



The Kew Society Newsletter • Summer 2023

Welcome....

to our summer newsletter. We hope you enjoyed the King's Coronation as much as we did – starting with the celebratory drink at the National Archives arranged by our Events Team on Friday 5th May which was attended by 135 people, and culminating (for some of us at least) in street parties, some of which took place in glorious sunshine. It was good of the Red Arrows to fly directly over Kew.

This edition features several articles about our interests in the environment following the recent Great Big Green Week. Do let us know if there are other issues you would like us to cover (secretary@kewsociety.org).

Following a suggestion from a member, we are dispensing with envelopes for those of you to whom we deliver newsletters to save paper. We are also adopting another member's suggestion and are now printing the newsletter on recycled paper (and do recycle it once you have read it!). Again, let us know if you have any other ideas or feedback (including ideas for future articles): they are always gratefully received.

Gardeners wanted!



Do you love plants and enjoy spending time looking after your garden? Are you a keen gardener who doesn't have a garden to look after? Do you want to improve your gardening skills? Or do you enjoy seeing the planting at Kew Gardens station and want to help to make Kew a beautiful green place to live in or visit?

If so, why not join our friendly gardening team?

The beds at the station were transformed from a wasteland to beautiful borders with lovely planting about seven years ago. We now have a lush woodland bed with ferns, hellebores and euphorbia, a sunny gravel bed with Mediterranean planting, and two long grass beds. These are looked after by a team of local volunteers who have also planted the beds in Kew Village by the Greenhouse Café

and the garden at the corner of North Road and High Park Road. The work we do includes: planting, mulching, weeding, cutting back and, increasingly, watering. We are assisted by Energy Garden, a community group who help local people garden at overground stations across London. We have a small team of gardening volunteers who look after these beds and we want to get more people involved. It's a fun activity – fresh air, exercise, a sociable team and the opportunity to contribute something to the local community: passers-by often stop to thank us and say how much they appreciate the gardens. We usually work on weekday mornings and most gardeners help for a couple of hours each week.

If you like gardening, can spare a couple of hours each week and want to help keep these beds beautiful please get in touch with gardening@kewsociety.org – we'd love to hear from you. My own garden in West Park Road was opened to the public on 25th June as part of the NGS National Garden Scheme.



Anna Anderson, Head Gardener

Anna Anderson & Jim Swindells at home

Looking after our environment



As our contribution to the 'Great Big Green Week' the Kew Society Environment team invited representatives from all the local organisations working to benefit the natural environment of Kew to attend our networking event. Nothing like this has been done before and we were delighted by the very positive response to our invitation. It is possible that the offer of a Pimms on a summer's evening may have been one of the attractions!

The leaders of local – and some not-so-local – groups, including the

Thames Landscape Strategy, gathered together with representatives from the local council, councillors, Royal Botanic Gardens Kew and the National Archives, to share ideas and experiences and to explore ways we can work together in the future. We have had lots of thank-yous for organising the evening. We hope it will be the first of many similar events.

Nora Dennehy

The Tale of the Taylor Avenue Community Garden



Kew Society members Rinku George and Faith Polya at work in 2021

Once upon a time there was a sad, neglected patch of land, strewn with rubbish, rubble, fallen twigs and branches. Now, that same patch has a magnificently colourful herbaceous border, a young native species hedge, a well-used nesting box and dozens of different species of wild flowers. This is how the transformation happened.

In the summer of 2020 the Kew Society's Environment Trustee – Venetia Harper – gathered together an interested group of Taylor Avenue residents to 'do something' about the roughly 10m x 8m area of rough ground at the corner of Taylor and Atwood Avenues. After many discussions, emails and meetings, a plan was hatched. Financial support came from Taylor Avenue residents and The Kew Society, and practical support and resources came from Richmond Council and the Woodland Trust. Two important aims of the project were to make the patch look better and help it to provide a better habitat for wildlife, primarily insects and birds.

In September 2020, the first practical work began with clearing the plastic, glass and paper rubbish, assorted rubble and fallen branches from the copper maple (*Acer*) tree growing in the centre of the patch. Simply removing the litter made a huge difference!

Then leaves and dead grass were raked up to allow planting of spring bulbs (bluebells, snowdrops, aconite, crocus, wild daffodils, pheasant-eye narcissi). December 2020 saw the introduction of wild flower plug plants, including cowslips, oxeye daisies, knapweed, wild carrot, red campion and yarrow.

In March 2021, one of the most transformative moments came with the planting of perennials in a herbaceous border. Catmint, yellow yarrow, rosemary, lavender, verbena, allium, euphorbia and bleeding heart were planted, with Jerusalem artichoke tubers added in 2022 to give late summer colour. The border was master-minded by Taylor Avenue resident Rinku George, with practical help from other neighbours and, through Richmond Council, Continental Landscapes, who helped with the spade work.

