisively turning in the allies' favour, leading to ultimate victory in November 1918. Some of the articles in *The Times* were quite critical of the steps being taken to stem the pandemic, so censorship seems to have been quite light in the latter stages of the war.

A *Times* leader of 23rd October said:

The Influenza has been raging for three weeks. Yesterday the Local Government Board issued a public memorandum of advice, which is being circulated among local authorities, the object being to prevent a further spread of the disease. It would have been better to lock the stable door before the escape of the horse.

those who were only mildly infected, often spread the disease then, pointing out that in the early stages of the disease, it was most contagious. However, there was never any government order making masks compulsory.

This epidemic appears to have come in three waves in this country between 1918 and 1919. The first wave was from about March 1918 to June 1918, the second wave was from the summer of 1918 to the end of the year, the third wave was from February to May 1919. The second and third waves were far more serious. One of the major differences between this pandemic and Covid-19 was the age group which was most affected. With Spanish flu, those most at risk were those under 45, and children were just as much at risk as young adults. One reason that this virus was so dangerous was because it appears that the infection made the immune system over-react, like Covid-19, which led to the patient becoming ill very quickly with pneumonia setting in, and it was this that killed the victim. The disease often developed very rapidly, and some people died the same day that they first showed symptoms. One awful example was in East Ham in November 1918. Two small children, who had been playing together one afternoon, had complained of headaches. Their mother gave them some medicine and put them to bed, but by next morning both children had died of the virus. It was also affecting relatively young men. In the course of November 1918, in the



Preparations for Infections

The leader continued, saying that the Board should have been aware of the gravity of the outbreak two months beforehand. This criticism sounds very familiar.

From the end of September 1918, the second wave of the epidemic started to develop at a rapid rate and, so tragically, did the number of deaths. In the LCC area, the number dying in the last three weeks in September was very small. In the last week, it had risen to just seventeen. However, in October the numbers started rising into three figures and then into four figures. In the six-week period to the end of November, there were 9,361 deaths in the LCC area plus a further 6,112 in the outer London area, making a total of 15,743. Gardeners from local parks were assisting in digging the graves. In one road – Stroud Green in Edmonton – 20 people died in one week. By the first week of December, the epidemic was beginning to decline and the deaths in the whole Greater London area had dropped to 1,784 and dropped again to 1,487 in the following week and then continued to fall.

The poorer areas appeared to be worst hit. In the last week in October, the number of deaths in West Ham was 269 compared to 14 in Wimbledon; and in the first week of November, there were 240 deaths in West Ham, but just 20 deaths in Wimbledon. This was no doubt contributed to by the very poor housing in some areas and an inadequate diet, made worse by the shortages caused by the war. However, even the more well-to-do suburbs were affected. In Kingston, in November 1918, there were 170 burials compared to 49 in November 1917.

Schools were also affected. In Richmond at the beginning of October 1918, fifteen percent of school children were suffering from the virus. By the middle of October, most of the schools in the London area had been closed. In the earlier epidemic, it was up to the local authority – not central government – to decide what schools should be closed and also what other steps should be taken, such as closing the cinemas. In November 1918, Middlesex County Council closed all places of entertainment.

Like the present epidemic, the virus was affecting the medical staff by the middle of October. To give one example, all but three of the nursing staff of Passmore Edwards Hospital in Wood Green were suffering from the virus. It was also impacting on public services. For example, in October 1918, 300 of the General Omnibus Service staff and 1,400 Metropolitan Police officers were off work with the virus.

The third wave started in February 1919. The epidemic returned to London, and while nothing like the earlier numbers, it had risen from just 58 in one week to 653 three weeks later. By the middle of March this wave was declining. Unlike in the present pandemic, London fared far less badly in this wave than the cities in the provinces, which were very badly hit.



A Hospital Ward in 1918

In the course of 1918 – in the whole country according to official figures – there had been 112,239 deaths, but this was probably an underestimate. A major move forward was the creation of the Ministry of Health in 1919, as a result of this epidemic, taking over the responsibilities from the Local Government Board. However, for the better off, by the summer of 1919 the danger from this epidemic had begun to pass. It is interesting to look at Punch, whose readership was generally from the upper middle classes. It had a weekly news column called The Charivaria. In Volume II for 1919 (from July to December) there were just two brief comments there about the epidemic, both making fun of attempts to find a vaccine.

