



The Kew Society Newsletter • Autumn 2024

Welcome....

to our autumn newsletter. We hope you enjoyed the AGM – we were delighted to see such a good turnout and to welcome some fresh faces as trustees. I'm sure you will appreciate the huge amount of work that has gone into designing and executing our new look website and logo (read on for how we got there) – do have a look if you haven't visited it yet. We are still looking for a Planning Lead, so if you know anyone who might be interested or would like to know more, do get in touch with Shiona. We have a bit of a bumper edition this time – but do let us know if you have any ideas for future articles or anything that you would like us to cover.

Interview with Sarah Olney MP

Background: Sarah Olney MP has been the MP for Richmond Park since 2019. She was returned in the recent general election having received nearly 55% of the vote. Claire Bethel asked her a few questions about her priorities for the constituency now that she has been re-elected. Before being elected to Parliament, Sarah was an accountant for Historic Royal Palaces. She lives in North Kingston with her husband and two children.



Can you tell our members what made you get involved in politics?

I wasn't really involved in politics before 2015. I wasn't a member of a political party. I'd never been involved in a political campaign. I'd certainly never thought about being a politician. But I knew I was a Liberal – I believed in openness, tolerance, compassion, working with our neighbours at home and around the world – and when I saw what was happening to politics in the wake of the 2015 general election, I felt I had to get involved.

Brexit was also obviously a huge motivating force. I think Richmond Park is full of people like me who felt that their views weren't being represented in Westminster under the Conservatives. We are a liberal, tolerant,

outward-looking community and I wanted to make sure that was represented in Parliament.

Aircraft noise: We are very lucky to live in Kew; but one of the disadvantages is the aircraft noise which may worsen if plans for the third runway go ahead. You have asked many questions in the House of Commons about this on our behalf and identify holding Heathrow to account as one of your four main local priorities. What is your assessment of the future as far as the level of aircraft noise is concerned, and what more might you be able to do to ensure that they are held to account for the impact aircraft makes on noise, health and the environment?

No-one can predict the future, but I can say with some certainty that after years of campaigning by MPs, councillors, and local people, I do not think the 3rd Runway is likely to be a serious proposal for at least another decade. Heathrow's finances are in too much disarray and the sector doesn't have the appetite for a controversial, multi-billion-pound project. Alongside opposing the Third Runway, my focus over the past two years has been on reducing and banning night flights at Heathrow. I know many residents will remember how in the summer of 2022, delays at the airport meant planes were roaring over our constituency well into the small hours of the night. We've already won a concession that Heathrow will be banning any flights after midnight from 2025, but I'll be working with my new colleagues, and with other MPs, to bring in a full ban over the coming parliament.

Water pollution: One of your other main priorities is keeping our rivers free of sewage and tackling Thames Water who have plans to dump more sewage into the river. What more do you think can be done to tackle this

and the risk of flooding in the borough which long term projections show may occur as a direct result of climate change?

In terms of sewage dumping, I think it is essential that Ofwat is replaced with a new, effective regulator. The organisation was set up primarily to ensure competition amongst water companies and so it's basically powerless to stop Thames Water's harmful practices.

I've championed the idea that Thames Water should be taken into special administration and then reorganised into a public-benefit company. This kind of company has a legal obligation to put the public good at the heart of its decision-making processes and would have a seat on the board for an environmental expert.

In terms of the risk of flooding, we need to make sure that the Environment Agency is properly funded and able to both maintain and expand defences where necessary. Over the past 10 years, just as it needed to be built up, the agency has been decimated, and it's leaving all our communities at risk.

Small businesses in Kew: Given our concerns about what is happening to independent traders in Kew, how do you see the future for small businesses in Kew, and what can be done to help them thrive? Is there anything that can be done to prevent multiple purchases of small business by one company?

I was very sad to see The Kew Gardener forced to close his doors earlier in the year and I realise that lots of other businesses in the area are struggling. While these are private businesses on private land, there are a few things we can do to help them thrive.

First and foremost, if you live in Kew, make sure you shop locally whenever you can. We'll only keep these shops and businesses if we use them. On a local level, I know that the Council has offered training and support to businesses across the borough to help them modernise and grow. There are so many resources available, and I'd really urge business owners to make use of them. Finally, from my perspective, we need to overhaul the whole business rates model with a fairer, more up-to-date system. This will take time, but I truly believe it's an argument we can win and a proposal that will help businesses across the UK thrive.

Affordability of homes is a major issue in Kew, making it difficult for young people with families to move in and meaning that when children who live here grow up, there is no way that they can stay in the area. Similarly, people wanting to downsize when their children have left home do not want a modern flat with high service charges, so stay in their often very large homes. What do you think can be done to help people to find affordable homes in the area? Can more be done to increase the provision of social/genuinely affordable housing in the area?

Ultimately, we simply need more housing across the capital. London's population is growing and people have to have somewhere to live. As a nation, we've failed to hit housing targets for decades now. It's why house prices are rising and why areas like ours are often unaffordable to young people.

Affordable housing is always a difficult question because as developments are built, there are always concerns in the community over how tall or how dense a site should be. To be in keeping with the area, they need to be smaller, but if they are smaller, developers reduce the amount of social and affordable housing to make sure they still make a profit. This is, of course, an oversimplification, and each development needs to be viewed individually, but you can see why there is an issue.

This needs to change from the top down. The new Government does seem to be making progress, but my party believes that we need to make it possible for local authorities to start building again. In the same vein, we should be providing financial incentives to developers to build on brownfield sites, reducing their costs and so increasing the amount of affordable housing a development can hold.

Can you tell us how you work with the Council and how closely you are able to work with them to tackle some of the important local issues that matter so much to people in Kew?