The Woodland Trust donated small hedge whips of dogwood, dog rose, hazel, hawthorn and crab apple towards a native-species hedge along the back of the plot. These, along with some field maple, were planted in December 2021, again with help from Continental Landscapes. Wild flower seeds, chosen to suit the site and its soil, were sown in the autumn of 2021 and spring of 2022 and, at various times, extra suitable plants such as foxgloves from local gardens were added to the mix.

There has been some experimentation throughout the project: at the beginning we did not know much about the soil and how it would take to the changes. The weather also posed challenges, and watering was needed during dry periods. Some plants did not thrive, and many took quite a time to establish. Wild species also turned up unexpectedly, including a very pretty flax and rather dominating hedge mustard. The false barley, which covered the entire site at the start, has gradually been thinned to allow more space for flowers, creating a much more varied habitat. There are now noticeably many more bees, especially bumble bees, and insects visiting the garden: they absolutely love the catmint! We've learned to go with the flow of nature and allow



what is naturally successful to help create healthy habitat. Maintenance is needed at some times of the year, notably cutting in the autumn to allow seeds space to grow the following year and watering the young hedge during droughts, simply to keep it alive. The bird nesting box has been host to families of great tits ever since it was first put up in early 2021. Local dog walkers have been successfully encouraged to control their dogs and there is no digging by foxes. However, litter is still sometimes a problem – it is blown by the wind on dustbin days, brought by the foxes who are cleaning up food containers and, sadly, thrown by passing drivers. This situation has improved since 2020 and we hope it will continue to do so.

Arguably, the most important issues affecting us all at the moment are climate change and species extinction. All the plants in the herbaceous border are hardy and drought-resistant – an example of how our garden plants are also changing to reflect hotter summers. Some of the key foundation species upon which we all ultimately depend are insects. The Taylor Avenue garden, as well as looking



better, is now a haven for many different types of insects. It is a tiny project but has brought joy in several different ways to many people, including local nursery school children who have often been seen stopping to look at the flowers.

Following on from this success story, The Kew Society is now working with Richmond Council and Habitats & Heritage to promote further green hubs, supported by local residents and with an emphasis on biodiversity.

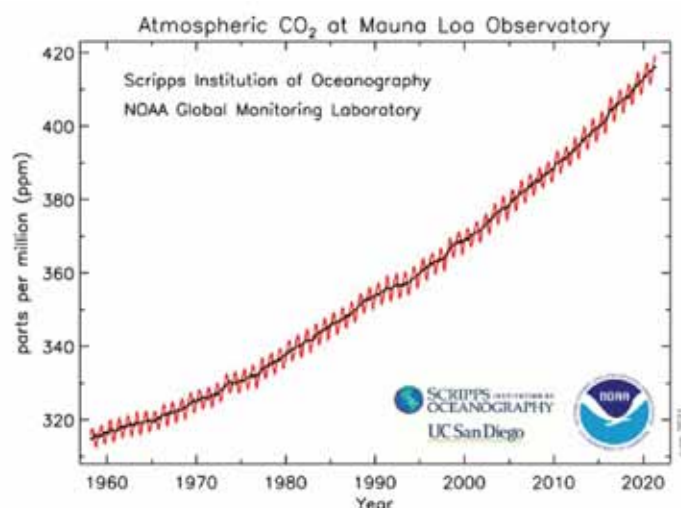
Faith Polya

Climate change in Kew

When torrential rain hit Bangladesh in June 2022 causing massive floods, or when millennia-old glaciers in Greenland begin to melt at an unprecedented rate, or when the level of the mighty reservoir behind the Hoover dam in the American South West dropped by 120 feet between 2000 and 2015, 'climate change' was invoked as the cause! Climate Change is the term used to describe the long-term changes in our planet's temperature and weather patterns. Towards the end of the 19th century, scientists began to realise that the concentration of carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the atmosphere was closely linked to climate change. When energy from the sun hits the earth, some is reflected back into the atmosphere as infra-red waves. It's these waves you feel as 'heat' radiating from a wall exposed to the hot summer sun! CO₂ molecules and some other atmospheric gases such as methane ('greenhouse gases') absorb infra-red energy, vibrate, and re-emit it – some going into space but some coming back to Earth, causing it to warm further! Man has been putting CO₂ into the atmosphere for the last 200 years by burning carbon fuels in machines, boilers, cars, etc., and by firing forests for land clearance. This has markedly increased atmospheric CO₂ concentration, and continues to do so in modern times (see figure below).

