



**Friends of St. James's
Park and The Green Park**

*Promoting interest and high standards in
planning, design and the environment*

NEWSLETTER Autumn 2015

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7 Cowley Street.
We have
objected to a
change of use
from office to
single dwelling.



Dean Bradley House. We
have objected on multiple
grounds to the proposal for
demolition and mixed-use
redevelopment. These

include inadequate community consultation, unsympathetic relationship between the proposed development and neighbouring buildings, and lack of affordable housing.

32-34 Great Peter Street. We have not objected to the proposal for redevelopment of this site, on the grounds that the proposed scheme is an improvement on the existing building.



www.thethorneyislandsociety.org.uk

@ThorneyIslandSo



Editorial & news in brief

It has been a busy Summer for major planning applications. Millbank Tower, Dean Bradley House and the site of New Scotland Yard are all now at the tender mercy of the developers. The case for redevelopment of these three sites varies, but what they all have in common is a lack of affordable housing and a proposed scheme that either is or will seem, taller than the building it replaces. Whilst there seems to have been inadequate community consultation about the plans for Dean Bradley House, the same is not true of New Scotland Yard, where consultation protocols were followed. Nevertheless, it is shocking to see that just 2092 invitations to the public exhibition were distributed locally. Since this is a densely populated part of the city, that equates to a distribution area roughly bounded by Buckingham Gate, Birdcage Walk, Great Smith Street and Great Peter Street. Given the size, location and significance of the site, it seems likely that it might have been of interest to others than just the immediate neighbours.

Having made it through the planning process, the construction process and various teething problems, The Walkie Talkie building

was recently awarded Building Design magazine's Carbuncle Cup, for the worst new building of the year. A worthy winner. Nominations for 2016 have not yet opened, but when they do I will be nominating the ZigZag building on Victoria Street. Whilst its new shops and restaurants are a welcome addition, its brooding, sludge-coloured presence most definitely is not. The original visuals of the proposed scheme, with their characteristic downward angle and glinting sunlight gave little enough reason for optimism, but the almost-finished article is even worse.

On a more positive note, and as explained at our Summer party, Jules Shellabear and Victor Keegan have been working hard to improve our website and social media presence. There is now a very good reason to bookmark our website, as Victor is posting regular updates on local history, and Lucy Peck on planning matters.

Finally, a big thank you to Grange Hotels for their continued support of the Society. We are very much looking forward to holding our AGM and Christmas Party in the lovely Pavilion Room at Grange Rochester.

Clare Annamalai

The proposed **Community Infrastructure Levy** is intended to raise a fixed sum per m2 on new commercial and residential developments. Often this will be in addition to Section 106 agreements, through which affordable housing is negotiated. In theory Neighbourhood Forums will have the chance to influence how this money is spent.

Westminster City Council have consulted on a **basement strategy** which will remove the right to dig under buildings. All basement developments will need planning permission, though the council have decided against a total ban on new basements in listed buildings and terraced houses, or a further basement below an old original basement. Instead they have developed a list of influencing factors, such as retaining trees in gardens and protecting heritage assets. There are still some unresolved issues, but the policy is likely to come into force next July.

Office buildings in our area are still under assault from developers who want to convert the sites to residential use either with a new building or by conversion. Part of their negotiations with the council involves the provision of affordable housing, as mentioned in the last newsletter. Developers try to reduce their obligation by pleading non-viability. There are currently two particularly important planning applications under consideration, both with minimal or no affordable housing included.

New Scotland Yard has been bought by developers who are planning to demolish the building and replace it with two buildings separated by a pedestrian street running between Victoria Street and the old London Transport Headquarters, the Grade I listed building over St James's Park Tube station. On the ground floor of each building there would be retail units, above them three floors of offices and then three towers of expensive flats, with heights overall of between fourteen and twenty floors. The tallest blocks will be fronting Victoria Street.

The Millbank tower complex is the other development, this time a conversion of the building, although with some additions. The buildings are not admired by everyone – I certainly deplore the way the tower spoils the view down Whitehall – but nonetheless it represents an important stage in the evolution of London skyscrapers. For a short while it was the tallest building in London and it is undoubtedly a striking building: at ground level there is its modernist podium partly supported on pillars encircling the oval forecourt. Above the podium is the tower, with its convex and concave elevations, and also a Y-shaped block that is less conspicuous. The developers want to add three floors to the tower and Y-shaped building, turning the first into luxury housing (with no affordable units) and the second into a hotel. They also seek to demolish and rebuild part of the podium and turn the currently accessible forecourt into a hotel lobby. They propose an arts centre in the base of the podium below the tower, in lieu of affordable housing.