We often work very closely together on projects that involve us both. Ward councillors have very deep local knowledge that I may not necessarily have, while I can sometimes use the profile of an MP's office to get the word out about a local issue more effectively than they can.

Ultimately, some issues fall into my remit while others will be the Council's: however, I'm pleased to say I've had lots of opportunities to work with Clare, Ian, and Alice over the past four years and I hope to work with them again over the coming few years.

Finally, can you tell us what you do in your (probably rather limited) spare time? Do you ever come to Kew?

My family and I are regular visitors to Kew Gardens – it's one of our favourite things to do in the holidays. We like to get outside – either walking or cycling – whenever we get the time.

Kew Society AGM



The Kew Society AGM took place on Wednesday 16th October at The National Archives. Around 70 people attended, and the reports from the Chair and the Trustees showed just how much has been achieved during the year. Sadly, the AGM marked the end of Mary Done's and John Ricketts's time as trustees serving on the committee,

leading on Events and Planning respectively, as well as the departure of the rest of the Events team. John's wisdom and expertise as Planning Lead will be sorely missed. The Events team have organised over 200 events between them over the last 12 years: we hope that they will continue to support The Kew Society and inject their ideas, especially now they will have a little more time on their hands! Shiona extended thanks and presented a token of the Society's appreciation for all of their work.

Mary Done said 'A huge thank you to all at The Kew Society for the lovely flowers and theatre token each of the Events team received at the AGM. It's been a pleasure overseeing events for the past twelve years, and we look forward to catching up with members at future talks and walks.

Au Revoir **Mary, Sue, Jane & Heather.**

To conclude, three new trustees were appointed (see below).



Mary Done



Jason Debney

Talk on the Thames Landscape Strategy

After the business part of the meeting, we were given a talk by Jason Debney – the Thames Landscape Strategy Co-ordinator – on the Arcadian Thames. Jason spoke about the work being done on the River Thames, illustrating his talk with slides showing the plans to deliver this all-important strategy. The Thames Strategy Partnership is a collaboration between three organisations working along the Thames that have been responsible for delivering Thames Strategies for more than 30 years. LBRuT host the Partnership. The Riverside Strategy Approach integrates upgrades to flood defences with riverside improvements and wider benefits.

Jason pointed out that the Arcadian Thames (which runs from Weybridge to Kew) was a rural paradise in the seventeenth century. The risks posed by the changing climate and increasing flood risk mean that action needs to be taken if we are to preserve the land that runs along the Thames – the 'peak fluvial flow' may increase by up to 40% over the coming decades due to climate change. A new barrage will be needed by 2130.

Jason described the strategy for the riverside and the detailed plans to raise defences in such a way as to be acceptable from an environmental, ecological and aesthetic perspective. All the relevant local authorities need to develop detailed plans for the five different sections of the Thames by 2030,

showing how they are going to implement the strategy which should allow enough time to plan future flood defence upgrades in line with the vision set out in the strategy and identify opportunities to upgrade flood defences. Plans need to set out who owns each section of the riverbank and land alongside it, what condition it is in and what needs to be done going forward to raise future flood defences since the rate of flooding is increasing rapidly (with a forecast estimate of a 91 centimetre rise in the water level along parts of the Arcadian

Thames). It also needs to secure the funding to deliver the strategy.

Richmond Council is acting as the responsible Flood Authority on behalf of all five authorities. A grant of £1.8 million has been awarded to fund the development of the strategic plans. Changes in the operation of the Thames Barrier by 2035 will place certain sections of the Thames at greater risk of flooding.

Jason also set out plans for turning some of the grasslands around the Old Deer Park into wetlands, providing an opportunity to restore habitats and hopefully prevent flooding. Jason's talk wasn't all doom and gloom – the strategies provide an opportunity to integrate flood defence upgrades with riverside improvements and he assured us that this will have multiple benefits. The aim is to create green, accessible, vibrant public spaces, attracting investment, while ensuring protection from the increased flood risk.

As if Jason's talk wasn't enough of a warning, the towpath opposite Syon House flooded and had to be closed

just three days later, making the well-trodden path from Kew to Richmond inaccessible (and his optimism somewhat misplaced!). There is extensive damage to the towpath and it is likely to be closed for some time since there is a huge drop where the path has been destroyed and a gap several metres wide has appeared. According to press reports, a timeline for repairs will be discussed in the coming weeks. Watch this space!



Notices on the Kew Towpath



And the reasons for them

Further discussion about the implications of climate change and what is being done about it by Richmond Council is set out in Roger Mason's article (see below).

Meet our new trustees



Bettina Kaemmerer, Sarah Clarke & Trevor Whittaker

running along the river), cooking, travelling and meeting with friends.

Bettina Kaemmerer was appointed as trustee and Events Co-ordinator at the AGM. She is an experienced event organiser and community advocate with a passion for bringing people together and making a positive impact. With over a decade of experience in event planning, Bettina has successfully planned a variety of events from corporate gatherings to milestone celebrations. Beyond her expertise in event management, she is deeply committed to giving back to her community and believes in the power of connecting people to drive positive change. Bettina has been working as a management consultant in her own company *Bee-Comp Ltd.* for 2½ years. Having lived in Germany before, she has lived on North Road in Kew for 17 years and knows Kew / Richmond inside out. In her private time, she likes to exercise (e.g.

