

**KINGSTON STREETSCAPE**  
*Pauline Lindsey, 10 June 2015*

For nearly ninety years  
 Kingston's been my home  
 A solitary lifetime  
 But I've never been alone.  
 Baby feet first found the street  
 Toddling into town  
 Then schooldays pounding pavements  
 And playing in the park.  
 Later young love  
 Found romance by the river, carving hearts on benches  
 Shyly reaching into the grown up world.  
 Then years of walking well worn routes  
 To work, in offices or shops.  
 Time moves on and I walk with children of my own  
 As they repeat life's vital steps.  
 Retirement, and old friends gather  
 In the market place or halls, reminiscing,  
 Anticipating  
 The stumbling steps of this old age.  
 The time will come when I move on  
 I will not be alone  
 My lifetime steps have been  
 On hallowed ground  
 Where saints and sinners lived and died  
 Weaving the fabric of history  
 I will join this bygone throng  
 Leaving my mark to merge  
 With all that's been  
 And this town's pride.

FREEDOM'S CAPTIVE. (Basil Hunt 6 June 2015)

Hangin' over the home : bonds of conformity, moral disapproval,

Duties and timetables, with a choking and unendurable safety.

Our escape to the careless street brings us freedom and its dirt;

its danger since others too are free; new rules, new opportunities,

For good or for downfall. Through joy and pain the child will learn .

Later, while travelling abroad, different streets with other ways of life,

Other perils and delights, other smells and stinks; other rules to learn

For cars and buses; roads to cross; markets to remember for their colour,

Their foods, their noisy shouts, their flowers, and their pickpockets:

All making the visit memorable. Till with regret or relief at last we leave,

Here, back in Kingston, in Surbiton, in the varied districts and centres,

Prosperous, depressed, commercial or official; valuable residential greenery,

But still potholes. Cars parked in every nook; others - with confident drivers -

Racing self-righteous past blind entrances, trusting in someone's watchful,

Caring determination to save them from worse than a flattened squirrel

Or the jolt from an ex-urban-fox. How lucky we must be: we can stroll,

Leaving traffic to one side, to walk lovely Queen's Promenade and into town;

Passing and passed by boats, relaxed and friendly families, and varied hues

Of massed swans and many water fowl, along the riverbank, near old alleys,

Into the hospitable heart of café-land, only a step from what still remains

Of the ancient Market, and the peaceful, welcoming Church; or rows of our

Bustling pedestrianised shops and public transport. Historic Kingston! Hall!

**STREET FURNITURE**

Tony Ford

Bins, bollards and benches

we walk past them every day

are they assets to the community

or do they just get in the way?

Bicycle racks are functional

just somewhere to park your bike

but could they be made more attractive.

Could litter bins be colourful?

Should they be easier to use?

Could they be larger and not overflow

spoiling street appearance and views?

Some bollards were made out of cannon

some anchored barrage balloons,

surely new ones could be multi-purpose,

might some even play tunes?

Benches are okay for sitting,

watching the world go by,

could they have extra uses

that in town and city

isn't it a pity

functionally

is not pretty.

John Grant



"Place your foot upon

A creeping and blazing

Shore of wet weed,

And you might fall!

Apart from a crossing,

Bridge to take the load,

Weak mortals, bent

In pursuit of the next

Obstacle, rush through

A gap, that is lost,

Shrunk, hazardous."

A.F.

A STREAM.

stanleypickergallery:

Poetry & Prose  
 inspired by  
 Fabien Cappello's  
*Streetscape*

Rhythm & Muse  
 Stanley Picker Gallery  
 June 2015

It could have been a recording angel, or just as easily an inquisitive impish spirit of the air.  
 In either case the words were simple and clear, just as they should have been in that exam,  
 The test I obviously failed, and so, not once but time and again, missed the golden door,  
 The scenic route to glory or wealth or love and happiness, or even to the blessed creative  
 Peace of selfless Nirvana! The words which demanded the simple, straightforward reply  
 Were just this: "What kind of town, of buildings, facilities, squares and streets is it right  
 For planners, architects, ideologists, public forums and the rest to envisage and project  
 In real form, so as to give the best, most satisfying, most enjoyable, most human-need  
 Fulfilling place for the individual, the society, the resident, the visitor, everyone ... to live."  
 First of course, the personal details to compile, "Protected by our rules of confidentiality..  
 Fill it all in, and sign that you agree. Then please begin the test, and be honest and personal!"  
 That is where the trouble begins: I really do not know, after all these storm-tossed,  
 Changeable years, just what and who I am, nor if my declared paradise might turn itself,  
 All too soon into a dark island, full of stings and stinks of frustratio and lonely despair.