So much for the chemistry lesson – but is warming occurring in our own neighbourhood of Kew, as opposed to in far-away continents? Fortunately, the Meteorological Office has a weather station in the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew (RBGK), and has records on temperatures, etc., going back to 1961: <https://tinyurl.com/CChange01>

Looking for long-term changes in weather patterns is complicated by short-term spikes or depressions in air temperatures, for example, which are not necessarily related to climate change. Thus, the winter of 1963 was the coldest for 200 years, but such low temperatures were not repeated in subsequent years. To avoid such 'spikes' having an undue influence on interpreting records, meteorologists can look at the mean (average) temperature for a particular month over a period of say 30 years and then compare it to the mean for that month over a subsequent period of 30 years. The table overleaf shows mean temperatures, hours of sunshine and millimetres of rain fall, at the Kew Met Station for January and July for 1961- 1990 and compares these with the mean values for 1991-2020.



The UK Met Office projects that in our country, climate change will lead to warmer and wetter winters, hotter

Month and 30-year period	Mean maximum temperature for month (°C)	Mean minimum temperature for month(°C)	Sunshine (hours)	Rainfall (mm)
January 1961-1990	7.26	1.29	51.15	53.08
January 1991-2020	8.56 Warmer	1.96 Warmer	60.17 Longer	59.87 Wetter
July 1961-1990	22.47	11.98	197.78	47.52
July 1991-2020	23.78 Warmer	13.19 Warmer	221.87 Longer	45.24 Drier

and drier summers and more frequent and intense weather extremes: <https://tinyurl.com/CChange02>

The data in the table on temperatures and rainfall indicates that the weather in Kew during 1991-2020 compared to 1961-1990 supports the view that we are already experiencing the effects of climate change in our neighbourhood! In addition, the increase in sunshine hours in more recent times is impressive. If the small increase in the mean maximum temperature

of 1.2°C in January and 1.3°C in July in the last 30 years strikes you as nothing to worry about, consider that NASA scientists have predicted that if global warming of 2°C occurs, more than 70% of Earth's coastlines will see a rise in sea-level greater than 0.66 feet as a result of melting polar ice, imperilling millions of homes across the planet from flooding: <https://tinyurl.com/CChange03>

More locally, Richmond Council has acknowledged that climate change is likely to increase the risk of flooding in areas like Kew in future. It declared a climate emergency in 2019, has published a Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy (2019-2024) and, recently, consulted residents on its draft Local Flood Risk Management Strategy: <https://tinyurl.com/CChange04> (See The Kew Society response to the consultation on our web page <https://www.kewsociety.org>) Basically, the Council's flood risk strategy accepts that climate change will inevitably increase flooding and that planning to increase residents resilience to flooding and recovery from it is a more realistic goal than planning to avoid floods in most areas. The Council recommends The Homeowners Guide to Personal Flood Resilience: <https://tinyurl.com/CChange05> as good preparation to improve residents' resilience should they be at risk of flooding.

Climate Change will impact our lives in many ways other than flooding. Even the plants in our gardens may have to change so as to include species which are more resistant to heat and drought. Already, certain alpine plants cannot survive now in the RBGK Rockery.

Roger Mason

Thames Landscape Strategy: Rewilding Arcadia and the Joint Thames Strategies

Written in 1994, and updated in 2012, the Thames Landscape Strategy (TLS) provides a comprehensive 100-year guidebook to conserve and enhance the remarkable River Thames between Weybridge and Kew (known as the Arcadian Thames 'rural paradise'). The Strategy, however, is as much about the day-to-day link between the landscape, the community, and the authorities as about the long-term vision. To achieve this, the TLS partnership brings together the main organisations that own or manage the riverside:

250 local groups (including The Kew Society), users and residents.

Since 2020, the TLS has been working on a project called Rewilding Arcadia to develop, explain and ultimately deliver a series of nature-based flood risk management projects to increase understanding of flood risk and introduce possible long-term term solutions to make the floodplain resilient to climate change. Rewilding Arcadia is not setting out to create large new areas of floodplain or to improve the existing flood defences. Rather, it looks to identify changes that will be necessary to achieve a functioning natural floodplain in places that are at risk already. By acting now, we can conserve and enhance the unique heritage, wildlife and recreational opportunities that this Arcadia offers. However, time is running out. Models predict that unavoidable changes to the operation of the Thames Barrier will be needed; and when combined with an increase in peak fluvial flood events, the Arcadian Thames floodplain is at particular risk. What is wet now is likely to get a lot wetter.

The TLS has been working with local landowners and communities to begin to survey and scope out this series of project sites. For Kew, this includes Old Deer Park, Kew Towpath and the Haha. Whilst we thought we knew how the water was moving across this landscape, and understood the tidal/ground water flow patterns, as part of the project, the TLS and Richmond Council commissioned an ecological and hydrological survey of the Haha and surrounding floodplain. Over the course of 14 months, a series of dip wells were monitored by a hardy team of volunteers which included Kew Society members Avril Dalglish and Richard Jaggard. Collating the volunteers' data with recordings of salinity, weather, tidal flow etc., the TLS has been able to have the



assumptions confirmed as well as learning a few new details. The recommendations from this report can now strengthen the case for alternative management of the floodplain of Old Deer Park to better support a wet environment with the potential for new/enhanced habitats and sustainable drainage.