Sarah Clarke was appointed as trustee at the AGM and will take the lead on our Environment portfolio. She first lived in Kew in 2003-2006 and moved back in 2021. Dr. Clarke, an electronics engineer by profession, is a writer, self-taught artist and nature enthusiast. She has lived in the USA, Japan, Singapore and Canada and most recently the Middle East. Sarah pioneered the use of educational support dogs in Bahrain to enhance the learning and life skills of children with autism and related communication differences. She founded a non-profit group – *Baloo's Buddies* – to advocate for inclusive education in Bahrain. Using art as a universal language of expression, Sarah conceived of, and facilitated, numerous *Art for Autism Awareness* projects. In 2019, *Baloo's Buddies* received an International Award for community engagement from the world's largest Festival of Drawing – *The Big Draw*. Sarah's PhD is in the field of sustainable technology management. She studied the networks of learning that shape technological innovation and how these may be influenced to guide businesses and technical communities towards more environmentally sustainable behaviours. Sarah loves to write anything

from poetry to news articles, children's books to journal papers on topics as diverse as inclusion, sustainable development and travel.

Since returning home to Kew three years ago, Sarah has been a volunteer gardener for The Kew Society, and has helped at Pensford Field. In 2022, she led a project – *Art at the Allotment* – in Ealing for the Youth Engagement Programme. She can usually be found walking her black labradors around the many beautiful green spaces in the borough.

Trevor Whittaker was appointed as trustee and Vice-Chair at the AGM. He joined the committee in July 2023, serving on the Strategy sub-committee. He has also contributed to the design of the new logo and website as well as several articles to the newsletter.

Trevor has lived in Kew for many years and is an infrastructure development professional with extensive experience in low carbon renewable energy, urban regeneration, and PFI schemes. He has led teams to secure significant funding, delivered various energy and urban projects, and advised on policy and innovation for the UK government. His expertise includes project creation and delivery, governance, funding, commercial management and stakeholder management. Trevor has held senior roles at KEW Consult Limited, John Laing plc, AMEC plc, and Frogmore Estates plc, among others. He has an MBA from Cranfield School of Management.

Update on Pensford Field

Most members will be aware that the Council – who owns Pensford Field – has decided to terminate the lease granted to Pensford Field Environmental Trust (PFET) with one year's notice. This was done without appropriate community consultation and, understandably, many people are upset and angry about the decision. The volunteers at PFET have cared for this special place for many years and operate a 'light touch' conservation management plan, which has attracted much praise and several awards. Local schools and nurseries have been welcomed to visit and enjoy the unique area in the heart of Kew.

Gareth Roberts – the leader of the Council – has apologised for the lack of consultation, but has said that the decision to award a new lease to a different charity – Dose of Nature (DoN) – will not be changed. DoN has operated from Pensford Field for the past four years and continues to pay a rent to PFET for the use of its facilities – currently for three days each week. DoN provides highly regarded 'nature based' therapeutic services to people from across the area who are referred by their GPs. Clients do not pay anything for their ten-week programme, most of which takes place away from PF. The need for such mental health support services continues to grow and, earlier this year, the trustees of DoN made a formal request to the PFET trustees to be able to operate from PF on additional days. This request was rejected by the PFET trustees.

A range of alternative sites was subsequently explored, but DoN was unable to identify any suitable space within the Borough. Richmond Council did not want to lose a well-regarded mental health support provision from the area and, after conducting a 'needs analysis', made the decision to transfer the ownership of the lease to Dose of Nature.

Representatives from both charities are being invited to meet with Gareth Roberts at York House on 29th November. Kew Society trustees have – with the support of both DoN and PFET – also been invited to join the meeting. We have arranged to meet with both charities before the 29th to gain a full understanding of the facts. At the meeting, guided by our remit to protect our green environment and our community facilities, we will aim to influence a constructive outcome to this unhappy situation, an outcome which fully takes into account protecting the environment of the field and ensuring the community has the opportunity to enjoy this space while still enabling the valuable therapeutic work of DoN to continue.



Pictures of the recent Supporters party

Do you need to renew your membership?

If you normally pay your annual subscription by bank card, cheque or cash, your membership will now have expired. To rejoin The Kew Society, you will need to set up a direct debit through our website.

This is a simple process for anyone with an online bank account. The direct debit arrangement may be cancelled at any time, and you will receive an automatic reminder when your next annual subscription becomes due.

We do appreciate that this may be less convenient than paying as you normally do, but have decided that we can no longer expect volunteers to spend the amount of time which is now required to process cards, cheques or cash. We really hope that you will continue to support the work that we do on behalf of everyone in Kew and to benefit from our newsletters and other member benefits.

If you cannot remember how you paid last year, or do not have an online bank account or experience any difficulties renewing your membership please get in touch with me at membership@kewsociety.org.

Janet Clark, Membership Secretary

Designing our new logo and website

As this is the first newsletter using our new leaf logo, we thought you'd like to know a bit more about the story behind it. It's part of our new-look website (www.kewsociety.org) which has been redesigned to have a more up-to-date feel and, importantly, to work well on mobile phones and tablets, which is how many people are likely to view it.

Technology and taste have moved on since we launched our previous website nine years or so ago. With so many images and messages all around us, we need a brand which is distinctive and modern if we are going to get noticed. We also wanted to keep our sense of identity and place, so our starting-point was the river and the green spaces of Kew. Working with our design partner – MWA – we looked at the map to see how we might use the curve of the river and the A316 road to the south, which bound the area covered by the Kew Society.

Mark Wilson at MWA traced out the lines and blocks of colour, then gradually removed bits of detail, to make it more impressionistic.

The blue of the river and grey of the A316 gradually became arcs, and the green blocks of Kew Gardens and Dukes Meadows morphed into a sort of Rorschach test, in which Mark saw leaves. I don't know what that reveals about his personality but we can leave that to others! This seemed to us to capture what we were after: it has a sense of location and the essence of the greenness of Kew's spaces, all without using any words. A bit of tidying-up resulted in the finished logo, which had another useful quality. The overlapping leaves form the outline of a heart, hence our line '*caring for Kew is at the heart of what we do*', which you will see used on our website and other communications over time.