We have objected to both these schemes, and our comments can be found on our website as well as on the Westminster City planning website, where comments are now viewable. There is likely to be quite a bit of controversy about both these applications and it will be interesting to see what decisions are made.

Lucy Peck



Proposed design for '10 Broadway', on the New Scotland Yard site



Millbank Tower

United Westminster Almshouses

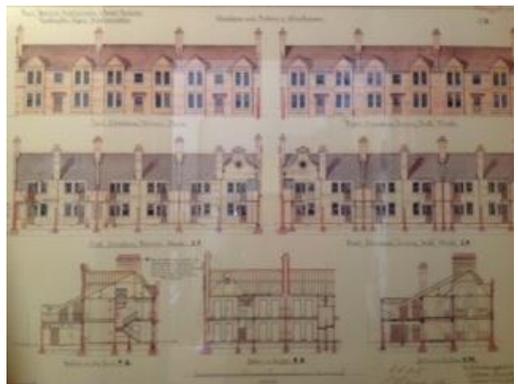
Each December a fine, tall Christmas tree appears at the top of Rochester Row, opposite St Stephen's church. It stands in the grounds of the United Westminster Almshouses and is, as Cristina O'Halloran, Clerk to the Trustees explains, an annual gift from the Queen. The tree is brought from Windsor along with those for Westminster Abbey and the Royal Hospital. Shortly afterwards, the Westminster Almshouses Foundation treats all 40 or so of its residents to a Christmas lunch at their local....The Vincent Rooms. Clearly, this is not your ordinary sheltered housing complex.

The red brick building at 42 Rochester Row dates from 1882, and is the last in a series of almshouses built on the Thorney Island through the generosity of philanthropists going back to the 17th century. It all started with the Reverend James Palmer, who in 1656 established almshouses comprising of twelve rooms for old people, a chapel, a schoolhouse, a house and six acres of garden, in the angle of what is now Victoria Street and Buckingham Gate. He would provide accommodation for six old men and six old women of the Parish of St. Margaret's, and would educate twenty poor boys. His Warden would instruct both the old and the young in religion and piety.

Over the next twenty years, further almshouses were built and funded by benefactors who are remembered in street names all over the Thorney Island. Nicholas Butler's bequest was used to build houses alongside those of James Palmer, for poor married couples. Emery Hill was Treasurer of Palmer's charity, a Churchwarden of St. Margaret's Church and a property dealer. His gift, of properties near the Strand, enabled the construction of twelve one-room houses in Rochester Row; six on one side for married couples or men, six on the other side for women. There were clear protocols about what should happen if a husband or wife died (widow to move to the other side, widower to stay in his house), and Emery Hill's deed instructed that there should be a courtyard in front "planted with good elme trees, as their green is better than limes."

Both Hill and Palmer aimed to do more than just put a roof over the head of the poor. In addition to education and spiritual guidance, their charities also provided some clothing for the residents, a small stipend and an allocation of coal.

By the beginning of the 19th century, Palmer's almshouses were deeply in debt and decayed beyond repair. They were pulled down and rebuilt, and by 1863 the whole of the property had been acquired by the Charity Commissioners. At around the same time, Hannah Chadwick carried out the wishes of her late husband, by donating a total of £3000 to Emery Hill's almshouses, to increase the stipends of the residents.



Plans for the 19th century rebuild on Emery Hill's site

In 1879 the almshouses of James Palmer, Nicholas Butler and Emery Hill, together with Hannah Chadwick's gift, were finally consolidated into a single charity, to be known as the United Westminster Almshouses. Just three years later the present buildings had been completed at 42 Rochester Row, the site formerly occupied by Emery Hill's almshouses. The new buildings provided accommodation for eight married couples and eighteen unmarried people, as well as apartments for a Matron and Caretaker, a Boardroom and a house for the Warden. Residents received an annual stipend and an allowance of coal; forty-two 'out-pensioners' were also provided for. Next door, at 38 Rochester Row was the Western Dispensary which had, since 1784, provided advice, medicine and midwifery for the poor. The introduction of the National Health Service made the Western Dispensary redundant, so in 1954 its buildings were made over to the Trustees of the almshouses, and were linked to the main site.