As well as at a project level, a further funding opportunity from the Thames Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (a committee of statutory flood authorities, i.e.: borough councils) has opened the door for a review of the Thames Landscape Strategy to ensure that the opportunities offered by Rewilding Arcadia can be replicated for the length of the tidal Thames and set out in strategic form. The review will be carried out in partnership with the other two Thames Strategies for London's river – the Thames Strategy Kew to Chelsea (TSKC), and Thames Strategy East (managed by Thames Estuary Partnership, TEP). These two strategies were written in the early 2000s in similar formats to the TLS, but have not yet been updated. In this way, a simultaneous review of all three Thames Strategies can be achieved. Whilst each Strategy is based on the individual character of its reaches, there are many common threads and priorities running through all three visions. This joint approach can act as an umbrella, bringing the strategies together whilst allowing for each Strategy area to retain its autonomy (like chapters in a book). The aim is that by 2025, the Thames Landscape Strategy will be reviewed in a format that can be used to help inform riparian boroughs in the development of their Riverside Strategies. This is a priority for the EATE2100 (the Environment Agency Thames Estuary flood risk scheme).

Over the course of the next year, the TLS will be working with the TEP and the TSKC West London River Group, our partners, boroughs, community groups and consultants, to scope the work needed to ensure up-to-date continuity with emerging local and national plans and policy. Following the completion of the Joint Review of the Thames Strategies, the river will have a comprehensive handbook for the Thames from Weybridge to the sea that sets out how climate change and flood risk can be managed whilst conserving the character of each reach.



Rebecca Kendrick (née Law) Thames Landscape Strategy Strategic Projects Manager

For more information, see Facebook @thameslandscapestrategy; Twitter @thameslandscape; QR Code link to the Rewilding Arcadia Film to the left

Would you like to join our Committee?

We have several roles coming up on the committee – our rules stipulate that no committee member should serve more than six years, and several of us have done the maximum permitted under our Constitution. Do let us know if you have a little time to spare and would like to get involved in running The Kew Society. We thought it would be interesting for some of those who are leaving to tell you a little about what each of these roles involves and what skills are needed as well as some of the highlights for our outgoing committee members.

Nora Dennehy, Press and PR trustee

This is a really interesting role, which is hugely important to supporting and publicising the work of The Kew Society and is one that can be fitted around a busy schedule depending on commitments. It's a very flexible role and could be done by more than one person.

I became a member of The Kew Society seven years ago because I wanted to get to know more people in my local area. With a background in journalism and radio and television production, I was soon asked to join the committee as the Press & PR Trustee.



The main responsibilities are to promote the work, campaigns and events of The Kew Society through social media platforms, liaising with local news outlets and other local organisations.

Since I've been in the role, I've organised campaigns to highlight a number of issues including supporting local businesses during the pandemic and the lack of step free access at Kew Gardens station. I also arranged the media launch of the platform gardens at Kew Gardens station.

I've really enjoyed being part of a team of like-minded people all working towards enhancing our local environment. I've got to know many more people in the area and feel that I have a much greater understanding and appreciation of all the organisations working for the benefit of Kew.

Alice Shackleton, Planning Lead, trustee

A major aim of the Society in its constitution is 'to promote high standards of planning and architecture in, or affecting, the area of benefit', which is Kew and adjacent areas. The planning sub-committee, headed by the lead planning trustee, plays a core part in achieving this aim.



The main aspects of the planning sub-committee's role are:

- To check relevant planning applications in Kew and adjacent areas and to consider whether The Kew Society should make comments on, support or object to the application (bearing in mind that we do not as a general rule comment on householder applications unless there is some policy consideration or effect on heritage assets), drawing also on the input of our Environment committee;
- To consider local, London and national consultations on planning policy (such as the current draft new Richmond Local Plan) and other pertinent consultations (e.g.: cycle lanes, CPZs) and make appropriate observations;
- To liaise with other amenity societies on planning matters relating both to policy and to major developments that affect a larger area (such as Homebase Manor Road, Kew Retail Park and the Mortlake Brewery);
- Where relevant to particular planning applications or topics, to represent the Kew Society at planning inquiries, Council planning committee meetings and planning-related events.

The role of lead planning trustee would ideally suit someone with a background in property-related work and/or an interest in the built environment, architecture and history, as well as the green environment.

The role has been a continuous learning experience for me and enabled me to contribute to keeping Kew as special as it is. Aspects which I have particularly enjoyed are the opportunities to learn more about the history of Kew and individual buildings and areas in it and how it has evolved and is still evolving. I have also valued working as a team with fellow planning trustees and with members of the Environment and Events committees, again always learning from their knowledge and working to protect and, when possible, to improve Kew. Meeting and helping and learning from members of the Society has been a particular pleasure.