The colours we've used in the logo and throughout our website are also carefully selected to reflect the palette of Kew: soft greens, blues for the sky and, er, the river? Well maybe not, but you know what we mean. They were inspired by a painting of Kew Green in 1892 by Camille Pissarro. You can see that near the bottom of the main page of our website – www.kewsociety.org.

Of course, a new logo on its own won't achieve anything. It's what the Kew Society does that's important, but we hope it will help our messages stand out and get noticed among the many hundreds you'll see each day. Thank you for your support to help us in caring for Kew, it's at the heart of what we do.

Russel Hayes & Trevor Whittaker



Evolution of our new Logo

Tide Times and Defibrillator Locations – now on the Kew Society website

Ever walked along the towpath from Kew to Barnes only to find that the tide is so high that you get blocked by the river water? Well, no more, as The Kew Society's new website provides tide times for each day.

New Live Tide Times Feed

You can find the live feed of the daily tide times in the new **Kew Info** section at the top of our website under *Tide Times* and also at the bottom of our home page. They are provided by tidetimes.org.uk.

In fact, why not use the tide times to plan a circular walk to Barnes? The path alongside Dukes Meadows on the north side doesn't flood, and you can cross the river both at Chiswick Bridge and the pedestrian walkway attached to Barnes railway bridge. Just remember to go whichever way round means you walk the towpath at the lowest tide. It makes a very pleasant four-mile walk.

Defibrillator Locations

We hope you don't need to use one but it's important to know where to find this information if you do. There are ten officially registered defibrillators, also known as AEDs or Pads, in the Kew area, but do you know where they are? We are providing this resource so that you can familiarise yourself with their locations.

Remember, in an emergency always dial 999 and they will direct you. Look in our new **Kew Info** section at the top of our home page under **Defibrillator Locations**.

This information is provided by the British Heart Foundation 'Defib Finder' service and contains verified and updated information. Simply go to the link and

enter your postcode when asked. These devices will certainly help save someone's life if they are having a cardiac arrest, so it's worth noting their location so that you can find them. If you want to brush up on how to use one, and we all ought to do this, there is some great information from the British Heart Foundation on its website (<https://www.bhf.org.uk/how-you-can-help/how-to-save-a-life/defibrillators/understanding-defibrillators-what-they-are-and-how-to-use-them>).



Planning update

In July 2024, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) launched a consultation on reforms to the National Policy Planning Framework (NPPF – the document that sets out the government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied). These reforms are designed 'to achieve sustainable growth in our planning system'. The consultation ended on 24th September.

The Kew Society fully acknowledges the need for more housing in Greater London, but not if it means long-term harm to the historic and local environment. Our response focused on this topic, including objections to (a) removing the clause (paragraph 130) which requires the character of an existing area to be considered when higher than average densities are proposed for new housing developments; and (b) removing the reference to consistency with the prevailing height of neighbouring properties when considering the upward extension of existing residential and commercial properties (paragraph 122(e)).

There is no further news on the proposed Kew Retail Park nor Homebase Manor Road developments. Dates for the public inquiry into the Mortlake Brewery planning applications have now been set for November and December this year – details can be seen at <https://tinyurl.com/Stag-Brewery>.

North of the river, you may remember that in December 2023, the Secretary of State approved the planning applications for the redevelopment of the Tesco/Homebase sites on Syon Lane, overturning the planning inspector's decision to refuse. In July 2024, the applicant St. Edwards (a joint venture between Berkeley Group and M&G Investments) consulted on minor changes to the schemes to incorporate the requirement for second staircases to tall buildings in the wake of the Grenfell disaster. Work has now started on dismantling the former Homebase store, which is likely to take a couple of months to complete. However, work on the foundations and then the above-ground buildings will not commence for another 18 months or so.

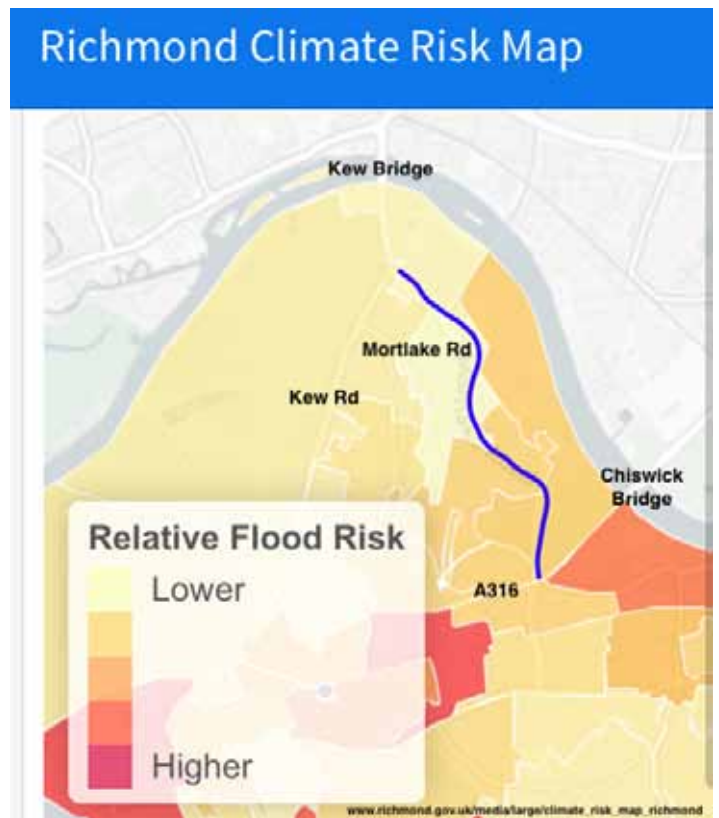
Richmond Council's Climate Strategy 2025-2030: catching up and contributing