It is difficult to make any direct comparison between the Spanish flu epidemic and Covid-19 which is still mutating. However, it must not be overlooked that medicine and medical practice has made gigantic strides in the last hundred years, and one also should not underestimate the effect on the population then having been involved in a terrible war. In particular, half the doctors then were serving in the armed forces. It is an open question whether the number of deaths from Spanish flu would have been very much less than we have suffered in this epidemic if they had had the advantages that we have now.

Update on Kew Road cycle lane

The Kew Society supports environment improvement and favours encouraging active travel (walking, cycling, public transport) and improving poor air quality. However, we believe that many people, for various reasons, will continue to visit the Royal Botanic Gardens (RBG) by car and coach in the future, so the sudden introduction of 24-hour segregated cycle lanes on Kew Road on 29th May 2020 has led to significant problems for Kew. Loss of parking on Kew Road has already resulted in visitors parking cars in residential side streets on busy days, clogging them. This could be mitigated by extending CPZ hours in Kew Zone B, although residents did not agree to that in the recent CPZ consultation. The hours will be reviewed again in a year, and we urge them to support an extension then.

Before the pandemic, coaches visiting RBG dropped passengers and parked on Kew Road. Coach parties ceased during the pandemic, but in normal times they are very significant for RBG. Between March and July, an average of 6-9 large coaches per day bring 55,000 children a year to Kew for educational purposes. Another 3-4 coaches per day bring 25,000-30,000 adult visitors a year to RBG. On particularly busy days in June there can be more than 20 coaches coming to the Gardens. The Council announced its plan for coaches in its August 2020 CPZ consultation. They proposed that all coaches should go around the western side of Kew Green, drop visitors at the Elizabeth Gate, and then go to park in the Old Deer Park car park, Richmond. They would make the same trip again later in the day to pick up their passengers. This proposal has several problems. First, up to 40 coaches per day crossing the traffic lanes on the South Circular Road on Kew Green to enter and exit the west side of the Green will disrupt through-traffic, causing long delays in the area and increased air pollution. Second, the Royal Botanic Gardens is not equipped to receive large numbers of visitors at the Elizabeth Gate and would incur significant costs to deal with the problem. Third, the Council's own management plan for Kew Green describes it as "a vital asset for local people and visitors. It has been designated a Conservation Area, owing to its character, as a fine example of an historic Green, the associated high quality of mostly 18th century development, riverside environment and village character". This will be highly compromised by numerous coaches circling it and the ensuing traffic jams.

The Kew Society put forward alternative proposals for coaches in a detailed document (available at <https://www.kewsociety.org/>). This was submitted to Cllr. Alex Ehmann – Chair of the LBRuT Transport Committee – who said it will be considered. The document includes proposals for dropping and re-embarking school parties (around 75% of all coaches) at TfL bus stops by the junction of The Avenue and Kew Road where the cycle lane is already interrupted.

School parties would walk a few minutes to Victoria Gate where there are facilities for admitting large numbers of visitors. Coaches would proceed, as described above, to various parking places off the A316. The problems and our proposals were also discussed at a recent meeting with the TfL Commissioner for Walking and Cycling – Will Norman – to which the Kew Society was invited. He undertook to raise all the issues discussed at the meeting with Richmond Council and TfL. However, in a subsequent email he did not offer any positive comments about whether changes from the current Council policy were likely.

Contact Us

Your Committee includes:

Chair	Roger Mason	chair@kewsociety.org
Vice-Chair & PR/Press	Nora Dennehy	pr@kewsociety.org
Hon. Secretary & Newsletter Editor	Claire Bethel	secretary@kewsociety.org
Hon. Treasurer	Mike Adams	treasurer@kewsociety.org
Membership		
Secretary	Michael Fletcher	membership@kewsociety.org
Environment	Venetia Harper	environment@kewsociety.org
Events	Mary Done	events@kewsociety.org
Gardening	Richard Jaggard	gardening@kewsociety.org
Planning	Alice Shackleton	planning@kewsociety.org
Website	Nick Hutchings	webmaster@kewsociety.org

Patrons

Nick Baird CMG CVO
Sir David Durie KCMG
Gudrun Edwards
Sir Donald Insall CBE

JOIN NOW by visiting our website:

www.kewsociety.org

Charity Number: 1173016

You can write to us at:

The Kew Society, 13 Ruskin Avenue, KEW, Surrey, TW9 4DR

