



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING – 3 OCTOBER 2020

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT ON THE YEAR 2019

At last year's AGM we resolved to close the 'old' Society and transfer its remaining funds to the 'new' Society, set up in 2015. I am pleased to report that this was finally achieved in September 2019, when the 'merger' of the two Societies was formally registered by the Charity Commission. Therefore, the 'old' Society is no more. This should simplify (and shorten) our General Meetings going forward!

A highlight of 2019 was undoubtedly our Dinner Dance, held at the Wimbledon Club, last October. The event was a sell-out and, thanks to the generosity of the event's sponsor Robert Holmes & Company and of many donors, we were able to raise £4,000 towards our Museum refurbishment project. Once again, I would thank the Dinner Dance committee for their work planning this event and especially Luz Patterson who inspired the event and drove the project with such energy and enthusiasm.

The bulk of the Society's work day-to-day is carried out by sub-committees. There are currently nine sub-committees in total, manned by nearly 50 members. We are always looking for more help! Early last year a new Communications sub-committee was set up, to review the Society's communications generally – particularly the Society's and the Museum's respective websites and our output on social media. As a result of that review, it was decided that our websites required a complete overhaul and we are now well embarked on a project to create an entirely new joint website. We hope that this will become 'live' in late Spring and I would encourage all members to look at it and give us feedback.

This has been another very busy year for our Planning & Environment Committee, as appears from Chris Goodair's report. Another memorable event of 2019 was our visit to the vast (and extraordinarily noisy) Southwark Integrated Waste Management Facility in Peckham, where we learnt a great deal about what happens to our rubbish and recycling. In September we hosted a well-attended public meeting at which representatives of Heathrow Airport explained and answered questions about their expansion plans, and its likely effect on Wimbledon. Now that Merton Council has declared a Climate Emergency, the Society is actively looking at ways to help the Council to respond to this.

Temporary exhibitions have in the past proved a great way to bring in large numbers of visitors to our Museum. As our Museum Director Jacqueline Laurence reports, over 500 attended the "Hidden Treasures" art exhibition last Autumn. It proved to be a wonderful opportunity to show off the Museum's art collection, and this was done in a most attractive fashion. Great credit is due to Pamela Greenwood and her team for the success of that exhibition. We are now busy planning a major refurbishment of the Museum, with new displays which will engage people of all ages. This will require substantial fund-raising and members will be hearing much more about this in the coming months.

Another group produces the Society's quarterly Newsletter which I hope remains a source of great interest to members with a wide range of coverage of local matters. Thanks are due to Sally Gibbons and her team for their very professional approach in producing a high quality publication. Thanks are also due to the members who distribute the Newsletter for us. Very interesting articles for the Newsletter are regularly provided by our Local History Group, led by Michael Norman-Smith, who continue to unearth hitherto undiscovered facts about our town's past. The Events Group led by Jane Healey continue to provide a wide range of walks, talks and visits for members to enjoy. I conclude by thanking members of the Board for their support. Many Board members lead or sit on more than one of these sub-committees, and the work they do is prodigious.

Jeremy Hudson

**PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
REPORT TO WIMBLEDON SOCIETY AGM FROM THE PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

Examining Planning Applications:

The Planning & Environment Committee reviewed 192 planning applications and we sent 89 letters of objection or comment to the Council's Planning Department. Of the cases where we wrote, 11 applications were refused, 5 were withdrawn, and 30 granted, the remainder being undecided. Whilst 35% of the applications we considered related to Village Ward, it should be noted that the town centre is split between three wards.

Planning and other Policy Issues:

There were no substantive developments about the Crossrail 2 project during 2019. Should a decision be made to build the line, we will re-start our meetings with the CR2 team, re-activate our previous proposals and re-assess the impact on our localities.

The Society's "Vision 2040" plan for Wimbledon Town Centre was discussed with Councillors and we will continue working with the Council during 2020 on their revised "Masterplan".

There were two Heathrow consultations during 2019, one concerning the proposed third runway and the other about the proposed changes to flight-paths. We made detailed representations to them, setting out our view that London's major airport is in the wrong place and that a structured plan to de-commission it should be instituted.

The Local Government Boundary Commission started a review of Merton Council's ward boundaries. It had already determined that the number of councillors would reduce from 60 to 57. Demographic changes have meant that most Wimbledon wards have fewer than the mean number of electors, so it seems inevitable that the ward that will disappear will be in Wimbledon. We sent them our detailed proposals for new ward boundaries in Wimbledon.

Environmental Issues:

In addition to a visit to the Southwark Recycling Plant, during 2019 we:

- i) expressed our concerns about the health risks associated with the roll-out of 5G technology
- ii) lobbied the Mayor of London about pollution levels on the Underground
- iii) lobbied Councillors for a Green Bus Route & extension of the Ultra-Low Emissions Zone to Merton
- iv) requested Merton Council to stop using glyphosate.