On behalf of The Kew Society, Roger and Maggie Mason recently attended a workshop at York House to discuss the impact of climate change and the evolving climate strategy. Almost all scientists and an increasing number of politicians believe that climate change poses the greatest threat to the future of mankind. Richmond Council declared a climate emergency in 2019 and published its policy to counter the effects on our Borough, as reported in The Kew Society Summer 2023 newsletter. We followed that with a talk at The National Archives in November last year on *Climate Change in Kew* and its potential dire consequences, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6JTdXW5aGdM&t=18s> and The Kew Society newsletter (Winter 2023-2024). Now Richmond Council is preparing its Climate Strategy for 2025-2030. The Council organised several workshops recently for residents to learn about progress on the climate strategy and to air their views. We attended one at York House on 26th September 2024.

Andrew Hagger – Head of Climate Change and Sustainability at Richmond Council – introduced the workshop to a Climate Risk Map of the borough which his team have produced (https://www.richmond.gov.uk/media/large/climate_risk_map_richmond.html). This enables current areas of vulnerability to overall and specific effects of climate change (e.g. overheating, flooding) to be identified. The area of Kew between the Village and Kew Road has a low overall vulnerability to climate change effects, but many other residential areas of the ward have a moderate risk. Richmond Town, North Sheen and Mortlake are at relatively higher risk. The above diagram, based on a screenshot from the flooding section of the climate risk map, shows the current relative risk of flooding in different parts of Kew. Broadly, the relative risk is highest to the east of Mortlake Road (highlighted in blue) and in areas to the south of the A316. However, these areas are relatively at less risk than, for example, the Mortlake riverside. This sophisticated tool will inform targeting higher risk areas when deciding priorities in the new climate change strategy. It will be updated every year.

Andrew stressed that the Strategy Team is very keen to seek the views of residents about climate change and how to counteract it. A new internet site – <https://richmondclimatestrategy.commonplace.is/proposals> – has been set up for that. The Council has set a goal for the borough becoming net zero for greenhouse gas emissions by 2043. This aligns with the Paris Agreement, which aims to keep the global temperature rise below 2°C above pre-industrial levels. Richmond residents have an important role to play in this as the major contributors to Borough CO₂ emissions are domestic buildings (46%, heating and cooking) and diesel/petrol-powered transport (24%). Solutions abound such as replacing gas heating systems with air heat pumps, using sustainable transport such as walking, cycling, or public transport, or buying an electric vehicle when changing your car.

The workshop broke into discussion groups for the last session. Participants had ideas which could contribute to the 2025-2030 Richmond Strategy. One concern is that some in the community are ill-informed about climate change, or not worried about it. Education must play a prominent role in correcting that. Scaring people about exceeding a 2°C temperature rise might help but must be accompanied by empowering them to take action to prevent it. Subsidies will stimulate the adoption of heat pumps and insulation and must not be downgraded as they are currently being for electric cars. The Municipal Council in The Hague, Netherlands, legislated in September 2024 to ban outdoor advertising for high carbon footprint commodities, including fossil fuels, petrol and diesel cars, flights and cruise ships. Radical ideas like that may be increasingly necessary to ensure we achieve net zero by 2043.



The Great Thames Race

Some traditions can go unnoticed, so it probably came as a surprise to many on Saturday 21st September to see a very large number of boats powered solely by hand making their way past Kew on their way from Docklands – Millwall Riverside on Westferry Road – to Ham.

The Great River Race is London's River Marathon. It's a spectacular boat race covering 21.6 miles from East to West, travelling under 28 of London's famous bridges. It appeals to every level of competitor, from dedicated athletes who come every year to beat their records to those who simply enjoy laughter, fancy dress and making money for their charity. It's a great fun day out for both competitors and spectators.

It started in 1988 with 61 boats crewed by a bunch of enthusiasts ranging from young scouts to hardened offshore rowing veterans coming from diverse organisations such as rowing clubs, pubs, schools, boating societies and the armed services. It now has around 300 crews taking part, and is an international event with competitors from America, Australia and many European countries.



This is a race for fixed-seat-only craft, and a large variety of boats take part, including the traditional Thames Watermen's Cutters. The race is based on the Watermen principle, and so each crew must carry a passenger and cox along with a 3' x 2' flag. A handicapping system is used to ensure fair play.

The Great River Race is now a charitable trust run by volunteers; and with over 2,500 competitors competing for 37 trophies, it has become the biggest and most prestigious event of its kind in Europe. Adult, junior and disabled competitors are invited to take part, and there are Junior categories for under 14, 16 and 18 crews and also veteran categories for V40+ and V60+. The Junior crews have a responsible adult (18 or over) in the boat as either the cox or passenger. Mixed crews have a minimum of 50% women rowing to be eligible for mixed-class trophies: crews with fewer than 50% women rowing are classified as men! In all classes, the cox and/or passenger may change places with a rowing crew member as long as they adhere to the gender or age restrictions of that class.

The start times vary each year and are dependent on tidal conditions. The race starts with the slowest craft first: each vessel has its own individual handicap and the faster the potential speed of the boat, the later the start time. The fastest boat starts just over an hour after the slowest. Historically, the fastest time was 2 hours, 2 minutes and 21 seconds

And if you missed it this year, the next one is on Saturday, 20th September 2025 – make a note in your diary now !!



Our head gardener's summer cuttings!