I joined the Society initially because I enjoyed the events so much. Then I was recruited to the planning sub-committee after participating in local campaigns, notably Homebase Manor Road, the Deer Park School proposal for London House and the Sandycombe Centre. I have found it to be interesting, stimulating and a pleasure, working with like-minded people with similar aims.

Venetia Harper, Environment Lead, trustee

The Kew Society aims to protect and enhance the natural and the built environment for all those who live here or visit us. We do this by undertaking a diversity of projects and responding constructively to a number of issues, many of them environmental.

I joined the Kew Society around 20 years ago but went to my first event only seven years ago, which led to me joining the committee. I appreciate being on a committee of people, who like me, love living in Kew and enjoy that sense of being part of a community. My activities have also given me the opportunity to meet people from all walks of life, some of whom live far beyond the boundaries of Kew.

Almost four years ago I started in the Environment Lead role and I have increased my knowledge of environmental issues enormously. The role has evolved, so that now I co-ordinate the activities of a small Environment sub-committee, who bring a wide and varied range of expertise and knowledge that I don't have, and together we work for the betterment of Kew.

The Environment Lead role will easily adapt allowing someone to concentrate on their particular environmental interests and to coordinate the overall activities of the function differently if they so wish. The role would equally lend itself to being divided between two individuals.

There are three main aspects to what we, as a team, cover:

- Working on initiatives and projects: some of my favourites would be, with a colleague, working with Habitats & Heritage to create 'green hubs' with an emphasis on



biodiversity from Council wasteland and organising the renovation of the Edward VII plaque on Kew Bridge. Perhaps the more challenging would be liaising with the Council and TfL to combat graffiti particularly along the towpath.

- Representing the Kew Society on a number of organisations: notably The Thames Landscape Strategy, Habitats & Heritage, the West London River Group and the Old Deer Park Working Group.
- Considering, responding to consultations and participating in discussion locally and/or nationally on policy proposals effecting the environment: for example in respect of the Thames Estuary 2100 Plan and the Cleaner Air for Schools Project.

Nick Hutchings, Webmaster



I have lived in Kew for many years and enjoyed being a member of the Society for much of that time. Several years ago, I was asked if I could provide help to update the website, and I have been doing that ever since. The webmaster provides a valuable and visible role for the Society and is responsible for updating the website with input from committee members for planning matters, environment, gardening and our events programme as well as with regular informal updates from our Chair. The website is often the first place people turn to for information, on the Society and what it thinks, so timely and relevant updates are required. The webmaster is also responsible for sending email newsletters and other communications to members. A further responsibility is to provide the rest of the committee with a monthly report containing information about website usage and email readership. It does not take up a great deal of my time, and lends itself to being

done remotely. The website is created with Wordpress, and is very easy to update using the tools provided. Emails are managed with Mailchimp which is also easy to use. Training will be available to anyone who wishes to take on this important function, and it is anticipated that a phased handover will occur.

Claire Bethel will also be standing down as Honorary Secretary after six years in office. The committee will be nominating Diana Ormond – an existing trustee – to take over from Claire at the AGM. Claire will continue to edit the newsletter (aided and abetted by her husband, Paul).

Do let us know if you would be interested in any or part of these roles by writing to chair@kewsociety.org

A very well-earned retirement!

At our recent party for new members on 9th June which took place at Pensford Field on one of the hottest days of the year, we took the opportunity to say a big 'Thank You' to Michael Fletcher, who has been our Membership Secretary since 2015. Supported by his wife – Clarissa – he has diligently dealt with applications



and renewals, generally keeping our house in order, and introducing a range of initiatives to help streamline this essential part of any charity funded by subscriptions. His career as a lawyer had undoubtedly provided him with skills and the attention to detail that he applied, meaning that everything is in very good shape for his successor.

Michael commented: 'I have been very happy to do my bit for the Kew Society, but Clarissa will no doubt be pleased to see me spending more time away from my desk.'

Everyone on the committee wishes you a long and happy retirement, Michael !

We are delighted that Janet Clark – one of our newer trustees – has agreed to take on the role. We hope to streamline the process for new members to make it easier to join online.

Planning

As before, most planning applications have been for domestic extensions, typically loft conversion and rear and side extensions: as explained previously, as a general rule we do not comment on these. With regard to major developments, it will be interesting to see what effect, if any, interest rate rises, etc. have on the progressing of these proposals.

The major development at Homebase Manor Road has still not been granted permission by the Mayor of London, although the developer has recently done some works, said to be for security purposes.

Despite requests, we have had no real update on the Kew Retail Park over the past nine months, though we understand we may have an update in the next month or so. The community consultation had focused on landscaping and community uses. Residents would like to know what the developers plan to build on this site in rather more detail (heights, design etc.) than we have been given so far.

