

T H E W A L W O R T H S O C I E T Y

Walworth Society 2016 Annual General Meeting – Report from the Chair

This report covers our fourth full year as a Society and describes the activities we have undertaken in the Walworth area, the role of our members and some of the issues that may be significant in 2016.

The base for the Society has been once again the great support and interest that we have had since we were formally constituted as a group at the end of 2011. We would first and foremost like to put on record our thanks to our members and our local Councillors in helping us play a part in the story of Walworth. In addition we would like to thank the many people who have given up their personal and professional time to help take projects forward in ways that simply would not have been possible otherwise. We would also like to thank the local press and in particular Amelia Burr from Southwark News and Kate Gould from the South London Press for their interest and support for our campaigns.

1. The State of the Society

At the beginning of 2012, the Society had just over 100 members, by the start of 2013 this had increased to over 230. Since then, numbers have more than doubled and we now have 550 members (up from 450 at the start of 2015). We continue to aim for membership to be free, as we wish to encourage participation and involvement.

We are extremely grateful to our Secretary Marek Drewicz for producing our monthly meeting minutes, for maintaining and updating our website and for managing our Twitter account (@WalworthSociety) which is currently followed by almost 1,450 users (up from 1,000 a year ago).

Many thanks too to Jay Hayter, our Treasurer, for keeping our finances on a sound and strictly administered footing. Jay is standing down at this AGM from her role and we would like to put on record our tremendous appreciation of her help over the past four years. A big thank-you also goes to Norma Lawrence for all her work as Vice-Chair. We are also extremely appreciative of all of the work undertaken by Diana Cochrane to unearth the history of the Walworth Road through the creation of the Historic Area Assessment (HAA) and John Whelan who lead the project group working on the Living Walworth event and is currently directing the Walworth Timeline event at the Coronet Theatre.

We have held a number of committee meetings to look at the future of the society and how we are organised. I would like to place on record my gratitude to all of the members of the committee for all their amazing hard work for the Society.

Thanks too go to the support of the Walworth Councillors and Southwark Council and its officers more generally. We would also like to thank all the community groups that we have worked with including a number of the fabulous local Friends of Parks groups, Wuntanara and the African drumming that they organise and the Latin American groups Latin Elephant and Carnaval del Pueblo. We would like to thank Father Andrew, Father Alan Wild and Catherine Attride of St Peter's Church for their support in allowing us use of St Peter's Church for our monthly meetings.

2. Activities in 2015

In no particular order, the Society was involved with the following in 2015.

a) Living Walworth.

Our main event of the year was the fabulous Living Walworth that was held on Saturday 6th June. The event consisted of two main parts - the Street Festival in Liverpool Grove and a display of the architectural history of the Walworth Road and a talk about that by Diana Cochrane in St Peter's Church. In addition Harriet Hill worked in three local primary schools looking at how local young people imagined the local community that they lived in. More than 2,000 people came along on the day and there was a fantastic mix of stalls from community groups and other organisations along with fantastic entertainment that included monologues from famous characters in Walworth's history, African drumming by Wuntanara, capoeira dancing and dance from Carnaval Del Pueblo. We are indebted to John Whelan for his fabulous organisation on the day, the hard work that the organising committee put in to planning for the event in the months leading up to it and the 50 volunteers who helped on the day. We are extremely grateful to our sponsors, London Community Foundation Elephant and Castle, Southwark Council, NSET and the Coronet Theatre as well as the support of the residents of Liverpool Grove who welcomed everyone into their street for the day.



b) Pubs

There has been a lot of activity around trying to help retain the remaining pubs in and around the Walworth area. The Walworth Society made three successful applications for local pubs to become Assets of Community Value under the Localism Act in 2015. These were the Elephant & Castle Pub that was under threat from Foxton's estate agents, the Thomas A Becket on the Old Kent Road and the Beehive in West Walworth.

In addition to these there has been a planning application for the ground floor and basement of the Masons Arms on East Street to be turned into hostel accommodation which would render it unviable as a pub in the future. Although the original application was rejected by Southwark Council the developer/owner has now appealed that to the Planning Inspector and we await the outcome of that appeal. We were really grateful for the fabulous

turnout that there was to protest against the original planning application and this got significant coverage in Southwark News.



The developers of the Rose and Crown on the corner of Wadding Street and Rodney Road wanted to change the usage of the ground floor from an A4 pub usage to a more general commercial usage (A1/A2/A4). The combination of significant work by the East Walworth councillors and our own campaigning appeared to encourage the developer to rethink this and it appears that planning permission has been granted for A4 usage only.

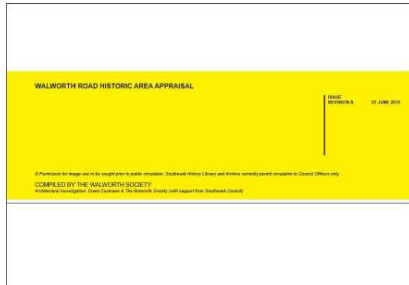


Rose & Crown PH

The New Southwark Plan Preferred Options does appear to be attempting to strengthen Southwark's hand in relation to the retention of pubs and discourage developers from making changes to ground floor and basement usages that will render it impossible for them to become pubs again in the future. This is all particularly relevant given the large influx of new residents that are coming to the area and the need for social and leisure amenities.