If you use Kew Gardens station and its approaches, we hope you've enjoyed the results of our gardening as you go about your daily business. We wanted to thank some unsung heroes, without whom the blooming beds and pots just couldn't exist. Local businesses like the Greenhouse Café, Cafe Torelli Il piccolo, Chris and Chris Motors, Jin Bao, and also TfL have all provided water free of charge to keep the plants alive. So let's hear it for them: a huge thank you from us at The Kew Society on behalf of everyone who uses the Kew station and the parade and plaza.



Ilmaz and Dogan from the Pagoda Cafe in Kew Plaza who've been doing their bit to keep Kew blooming lovely

April: Back from the dead

Last autumn the grasses and verbenas on the eastbound platform were chopped down in error by TfL's contractor. Thankfully they have paid for replacement plants which we planted in April and the bed has now, as I'm sure you'll have noticed, been restored to its former beauty. Scarlet and bright pink pelargoniums planted under the bridge at the station have provided a wonderful splash of



Blooms at the station

colour this summer under the station sign at the top of West Park Road. The staff at the station are always helpful to the gardening team, and it's great to know our hard work is appreciated. Indeed, our gardening efforts at Kew Gardens station

were recognised in the October edition of TfL's staff magazine *On the Move*, which goes out to over 20,000 people who work for TfL.

Of course, we couldn't do any of this without your support or that of our gardening volunteers. Thank you so much, and here's to keeping Kew beautiful.

Anna Anderson, Head Gardener

Kew at War

Simon Fowler has lived in Kew for over forty years. He is a member of The Kew Society and worked for many years at The National Archives and subsequently helped to set up Kew Village Market. He has revised a book about Kew in the Second World War. Claire Bethel asked him about his work in revising Kew at War.

Can you tell me what interested you and your co-writers to find out more about the role that Kew played in World War Two?

My interest really began when I wrote a history of Richmond between 1939 and 1945. When it came time to revise *Kew at War*, I was asked to take on the project. The original authors knew many people who had lived here then, and it was their experiences which brought the book alive. I've included additional sources released over the past decade and written something about the men and women from Kew who were in the services.



Damage done by V2 rocket in West Park Avenue

What role did the site that is currently occupied by The National Archives play in the war?

The site had a number of different uses. It originally housed American cartographers drawing up maps for the D-Day landings. For two years from March 1945, the site became the home of several thousand Italians who were helping to clear bomb damage across London.

What role did Kew Gardens play in the war?

Remarkably the Gardens did not close to the public, although much of the grounds was turned over to growing fruit and vegetables. Botanists also provided much practical advice to gardeners and allotment holders.



Was there very much bomb damage in Kew?

The worst incident occurred in September 1944 when a V2 rocket killed eight people and destroyed a number of houses in West Park Avenue. There is a complete list of the buildings which were destroyed or badly damaged in the book.

How can we get hold of the book?

Priced £10, *Kew at War 1939-1945* is on sale at The Kew Bookshop, The Open Book in Richmond, the committee stall at Kew Village Market and online at www.richmondhistory.org.uk.

The author – Simon Fowler – left

Celebrating 40 Years of Rotary in Kew

Founded 40 years ago on 12th October 1984, Kew Gardens Rotary Club is perhaps one of Kew's biggest secrets, quietly working on local and international community and humanitarian projects for the benefit of all. Indeed, this small group of around 20 members tackle some of the most complex challenges faced locally and globally, working with local groups to deliver projects in communities at home and overseas to change lives.

'It may be a small club within the Rotary Organisation, which has 1.2 million members globally, but its impact is large. We've raised over £40,000 through crowd funding for the Richmond Foodbank, £100,000 to purchase equipment for schools and their children in Ukraine, £13,500 through a joint Kew venture for a prefabricated home in Ukraine and £2,000 to plant trees in the drylands of Kenya to help bring safe water to the community', notes 2023/24 President James Onions.

Proud of its achievements, the nucleus of Kew Rotary was drawn from a businessmen's lunch in 1983. Those men-only days are long gone, and Kew Rotary welcomes everyone to its meetings; in fact, it was the first club in the district to induct female members in 1988, and the first female Rotarian in the UK lived in Kew. Today the group can be found at Café Torelli in Kew, chatting informally over a coffee, meeting over zoom or sharing knowledge with guest speakers at monthly gatherings at The Coach & Horses.

The Club's first fund-raising community event was a stall at the Kew Horticulture Society Show in August 1984, proceeds from which funded a new bench at the bus stop on Kew Green. These days they fundraise at local fairs, markets and shows, and golf days, and have hosted jazz evenings, quizzes (which raised over £52,000 for local charities) and even a *Bad Taste Bingo Bash!* With a robust governance system, donors can be assured that their contributions are safe, as every penny raised is spent on the projects, none goes in administration.

What of the future? Kew Rotary's latest projects include mulled wine at the Christmas Kew Village market, Christmas food bags for Crossroads Care, Empowering Women and Girls, local Defibrillators, Ukraine



Christmas food parcels for children and young adults supported by Crossroads Care



school children support and Sand dams.

Additionally, members enjoy social events and outings. Why not contact them and get involved? For more information you can find Kew Rotary at www.kewrotary.org.uk or email one of our members: richardwilliammason@hotmail.com.

A temporary home in Moshchun, Ukraine, provided by the Kew Rotary Club

Celia Holman returns to The National Archives



On Wednesday 25th September, Celia Holman – historian and resident of Eel Pie Island – returned to The National Archives to give another of her entertaining talks to The Kew Society. This time, her topic was **Poets & Princes, Naked Ladies and Rock Gods**, and covered the history of the area of the Arcadian Thames close to Eel Pie Island, including York House and its beautiful gardens. For those who missed it, we thought you might be interested in the history of this stretch of the river.