Over the last fifty years the buildings have been remodelled and modernised more than once including, in 1962, with the addition of central heating and private bathrooms to each flat. Today, the almshouses provide warden-assisted sheltered housing to Westminster residents who are aged over 60, are able to live independently and are of relatively limited means. It is a loose-knit community, in which some residents are very elderly but others are much younger and still in employment. Social activities and exercise clubs are provided, but Cristina O'Halloran says that most socialising takes place in the laundry room! At the front of the main building, overlooking the Queen's Christmas tree, the elegant Boardroom remains, hung with original wallpaper and portraits of benefactors. The Foundation has made it available as a filming location, so it may only be a matter of time before we see it in some TV adaptation of Wilkie Collins or Trollope.

The Foundation also continues the work of Palmer and Hill by providing financial support for non-residents. Its hardship grants, which total around £120 000 a year, are given to Westminster residents who need help to buy essential items like cookers, refrigerators, children's clothes and prams. They are typically one-off grants, intended to help the recipient towards self-sufficiency. In addition, the charity offers about £40 000 worth of educational bursaries, and very surprisingly these are undersubscribed. The bursaries are used to help Westminster children who are in primary or secondary education and need support with the

costs of uniform, materials, travel to university interviews, or subsistence. The Foundation is actively encouraging applications from young people in Westminster who are struggling with the costs of education or at risk of missing out on opportunities, for want of financial support.

More information about the Foundation's grant programmes can be found on their website:

www.westminsteralmshouses.com



42 Rochester Row

Michael Voggenauer, 22nd July 1944 – 30th March 2015

Michael Voggenauer was a loyal friend of The Thorney Island Society, and served as one of its Vice-Presidents for many years. With his wife Margaret he campaigned vigorously on local planning and development issues. The following passage is edited from the requiem given by Margaret's cousin, Roger Hudson.

Michael stood for a true European ideal. When conversing with him we felt, or we hoped, that we might be benefiting from some of his culture, that he might, indeed, be cultivating us. He had insights into Central Europe, and Czechoslovakia in particular, via his mother, into Germany via his father, into France, his first adopted country, and into Britain, his second. He knew too how thin the layer of civilization often is on top of state-sponsored violence and totalitarianism, how close the collapse of civil society can be. How could he not know, given when and where he was born and then lived his early years?

Aged four, in 1948, he endured a classic cold war nightmare, creeping through the woods with his mother and nanny to escape Communist Prague. He spent the rest of his childhood in Germany, but in 1964 achieved his ambition of moving to Paris. His mother had always spoken French to him, and Paris was for him the embodiment of the European tradition in the fine arts, in literature, in thought. If your background and experiences have made plain how easily all continuity, all tradition can be lost, then civilised values and their transmission take on an added urgency and importance. This principle guided Michael's education in Paris, where he obtained a degree in Slavonic languages, at the same time as studying under the influential historians André Chastel and Fernand Braudel.

Moving to London, he became a researcher for the arts dealers Wildenstein, but the only discovery he made there, albeit a very important one, was Margaret! Shortly afterwards he moved to the old master department at Christie's, where Michael and Margaret began their married life above the shop, as it were, in Amsterdam. After Christie's he moved to run the old master side of a gallery in Cologne, before becoming a freelance dealer, which gave him welcome opportunities for research. He got great satisfaction, for instance, when he identified a preliminary drawing for a ceiling painting in one of Prague's Baroque churches, and was then able to sell it to the Czech national gallery.

Sometimes Michael suffered from his aesthetic judgement being so fine-tuned. Margaret says that they often had to enforce a five-minute silence in the car when driving around London because otherwise the stream of outrage at so much of the modern architecture outside would have been ceaseless. He and Margaret were ardent travellers all over Asia and the Middle East, as well as moving perpetually between London, Somerset and Munich. But in 2000 Michael finally chose to become a British subject, and his requiem was given not in a Baroque Prague church or a Rococo German one, but in a medieval English country church.



Burton Mews, SW1. Michael & Margaret won the backing of the Law Lords and the European Court of Human Rights in a battle over the freehold.

How to become a Twitter activist



We have recently improved our website (thethorneyislandsociety.org.uk) so members and others can get up-to-date information about planning applications, walks, visits and local history. It has a bold front page with a marvellous reproduction on the left hand side of what Thorney Island used to look like hundreds of years ago, complete with the Tyburn running around it. On the right is the facade of the old Westminster public library (now the Cinnamon Club restaurant) which the Society saved from demolition when it was formed in 1985. The library occupies a site which would have been at the bottom left of the image of the old Thorney Island.