We understand that the Mortlake Brewery revised scheme is due to be considered by the Council's planning committee on 19th July. We will not be speaking at the meeting on the basis that it is better and more effective for local groups who have been heavily involved (and in detail) in all aspects of the proposals for some time to use the time allotted for speakers. We have, of course, supported and liaised with local groups.

We are considering the benefits of getting together with other groups in the wider area to set out and investigate common matters (problems) that these major developments will create. In particular, these include the impact of huge numbers of new homes on transport, private and public, as well as the impact on air quality and also the effect on other infrastructure, physical and social.



ASK restaurant for which signage was approved in 2015

It may be that this network, or parts of it, may consider it worthwhile instructing professional consultants at some stage. Some groups, particularly those involved with the Mortlake Brewery proposals, have already developed extensive and deep knowledge of these matters. Bear in mind, of course, that not only local councils but also the Greater London Authority have their own evidence bases and expertise in-house and policies in place on transport strategies.

We reported in our last newsletter on 85 Kew Green (formerly ASK and now Kew Green Preparatory School). The application is for externally illuminated coloured roundel signs on the gable ends. We have objected to the new application on the grounds that it will be detrimental to the Kew Green Conservation Area. The applicant has referred in support of the application to a 2015 approval for ASK restaurant to have externally

illuminated signs, but we maintain that that approval was for a specific design which was much more sympathetic to the building and area.

Finally, the draft Richmond Local Plan 2022 (see link below) setting out a 15-year strategic vision, has now reached its second stage, called Regulation 19 or Publication version stage. The draft plan's focus is the 20-minute neighbourhood.

https://www.richmond.gov.uk/draft_local_plan_publication_version

We commented in detail on the first consultation draft. In the link above you can find the Council's summary of our responses (with those of others) question by question.

We are now considering what, if any, response we should make to the current consultation, which focuses on legal and procedural compliance of this Regulation 19 draft.



Alice Shackleton, Lead Planning Subcommittee

And now, as a nursery

Our WhatsApp shared interest groups



One of our aims is to 'connect' members and to encourage people with a shared interest to meet each other... initially online and – if it seems a good idea – in person. Two groups are already up and running: participants in 'Short Walks in Kew' have now met several times for a walk in different parts of Kew Gardens (such as the laburnums behind Kew Palace, opposite), followed by a cup of coffee. Everyone has enjoyed the gentle exercise – and some good conversations.

The 'Gardening and Plants Swaps' group is taking off nicely and has met once. As well as swapping 'gardener's tales' (and moans!), we have arranged a trip to Wisley and are looking forward to visiting each others gardens. We would welcome anyone who would like to join us.

The 'Enjoying Art' group has met once, and it became obvious that members were hoping for different things: some wanted to visit galleries while others wanted to learn about different artists. We need to work out what would be most popular... suggestions very welcome.

Another 'games' group – members linking for a game of chess, backgammon or canasta – has been suggested; and other groups, including Poetry Appreciation, Local History and Croquet, are in the pipeline.

If you would like to start a group – which would be open only to Kew Society members – do get in touch with the Chair at chair@kewsociety.org and we will do what we can to get things going.

Diana Ormond

Kew Society Events

The Kew Society Events team currently comprises Jane Hogan, Heather Wakefield, Sue May and Mary Done. We quite often try to rustle up extra help for events, so please do contact events@kewsociety.org if you are keen to assist in any way. Before Easter, we were provided with a fascinating illustrated talk by Lucy Ward, author of The Pushkin Book Prize shortlisted book *The Empress and the English Doctor*. This provided a graphic account of the 18th century fight against smallpox in both England and Russia.

April's two guided walks featured a walk following an Arcadian Thames route and ending with a fun visit to



the Eel Pie Island Museum – entry from Twickenham High Street was through a small entrance, but what a glorious glimpse into music heritage lay behind those doors. We have also enjoyed two City of London walks in April and May with our brilliant Blue Badge – and local resident – guide, Helen Bartolome. Helen conducted her second excellent walk in early May – with its focus on Sir Richard (Dick) Whittington and Sir Christopher Wren. Marvellous!



Eel Pie Interior

A huge thank you goes to all who popped along on a splendid May evening to raise a pre-Coronation glass to toast HM King Charles III and Queen Camilla the night before the actual event at Westminster Abbey. Our



Defoe Avenue Street Party

Events team fully recognised how much attendees enjoyed and valued these short but sweet get-togethers which provide a chance to chat and meet other members and friends – and we will look at doing similar events in the future. Thank you too to all budding poets who entered the poetry competition, and especially the winners – well deserved!