York House is Grade II listed and is scheduled as an ancient monument, dating back to the 17th Century. The earliest reference to York House is in 1446, when it was known as Yorke Farm. This formed part of the Manor of Twickenham, which comprised 43 acres and 77 acres of common land in Twickenham, Whitton and Isleworth. At this date the farm was leased by William Helder and Walter Bolder to William Yorke and his wife Agnes.

In 1639, the house had again been sold, this time to Sir Charles Tufton, for £3,000. The next occupant, who was thought to have much improved the house and the grounds, was Major James Webber, who occupied it prior to 1796. He was succeeded by Ludwig Count Von Starhemberg who

built a theatre in the grounds which was attached to a wing of the house. There is no remaining evidence of the theatre and its exact location has never been established.

In 1906 the house was sold by auction for £16,000 to Sir Ratan J Tata, an Indian merchant prince. His contribution towards the development of York House was to move the main entrance to the centre of the building and to build the loggia at the end of the east wing. Sir Ratan also transformed the garden and grounds by enclosing the meadow by the river, excavating the main lawn to create the present sunken garden and replacing a bridge over the road with the present stone one. In 1909 he acquired the fountain and statues which decorate the meadow garden.

Sir Ratan Tata died in 1918, and his widow lived in York House until 1922 when she returned to India. In 1924 the property was purchased by Twickenham Urban District Council, who lent it to Twickenham Yacht Club. (The Yacht Club now uses what was the York House boathouse as their headquarters.)

When in 1926 Twickenham received its Charter of Incorporation, the Borough decided to use the house for meetings. It was opened by the Duke of York (later King George VI), and it was decided to use York House as the municipal offices when the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames Council was formed in 1965; and Celia showed us various maps illustrating how it had been enlarged.

Celia also told us about the history of Orleans House, a Palladian villa built by the architect John James in 1710 near the Thames at Twickenham for the politician and diplomat James Johnston. It was subsequently named after the Duc d'Orléans who stayed there in the early 19th century. By the early 20th century it was derelict and



The Octagon of Orleans House

in 1926 it was mostly demolished. However, parts of the property, including a baroque octagonal room designed by architect James Gibbs, were preserved. The Octagon Room and its service wing are listed Grade I by Historic England and, together with a converted stable block, are now the Orleans House Gallery, a gallery of art relating to the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames and neighbouring areas of London.

And of course, Celia had to include the story of the fountain in York House gardens.

In 1906, Sir Ratan Tata – the Indian merchant prince – purchased York House and commissioned the installation of a large fountain and statues in the garden. The fountain came from Lea Park, near

Godalming. The origin and history of the statues is not precisely known. The style is distinctly fin-de-siècle, and they are believed to be Italian. The eight larger than lifesize statues – also called The Oceanides – are located at the western end of the riverside gardens and are made of Carrara marble and represent the Oceanides, or sea nymphs, from Greek mythology, and they are locally known as ‘the naked ladies’.

The fountains fell into disrepair due to a number of factors, including vandalism, electricity bills, pump failures, and leaks.

The statues were sprayed with a grey sludge during World War II to prevent enemy bombers from using the moon’s reflection on them to navigate the Thames.

In the late 20th century, conservation work was carried out to restore the gardens to their early 20th century layout.



The Fountain in York House Gardens

Paul Bethel

OBITUARIES

Sadly, we have to bring you news of two much-loved members of our community

Gudrun Edwards

Gudrun Edwards, who retired from her position as Patron of the Kew Society in 2022 due to ill health, died peacefully at the Kew home that she had lived in for 59 years, on the 30th September. During her life, she made a huge contribution to the cultural life of Kew. She co-founded and then led the Kew Sinfonia for 30 years, from their inaugural concert in 1986 to her final concert as leader in 2016. She had a wonderful ability to connect with young people and taught many people who are now themselves established musicians.

Everyone who knew her admired her wonderful ‘can do’ attitude and her ability to ‘get things done’...a truly rare talent, who will be missed by many. A number of Kew Society members attended the celebration of her life on the 31st October...held, very appropriately, at The Musical Museum.

Shiona Williams, Chair





Mary Done looks back on Gudrun's life

At our 2024 AGM, Shiona Williams – Kew Society Chair – paid tribute to Gudrun Edwards who died peacefully at home on the 30th September 2024 after a period of declining health. Gudrun is well-known to local residents and music lovers for her distinguished contribution to all levels of music and her stalwart work as a past Patron of The Kew Society from 2016 until 2022, where she is remembered for showing such interest, caring and commitment towards the local community.

She delighted concert audiences as leader of the Kew Sinfonia for 30 years and leader of the Richmond Orchestra for 10 years. Her glorious musical performances were dazzling and uplifting.

Many locals will have children who were taught by Gudrun about the fundamental basics of musical appreciation – especially through

playing the violin – in local schools and in her comfy sitting-room.

Sitting and waiting, as Gudrun taught my young daughter the best ways to hold and play her tiny violin, her kindness, encouragement and patience came to the fore. Without being a dragon, she managed to get pupils to practise – always with a smile and twinkle in her eye. I am eternally grateful to Gudrun for sharing the joy of music, which formed part of family life from then on. Her mantra seemed to be that life is for living and enchanting others through music. Her passion and commitment were equalled by a delightful sense of humour and determination that improvement was on the cards – 'keep practising' always being her parting words to pupils.

We will all miss Gudrun and offer love and support to the family she has left behind and whom she adored – there are so many happy memories for them to think about, laugh over and enjoy. When we met in later life, she was always so interested in the musical career that my daughter followed – I know this emanated from the seeds sown in those one hour violin sessions each week at her house! Gudrun – there never was a better lady and we will all miss you terribly.