External Meetings:

We have continued to hold meetings with Council officers to discuss issues of mutual interest. We also met officers looking at the Climate Emergency and we have continued to liaise with them since.

We were invited to attend a meeting called by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on the Future of the High St in February, interesting for the insight into initiatives being taken in other areas.

In the autumn we invited representatives from ten neighbouring Civic Societies to meet with us to discuss common issues. We will be hosting at least one further meeting this year.

Committee Membership:

One long-standing member of the Committee, John Rowcliffe, retired in March 2019 after many years of valuable service: and another member left us later in the year. We welcomed two new members to the Committee which restores us to the healthy number of monitors needed to spread the workload.

Once again, I wish to extend my thanks go to all past and present members of the Planning & Environment Committee for their hard work and support during the last year.

Chris Goodair

REPORT TO WIMBLEDON SOCIETY AGM FROM THE MUSEUM & EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Behind the Scenes:

Pamela Greenwood's wonderful work on the collections continues. She is assisted by her growing, and increasingly expert, team of curators and conservators. Inventories of the Art Collection and the Maps Collection are almost complete. Wonderful preventative and remedial conservation work on these collections made possible the special exhibitions mounted and planned during the year.

Visitor Numbers and Outreach:

A total of 1791 visitors came to the Museum in 2019. Of these 258 were children, some attending our first ever "Family Fun Day" in July (part of the national Festival of Archaeology), and many on school visits. At the end of November we had our first school visit from a school for children with special education needs, Linden Lodge. This provided a wonderful educational experience for children who are visually impaired, including those who are multi-disabled, visually impaired, and some who have profound and multiple learning difficulties. The visit was a great success and I hope it will be the first of many. In November we also had a special evening opening of the Museum for a group of young people with learning disabilities, members of a local charity called The Squad. We also received the result of our joint bid with C&C Housing for funding from the Wimbledon Foundation for a museum project involving elderly residents of C&C Housing and local school children. Sadly we were unsuccessful in a very competitive funding round, but we learnt a lot in the process of applying and we will certainly try again.

Special Exhibitions:

The Art Exhibition "Hidden Treasures: Art & Artists in Wimbledon", was a great success. A total of 526 people came to see it. No sooner had it finished, than we were preparing for the Maps Exhibition "Mapping Merton: Where do you think you are?" which opened in January.

Refurbishment:

We have recruited an invaluable new volunteer to help with the refurbishment. She is Jane Allen, previously Head of Heritage at Sutton Council, and the person responsible for the lottery bid and refurbishment of the Whitehall Historic House and other major projects. She has joined our Refurbishment Committee, which has just met for the second time. Our National Lottery Project Enquiry Form will be submitted in January 2020.

Jacqueline Laurence

LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

In 2019 our regular members have occasionally been joined by visitors who are welcomed for their interest. Sometimes they raise queries such as the extent of use of ducking stools locally. None were evidenced.

In the absence of coverage in the local media we recorded the candidates and votes in the General Election and those known to have been awarded honours at the New Year.

Several participants have published histories, including that of William Morris House and Merton Park Film Studios. Those with archives drew upon them to show us architectural drawings, and Council Minutes about plans for Past Town Centre changes.

There have been planning applications and developments transformational to our community. For instance, these include the closure of several familiar businesses in the High Street, expansion of the Dog & Fox, and the dramatic fire (ironically!) at the Old Fire Station.

Individual members have pursued particular research projects into subjects ranging from St Mark's Church, local schools and Methodist factions, not to mention peculiarities in street numbering. Further investigations are planned into the Jesuit Movement.

Michael Norman-Smith

ACTIVITIES & EVENTS GROUP

My first year with the Events Group has been very rewarding. I would like to give special thanks to Asif Malik and to my fellow group members, Jenny Humphries, Michael Norman-Smith and Ann Cantrell, without their guidance, organisation and support I would have been lost. As I start my second year I feel I have a better idea of what is required and, with that in mind, we have been putting together an exciting programme for 2020/2021.

During 2019 we had successful and well attended trips to Stationers' Hall, Highgate Cemetery, West Horsley Place and more recently to the Pre-Raphaelite Sisters exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery, with a hugely fascinating talk from Lucinda Hawksley. Our excursions, local walks and talks were also well attended, and we have more exciting events planned, but you will have to wait for the next Newsletter for full details.

All the events we arrange require considerable time and effort from us as volunteers and, whilst I am new to the task, others have been working for many years, so please feel free to volunteer with any aspect of the Society's Activities & Events Group.

Jane Healey