



Pro-Biz



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Vanity, O Vanity

Vanity projects have had a bad press recently. The Garden Bridge on the Thames being one example. More money than sense said some. This is often the response when public money is involved. Yet we feel bereft when what were vanity projects in their day are neglected or destroyed. This was graphically illustrated both technically with excellent photographs and video film and philosophically in a thoughtful and provocative presentation to members by Dr. Pieter Morpurgo, President of the Friends of Bushy and Home Parks, our guest speaker at the July lunch.

Pieter used two major landmarks, the Waterfall Gardens and the Diana Fountain in Bushy Park to make a strong case for the restoration and preservation of what were in essence vanity projects in their time.

He described how Lord Halifax, as Ranger of Bushy Park, conceived and commissioned the construction of the Waterfall in 1710 using the very best materials and personnel in the work, at enormous cost to himself. Halifax developed the site as his “private recreational garden”. The Diana Fountain had a more chequered history and could have disappeared if Oliver Cromwell, who took a fancy to the original fountain and had it relocated in his privy garden at Hampton Court Palace, had listened to one of his more fervent supporters, Mrs. Nethaway, who advised “demolish these monsters that are set up as ornaments”. Such baubles were not fit for the new world of Puritanism. Queen Anne may have been personally involved in the decision to raise the grand confection in water which has been described as ‘the large traffic island’ in Chestnut Avenue leading to Hampton Court.

This historical background was the crucial backdrop to the essence of Pieter’s presentation which detailed the refurbishment and renovation of both the Waterfall and Diana. He told the story of a highly technical operation in comprehensible and stimulating language. As befitted such a well known and respected television producer/director, the supporting visuals were excellent. Pieter also touched on the use to which Bushy Park was put during the WWII when a large part of the Park was taken over by S.H.A.E.F. and housed General Eisenhower. It was here where D-Day was planned and executed. This could well be the subject of an after-lunch talk in the future. Watch this space!!

Those of us who enjoy Bushy Park so much are grateful to Pieter and the Friends of Bushy Park who have tirelessly worked and sometimes cajoled those with money, for conserving and preserving what we so easily take for granted.

Malcolm O’Connor gave an elegant vote of thanks which was roundly applauded by members.

(Chris Oprey)



FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Flyers for the Concert at Cadogan Hall on Thursday 3 October were produced last month, and if you missed them, copies can be obtained from the Organiser, Chris Oprey. At £22.00 a ticket, this is very good value for money.

WALK AROUND CANARY WHARF & LUNCH AT THE TRAFALGAR, GREENWICH 6th AUGUST

Quite a change for this walk, instead of a chance to get lost in the corn fields and woods of deepest Surrey, this time the opportunity came in the tower blocks and subterranean shopping malls of Canary Wharf. Our group met up at Hampton Station, making a half dozen of prospective walkers waiting for the 9.50 train to Waterloo. Needless to say, the train was 6 minutes late which seems almost standard for South Western trains at the moment. At Kingston it was announced that the train would be non-stop to Waterloo, which again is not unusual these days. On arrival it was a quick scuttle down to the Jubilee Line, and then straight off to Canary Wharf station, which, like elephants, is enormous. At the top of the escalators we found Eric Eustance lurking in the shadows. Eric was without his trusty walking stick, which he usually carries on our country walks to test the depth of mud, but since we were in an area of London which is completely paved (not with gold, but not far off) his stick could be safely left at home. Our walk then began with a host of factoids relating to all the major buildings dotted around the old East India Docks, the most notable being No.1 Canada Square which stands up to 723 ft to the top of its pyramid roof. Opposite is the J. P. Morgan building, which has the accolade of having the poshest loos of all the office blocks in the area. It also has updated gym facilities, including a spinning room, whatever that is. It was then on to the various walkways, backwards and forwards across the original docks which are now surrounded by massive apartment blocks, which seem to be springing up like dandelions in your garden. Our route took us over the north dock, and on that side there is a line of the original warehouses which have now been converted into a docklands museum and various ale houses, all looking rather splendid with plenty of outside seating. The original dock entrance has been preserved, but the filthy old wall that used to surround the dock area has now been demolished. This area includes many food stalls of various nationalities, which seem very popular with the office workers, as they were all piling out now for lunch. There seems to be a standard uniform for the chaps that work in this area, which consists of a long sleeved white shirt and a dark slacks. There are no ties or jackets to be seen. We spent a swift 15 minutes in the museum, which showed the original dockers complete with their barrows and flat caps. There are also a few photos of Jack Dash, the last dockers' leader before closure in the 1960's. Time was marching on, but there was still one place to visit, which was the Crossrail station located in the middle of the north dock. This is an extraordinary construction as it resembles the longest glass house at Kew Gardens, with winding walkways through an exotic collection of palm trees and other tropical plants. From there it was a swift walk back to the DLR, which took us across to Greenwich where we picked up the towpath to the Trafalgar Tavern. If you are ever in the area this establishment is definitely worth a look, as the restaurant has an extraordinary amount of art work, and the chandeliers throughout make it look very up market. We were seated at a long table overlooking the Thames, and were later joined by Mike and Ann Fraser who made up our diner contingent. We had intended to cross from the Isle of Dogs to Greenwich by the foot tunnel, but time prevented that part of the journey, so we saved it for the return. It is just over 1200 ft. long, and all you have got to do is to make sure you miss the cyclists who come hammering down, riding straight over all the 'no cycling' signs on the floor. From the north end of the foot tunnel it was a journey in reverse, arriving back at Hampton Station just before 6.00 pm.

(Keith McArthur)



Lunch in the Baronial Hall

Probuz Members meet new friends



Outside Canary Wharf station



In the tropical gardens

Photos:
Keith McArthur

FUTURE EVENTS:

Tuesday 3 Sep: Pub Lunch and Walk –The Cider House, Shackleford. Organiser Keith McArthur

Friday 13-17 Sep: Holiday to the Loire

Tuesday 17 Sep: Club Luncheon – No Speaker

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