Gudrun is survived by her three children and eight grandchildren: Georgia, Laurie, Ellen, Linden, Jade, Vivian, Dan, and Ollie.



Mary Done – TKS member

Gudrun Edwards 1938-2024

Serge Lourie

Serge Lourie, who died suddenly on 10th September, was a true west-London boy: he was extremely proud of his Russian/Ukrainian heritage and recently got a Russian GCSE after studying at the Avenue Club in Kew.



Serge Lourie 22nd February 1946 – 10th September 2024

One of his running friends described him as 'vigorous, funny, encouraging, stubborn and kind' to which I would add 'energetic, indefatigable, generous and unstoppable!' The characteristics that all his many friends have used to describe him really give the measure of the man – affable and jolly, kind with a boundless generosity of spirit.

Serge and Julia moved to Kew in 1976. When the pro-European SDP was formed in 1981, Serge was swift to join, and won a seat in the Kew Ward for Richmond Council in 1982 – a seat he retained until 2010, having joined the merged Liberal Democrats on their formation

But Serge, activist that he was, was not just a member but became Leader of the Council and leader of the Opposition, with a fistful of appointments on London-wide bodies to boot. His achievements in these roles were considerable. His approach was visionary with an early concern for the environment. He left an indelible mark on Richmond and Kew.

After he lost his seat in the 2010 election, he decided that it was time to move on. He did not stand again, but continued to work tirelessly for the local Liberal Democrats, cheerfully fundraising and ever active behind the scenes.

Serge always enjoyed doing everything he did. And although much of what he did was motivated by a desire to make things better for others, there was another side to Serge who loved the good things of life as well as the sheer exhilaration which comes from physical activity, whether running or skiing or walking.

Serge's involvement with Kingston Hospital long predated his near-fatal attack of COVID in March 2020. He attributed his recovery to the care he received there, which saved his life. From then on, fundraising for Kingston Hospital became a major occupation.

Fundraising, particularly as an auctioneer, was his real forte. Any community group in Kew, Richmond or the Local LibDems had only to ask, and Serge was ready to pick up the gavel. Using a mixture of good humour and bad jokes, he surely raised hundreds of thousands of pounds. He was also a great supporter of the Kew Community Trust and the linked Avenue Club, playing a leading role for many years as well as participating enthusiastically in French conversation classes and leading the very successful monthly walks.

Serge was a really excellent cook and loved food – especially feeding others.

Running was an even greater part of his life! On New Year's Day 1985, he proposed that he and I should run a half-marathon which we duly did in March that year. The following year we achieved our best marathon time of three and a half hours. Serge ran several more and was planning a further final one when he was 80. He also attracted a band of runners centred on Burlington Avenue who ran most mornings, rain or shine. He became a stalwart of the Richmond Park Run – a 5k run – every Saturday, completing over 470 runs.

Much of what Serge did, happened because he devoted so much of his life to the service of others. But he would not have described it in these terms. He would have said that he did what he did because he liked doing it. The fact that so many people were beneficiaries of his actions was for him a bonus and for the rest of us a blessing.

KEW DIARY 2024

15th November	The Richard Cook Trio – Classic American Jazz	Café Yukari
16th November	Bulb planting and bramble clearance at the HaHa, Old Deer Park	Habitats and Heritage*
23rd November	Tour of HaHa at Old Deer Park and Q&A session	Habitats and Heritage
24th November	Mood Indigo - Jazz on the Plaza	Café Yukari
1st December	Our Songs, Your Songs	Café Yukari
1st December	Advent Sunday Carol Service	St. Anne's Church
5th December	Meet in Kew at Kew Community Centre	The Kew Society & Kew Community Trust
6th December	Kew Sparkle, in the village (see https://www.kewsparkle.org/)	Various

* BOOKING REQUIRED. Sign up using <https://www.trybooking.com/uk/EAIX>

Details of The Kew Society events have yet to be finalised: keep an eye on our website (see below). Let us know if you can help the new Events Team – contact Shiona Williams at chair@kewsociety.org.

Kew Road Ha-ha upcoming events

**16th November 2024 -
Nature conservation
volunteer day.**
Help plant some native flower
bulbs and clear some bramble.
10am - 12.30. Please sign up on Try
Booking using the QR code.

Scan Me!



**23rd November 2024 -
Community information**
A guided tour of the ha-ha
followed by a project update and a
Q&A session. 187 Kew Road, Old
Deer Park Sports Ground. 10 am - 12
noon







**A mature cygnet from The National Archives,
rescued from his aggressive dad and taken to
Barnes by the Swan Sanctuary**

Contact Us

Your Committee includes:

Chair	Shiona Williams	chair@kewsociety.org
Vice-Chair	Trevor Whittaker	trevor.whittaker@kewsociety.org
Hon. Secretary	Diana Ormond	secretary@kewsociety.org
	Steve Williams	treasurer@kewsociety.org
Hon. Treasurer	Steve Williams	treasurer@kewsociety.org
Membership Secretary	Janet Clark	membership@kewsociety.org
Press/Website/ Communications	Russel Hayes	russel@family-hayes.co.uk
	Social Media Coordinator	Karina Garcia
Planning		planning@kewsociety.org
Environment		
Lead	Sarah Clarke	environment@kewsociety.org
Events	Bettina Kaemmerer	events@kewsociety.org
Gardening	Anna Anderson	gardening@kewsociety.org
Newsletter		
Editor	Claire Bethel	editor@kewsociety.org

Patrons

Nick Baird CMG CVO
Sir David Durie KCMG
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, 90 Forest Road, KEW, Surrey, TW9 3BZ



If Hand-Delivered:

For Address Label