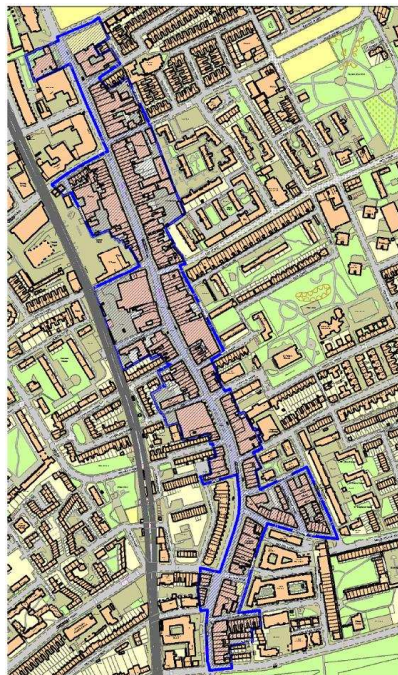
c) Walworth Road Conservation Area

We have made good progress in our bid to gain a Conservation Area designation for the Walworth Road. Thanks to the fabulous research that Diana Cochrane did to create the Historic Area Assessment (HAA), Southwark Council created a draft conservation area appraisal which went forward to Southwark's main planning committee in early September.



Walworth Road Historic Area Assessment Report

That planning committee meeting was supportive of the designation and proposed the start of the consultation period which ended formally on 31 December. At the end of the consultation period the planning application will go back to planning committee for a final decision. If the area is designated as a Conservation Area it very much represents the start of work to seek funding and other activities to restore and improve the fabric and character of the buildings along the Walworth Road. The HAA can be downloaded at bit.ly/1kbWVLi



Outline of the Proposed Walworth Road Conservation Area

d) Other Projects

There has been some progress on a number of the other projects which may be of interest to members of the Society:

Manor Place Terrace. It looks like the Manor Place Terrace redevelopment will come forward for further/final consultation in the spring with a planning application in the first

part of 2016 as one of the early sites to be redeveloped as part of Southwark's council home building programme.

Manor Place Depot. In late 2015 Notting Hill Housing obtained planning permission for the redevelopment of the Manor Place Depot site and as part of that permission it was confirmed that they will be refurbishing the former Coroner's Court building.



Manor Place Depot Coroner's Court Building

Walworth Town Hall. Progress on the Town Hall has been good following the fire in 2013. Southwark Council has a vision that now includes bringing together the services in the Town Hall building and the Library building. Proposed services include a new library, a civic centre, a home for the Cuming Museum and meeting spaces.

Walworth Road Credit Union. Thanks to the efforts of LMCU and Walworth councillors it appears that a branch of the credit union will open on the Walworth Road in early February 2016.

Support for Heritage Research in Borough & Bankside. As part of the CGS funding that we received from Southwark Council in 2014 (WS Borough, Bankside & Walworth Community Council Heritage Project), we promised to undertake 15 days heritage research in the Borough and Bankside area (to a value of £1,500 (out of the total CGS grant of £5,000)). Diana Cochrane has undertaken this work over the past few months in support of the Bankside Neighbourhood Plan and their research into the buildings that are currently not protected in that part of the borough.

e) Other Activities

Events. In September we attended the extremely popular Pasley Park Fete organised by the Friends of Pasley Park.

In October we held a consultation day in conjunction with St Peter's Church about the improvements to the Churchyard and surrounding area.

Funding Bids. We have made a number of funding bids for future projects in the Walworth Area:

- Cleaner Greener Safer 2016/17 - i) Bid in conjunction with Friends of Pasley Park to improve the entrance to Pasley Park on Sturgeon Rd; ii) Bid to open up a section of the Low Line close to the Newington Estate Boiler House; iii) Bid in conjunction with St Peter's Church for improvements to Liverpool Grove.
- Neighbourhoods Fund (2016/17) - i) Bid to open up a section of the Low Line close to the Newington Estate Boiler House and ii) Bid to re-establish the Walworth Festival (event following on from the Living Walworth day in 2015).

Old Kent Road Community Forum. Along with many other groups we have been regular attendees at the OKR Community Forum which has been meeting in 2015. The Society led a walkabout on the historic character of the OKR and presented to the Forum about it.



Cover of Presentation to OKR Forum

Walworth Network. Along with other local groups the Society took part in the inaugural meeting of the Walworth Network which aims to bring together groups that interested in and active in arts, culture and community in the area for a chance to chat through issues and work out ways to collaborate more closely and raise the profile of the Walworth area.

Priorities for 2016. These include:

- If the proposed Walworth road Conservation Area is adopted we will look at funding bids to start to improve the fabric of the buildings along the Walworth Road. Sources might include the Townscape Heritage Initiative from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).
- Gaining protection for historic buildings in Walworth that fall outside Conservation Areas through their being recognised on a “local list”. We are hopeful that a Heritage SPD will be developed in conjunction with the New Southwark Plan. A Heritage SPD is required to give formal protection to any buildings that are identified as part of any local list.
- Gaining protection for the remaining pubs in the Walworth area.
- Working to ensure that the New Southwark Plan includes a strong vision for the Walworth area.
- Continuing to work with other groups on cultural and heritage projects that bring together communities across Walworth to know more about the history of our area and its character.
- To play a part in the development of a Neighbourhood Plan that will hopefully include significant parts of the Walworth area.
- To play a part in ensuring that the Old Kent Road Opportunity Area gives protection to the character of the historic buildings and terraces along the OKR and the residential areas that adjoin it.

Jeremy Leach – Chair Walworth Society – 31st January 2016.