A beautiful May evening was enhanced by an interesting and informative tree tour around Kew Gardens with Kevin Martin, Head of Trees, RBG Kew. With this, and many similar tours, all ticket money is donated towards specific projects – in this case the money will go towards research into the

best trees for future planting and fencing around protected trees.

The Kew Society joined forces with The Avenue Club of Kew on the 8th June for a coach trip and guided tour of Bletchley Park, Milton Keynes – the principal centre of Allied code-breaking during WW2.



Bletchley Park

Regarding future events, we are delighted to be hosting a talk by Nick Ovenden on Monday 24th July about his ground-breaking work in the Amazonian rainforest, Ecuador and future global initiatives he is involved in. Nick is taking time to speak to us as he makes a brief visit to Kew, where he grew up, before he returns overseas.



Alan Turing's desk

We have now opened booking for a Tuesday 15th August guided group tour of the newly renovated Marble Hill House and Park. Please also hold September dates: Sunday 3rd September for the Kew Society Summer Picnic at Pensford Fields (fingers crossed for good weather!) and Friday 15th September for *The Great Stink and the Water Supply of London* – a

talk with a focus on Sir Joseph Bazalgette and Kew's current water supply. A massive thank you to members who have pointed the Events team in the right direction with ideas for future talks. Much appreciated! Spaces on some events are limited due to logistics – group size, dates, availability, guides etc. Tickets can sell out extremely quickly, but we will try to offer repeat visits where we can and if there is appetite for a further visit. We shared a stand at Kew Village Market on Sunday 4th June with Pensford Field: manned by our members of our committee, we talked to lots of people who came to visit the ever-popular market and hope that some will agree to join The Kew Society. We also had a stand at the Kew Midsummer Fair on 17th June and will also be at the Kew Horticultural Show on 26th August on Kew Green. Please do drop by to say 'hello', hear about what The Kew Society is planning for future events, and to let us know what are the important issues for you right now and in the future? There's lots more coming up...so watch this space.....

Mary Done and Events Team

Who cares about care (of older people) in Kew?



This photo (left) shows Victoria House in Ennerdale Road, for over forty years an Abbeyfield care home*. It is now empty as the national charity, Abbeyfield, have closed the home. There are reports that they will also be closing Palmer House opposite. The future of the sites is unknown at the moment. What *is* known is that in ten years' time, there will be more people over the age of 85 in Kew, many of whom will be either living alone or caring for someone, and increasingly at risk of some physical or mental incapacity and therefore in need of 24/7 care. If so, they are likely to require nursing care, including dementia services.

Kew is fortunate in that there is still a residential care home in Kew, Cecil Court in Priory Road, like Abbeyfield provided by a voluntary sector charity. But Cecil Court is in an older building and may, without major work, become increasingly unfit for purpose. What if Cecil Court were to close? What if we lose the option of 24/7 care in Kew for ourselves (writing as someone over 80) or our partner or (for younger people) for a parent?

Do people in Kew want to be sure that we still have a residential care facility fit for purpose in Kew in 2035? If the answer is yes, then we need to inform ourselves and our neighbours, and make our voice heard through our local councillors. Councillor Clare Vollum (cldr.c.vollum@richmond.gov.uk) is particularly concerned with social and health care issues and is Dementia Champion for the borough.

The owners of Cecil Court want to upgrade the service. They will need local support if they are to succeed.

* You can read about the history of Victoria House, and its close links with people in Kew, in: Simon Fowler (2022) *At the heart of the community*; available from Kew Bookshop.

Claudine McCreddie

The longest-established family in Kew?

Rose Konstam (née Tittensor) and Alex Tittensor live in Beechwood Avenue, Kew with their other sister Beth and Rose's three sons. Their family has lived here for many years, and may indeed be one of the oldest resident families in Kew since their grandfather moved here in 1929, first living in Burlington Avenue and then in Beechwood Avenue. They continue to live in the Beechwood family home their grandfather purchased. **Claire Bethel** asked them about their family's history and about their own lives.

Can you tell our readers about how and when your grandfather first came to Kew? What did he do here?

Our Grandfather – Eric Sydney Pietersen – came to Kew in 1929 with his wife Sylvia and baby Judith, first purchasing a house in Burlington Avenue as it was an easy journey to his office in Cannon Street. He rented our current home in 1938 to house a division of the family firm (furriers and leather merchants in the city of London). On the day before the blitz, they completed the transfer of all their finished tailoring ready for fittings only to wake up the next day to hear the head office in Cannon Street had been destroyed. They were one of the oldest firms in the city of London whose clients included Lords, Ladies, the Military and the Royal family, including Queen Mary. During WW2 he became the air raid warden for the Beechwood side of the tracks, and his records of air raids can be found at the National Archives. He was extremely experienced in this role having fought in WW1 and soon (along with our grandmother Sylvia) became very well known and respected by all. At the end of WW2, he bought our current home from the landlady as a sitting tenant.