As part of the re-design we have started using Twitter. This prompts mixed reactions among members but it is easy to use and potentially a powerful communication tool for us. You can sign up easily and receive regular updates about our activities plus news and photos of what is happening on our manor.

You can "follow" us which means you will just receive "tweets" from us and no one else. But you will probably find it useful to follow other people who share your interests to receive their tweets and, if you feel so disposed, you can reply - as long as you don't exceed the maximum of 140 characters. If you follow someone you will get all their tweets but they will not see yours unless they follow you back. In this way conversations can take place among like-minded users.

You can include links to other web sites by using one of the free services - such as tinyurl.com - which abbreviate long web addresses.

Twitter is easy to use on a smartphone, tablet or computer. Just go to Twitter.com/signup. Twitter will suggest a few people to follow, which is useful to do if you want to get the hang of it. You can always "unfollow" them and anyone else later. One important point, think carefully before taking a name, as you can't change it and a lot of the obvious ones may have gone. The reason our Twitter name, @ThorneyIslandSo, ends with So and not Soc is that we forgot that there is a limit on the number of characters you can use for a name!

You don't need to join Twitter to enjoy our web site but it does make it much more of a community. Give it a go and let us know if you have problems.



The Garden Bridge: Much of the debate around this controversial project is taking place on Twitter. The Thorney Island Society is not taking a position on this issue, as it is very far outside our geographical area of interest. However, members wishing to follow the lively and often satirical debate, or to examine the arguments for and against, might try: [@TheGardenBridge](http://www.gardenbridge.london)
[@TCOSLondon](http://www.tcos.org.uk)
[@follyforlondon](http://www.afollyforlondon.co.uk)

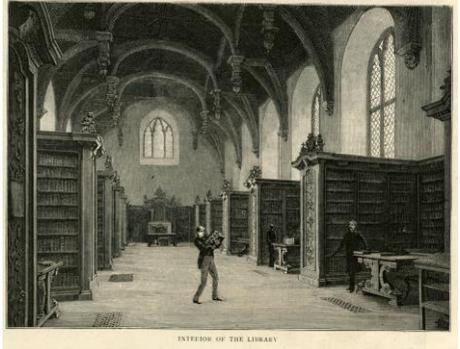


Diary dates & other information

Diary dates 2015-16

- 28th Oct:** Parliamentary Education Centre
- 4th Nov:** The Muniments Room, Westminster Abbey
- 11th Nov:** Institution of Mechanical Engineers
- 18th Nov:** The Thorney Island Society AGM
- 19th Nov:** Royal Academy of Music & Shakespeare Celebration
- 24th Nov:** 55 Broadway
- 7th Nov:** Lambeth Palace Library (M)
- 9th Dec:** The Thorney Island Society Christmas Party
- 12th Jan:** Parliamentary Archives, Victoria Tower
- 20th Jan:** The Government Art Collection
- 28th Jan:** Lancaster House

Visit bookings: pippa.parsons@yahoo.co.uk
We have opened up some of these events to non-members, for a small extra charge. This is to help raise awareness of the Society and encourage new members to join. If you know anyone with an interest in the Thorney Island area, or in London history more generally, then please do make them aware of what's on the programme. Those visits which are exclusively for members and their guests are marked (M).



Lambeth Palace Library in the 19th century

Disclaimer: While The Thorney Island Society is concerned that the views expressed in articles are relevant and honestly held by the contributor, the opinions stated by individuals may not necessarily be held by The Thorney Island Society Executive, which is not in a position to vouch for their accuracy.

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The Thorney Island Society is a voluntary amenity and civic society which came into being in 1985. It is concerned with the welfare of the physical environment of a widening area, sometimes referred to as the 'Westminster Village'. It organises visits, reviews planning applications and maintains a local archive. There are currently around 400 members, and we would welcome even more. A membership form can be found on our website: www.thethorneyislandsociety.org.uk. Registered Charity No. 1000751

If you would like to comment on this newsletter, or to propose a story for the next edition, please contact the Editor: clare_annamalai@hotmail.com or @ClareAnnamalai
For more regular updates, follow us on Twitter: @ThorneyIslandSo