What about your parents? Did they carry on living in Kew? Can you tell us something about them?

Our mother and father joined our grandparents in the family home in 1962. Kew was then full of artisans, actors, writers, painters, museum curators and jewellers, so they felt it was a good move as my father would have space to practise his art as well as being surrounded by a highly creative local community. Our mother – Judy Pietersen – married our father Andy (Annesley) Tittensor – a sculptor from the Midlands – in 1956. Before WW2, our father had won a full scholarship to the Royal College of Art from Wolverhampton Art School and travelled down to



Eric (Bunny) and Sylvia Pietersen

London with Arnold Machin who had also received a scholarship to study there under Richard Garbe. They both received prizes for their work and continued to support each other throughout their lives. Both Arnold Machin and George Fullard made portraits of Andy, as he had shared studios with both of them in Chelsea. Fullard's portrait of Andy can be seen at *The Pangolin Gallery* in London. Our father took a part-time job at Kingston Art School to support his family while working on commissions. He became Head of Ceramic Sculpture there in the 1970s. He taught many of our now notable sculptors and draughtsmen, including Diana Thomson, Sally Arnup, Dave Nash, Harry Brockway and Robert Erskine. One of his carvings can be seen in the Wolverhampton Art Gallery, and he also exhibited at the Royal Academy and with the Brotherhood of Ruralists. Our mother was a primary school teacher at Kensington High School and then worked for the ILEA for many years. She was a regular worshipper at St Anne's, and both of our parents' ashes are buried in St Anne's churchyard.

Could you tell us something about your own work and your lives in Kew?



Andy Tittensor & Judith on their Wedding Day

I am a set decorator for Film and Television. Having studied sculpture, worked as an art teacher and practising sculptor, it was after my youngest son entered secondary school that I retrained in my other passion – Production Design for film. I have worked on many productions including *Downton Abbey*, *Fury*, *Legend* and *The Witcher*, and one of my projects was nominated for best art direction at the Venice film festival. I consider my work an art form, producing believable sets to transport an audience into the world of the film.

My sister Alex is an archaeologist who has worked for the Museum of London and The Canterbury Archaeology Trust among other archaeological units before taking a position at the National Archives where she has worked for many years.

What would you say were some of the main changes you have seen in Kew over the years?

Kew has seen many changes over the years. Most obvious for us has been the shops, which are far less diverse than they used to be. You could get anything you wanted in Kew, even if it were just three nails, a single lightbulb or a packet of needles, without having to go to Richmond. We can remember two butchers, a fishmongers, newsagents, a haberdashery with a cat that sat on the proprietor's shoulder, greengrocers (Mr Stonham and Yeomans), hardware (Robins), bakers (Mrs. Fix and Newens), a hosiery shop run by Mrs. Morley and her husband, post office, two banks, a hairdresser's for a purple rinse called *Junes of Kew*, a pharmacy with huge chemical bottles filled with amazing coloured liquid in their windows, a corner shop where you could get your soda syphon refilled and a shop where a man would mend anything electrical like a broken toaster, Hoover or lamp. We miss all those shops terribly but still visit Newens regularly as our grandparents did. We also miss the onion sellers from Normandy on their bikes and the window cleaner cycling down the road with his ladders strapped to his side. All Kew residents knew the local policeman by name: Mr Webb. A far cry from how things are now.

He lived in Burlington Avenue and knew all of us by name. Much to our amusement, his cat was quite the local thief, and was known for running off with the neighbours' tea towels and socks that it had managed to get off their washing lines or airers. The trains from Kew are so much busier than they once were, and it appears to us that the population of Kew is now considerably larger than ever before. With this increased population has come the increase of traffic (and lack of parking to go with it), narrow streets with parking on both sides and no room to pass when meeting another car. Of course, there's the noise from aircraft, which has ballooned in volume since we were children and we no longer have owls in the trees which we could hear hooting at night.



Rose Konstam & Alex Tittensor

KEW DIARY 2023

2nd July	Kew Village Market	Kew Village
6th July	Meet in Kew, in Kew Community Centre	The Kew Society
24th July	Amazonian Rain Forest talk by Nick Ovenden	The Kew Society
3rd August	Meet in Kew, in Kew Community Centre	The Kew Society
6th August	Kew Village Market	Kew Village
15th August	Marble Hill House & Park – Guided Tour	The Kew Society
26th August	Annual Flower & Produce Show	Kew Horticultural Society
3rd September	Summer Picnic in Pensford Fields	The Kew Society
3rd September	Kew Village Market	Kew Village
7th September	Meet in Kew, in Kew Community Centre	The Kew Society
15th September	The Great Stink talk (provisional)	The Kew Society
5th October	Meet in Kew, in Kew Community Centre	The Kew Society

For full details of Kew Society events, see our website: details below.



Coronation Celebrations in Kew Village



Contact Us

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