"SIGN HERE - AND DESIGN YOUR OWN TOWN." (Basil Hunt 9/06/2015)

The car-friendly broad open roads, what are these to the stumbling old or unwell pedestrian,  
 Or the cyclist battling the wind and rain on the way to work or school? The attractive, wide  
 Arcades and shopping malls, by day reproach the poor for their unwelcome presence; by night  
 They close, or empty threaten the timid passers-by, providing or denying, according to rule,  
 Chilly, hard, doorways for homeless, drop-outs from respectable society.  
 Along the lovely river, drunk with immortal fantasies, crowds gather to voice their power,  
 And risk their sanity or very lives. The young men's happy-hunting-ground turns into insults  
 And threats for those, especially incautious women, who unaware find themselves in range.  
 Peace at home is a first human need, with many snares, but over-riding is the need for a home.  
 Yet providing a home, for swelling numbers, is a challenge to the environment and sustainability  
 Of any town, along with employment, and provision for education, health, safety, good order.  
 Please tell the lmps to lay down their tormentors! There is no perfection to be reached in planning,  
 Or even imagination. But we can see when developments have as their aim some noble end:  
 Beauty in nature, convenience and mutual social support. Then the rest is up to us, our own  
 Good-will and effort and belief. Energetic and altruistic idealists need our help. Never despair!  
 The mind is its own place, and of itself can make a hell of heaven, a heaven of hell.

Looks like everyone in the South West of London is here  
 Now he is encircled  
 By the merry makers having fun  
 Leaving him with nowhere to run.  
 (c) Lily V Jenkins 15.06.2015

To hide from his pursuers turns futile.  
 To get lost in the town  
 His plan to come to Kingston  
 Ahead is Eden Street.  
 He glances to the left, then right  
 Progress slow, too many bodies clogging his way  
 Dodging between the tables outside cafes

Blocking the way, he bears left into Castle Street  
 In front of him a mass of people  
 Entering Five Road in a hurry, breathless.  
 He dodges between the cars in Wood Street  
 Moving noisily

The traffic is nose to tail  
 In front of the station.  
 Waiting to cross at the junction  
 Running into a wall of humanity  
 Vaulting over the ticket barrier  
 Hastening down the stairs

Leaping onto the platform  
 Waiting for the train to stop  
 Impatiently he tapped the button  
 Back to the other passengers.  
 Facing outwards  
 He stood by the door  
 Nowhere to run



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On this glorious summer evening! On my way to meet friend, cycling through Kingston town

OH where to put my bike I ask myself!

Then I spot other bikes attached to a bike rack or is it!

To me it looks more like my Red wine rack that matches the one in my Kitchen!

Then a smile spreads across my face as both play a part in my life

Cycling & Wine!



Helen O'Brien

#### No view

Bench  
No view  
Sandy regular brick wall  
And a one-way system racing behind  
No sight of nearby river  
No view of municipal hanging baskets  
No sense of road sweeping over the bridge towards Hampton Court  
Bench  
Curve of silver metal  
Question mark curl  
No dot  
Planter full of tangled weeds

Sit awhile

Behind you,  
Paving sweep to hill rise,  
TK Max frontage and security guard  
Hanging-about people

Perhaps, choose this bench because your legs gave way  
Because you hate TK Max  
Sulk here  
Your bike was nicked and you are waiting for the police to turn up  
Or, perhaps, you have no aesthetic sense  
No imagination  
No soul to rise

A bench is for contemplation, isn't it?  
What will you contemplate?

The person who planned this bench  
Should be shot  
At dawn  
As apricot floods the sky  
And the birds fling their souls  
In song

But not blindfolded

For truly and without prejudice  
This person has no vision

Cath Howe

#### Complex Spaces

Enter – a bin and a bench  
Further, foliage encased in grey / yellow / grey  
Further still, bike racks and bollards, white painted space

Childlike bollards, childlike bike racks, calling to mind  
*Connect 4, Ludo, Who Goes There?*

Where? Further in, filmic function over design  
Or is it design over function every time?

Who goes there? *Where?*  
Down that path, the one edged in yellow, framed  
By glass and a church, a passer-by, dog sniffing lamp post  
Yellow townscape, red, blue and yellow markers  
A bin, a bench, a bollard within greenery – and leave

Alison Hill

#### RIVER TALK.

Solitude has its music, a whispering river:

Singing those chances lost, those fantastic

Journeys the future holds. We may choose

A quiet path upstream, to scenes of nature,

Gentle, thoughtful company, to match a mood;

Or downstream with the crowds, into the town

With jostling markets, bright lights and din.

Or risk our tiny boat to the river's own current,

To carry us, awake or dozing, where it will.

The outlook, sunlit or stormy, is to be enjoyed ,

With radiance, ripples and shadow, raindrops

To accompany nature's music and its river smell.

Beware, Deep Water. The river's other face.

Dangerous Rapids. Do not venture here ;

The river may take you ... you may drown !

Swollen, the river is magnificent, but may sweep

Unwelcome, destructive and dirty over its banks,

Polluting property, spoiling life . River or solitude:

Open your eyes ! See wonder and see torment,

Beauty and delusion. Beware their Siren songs.



#### Two benches

Two benches, both alike in dignity  
In fairest Kingston, where we lay our scene

The left one, black of hue, old metal,  
the curling style of yesterday,  
repainted many times, crusted  
and barnacled by council speedy recoats,  
prey to pigeon shit and sticky dribbles,  
from punters who missed out on seats  
in nearby summer pub alfresco garden.

To the right, wooden, curved Danish, new-designed,  
with handy coffee cup platform in lively red,  
well-planned, smooth.

But, benches have a special tale to tell.

"Who are you?" asks the left,  
"I'm Harry Smart, he loved this view,  
1924-2012."

And curvy wood replies, "Ellie Ward,  
Beloved mum, grandma, sister, now at  
peace."

"That's nice," says he.

"This view," she says,  
"this expanse of river bustle  
to Hampton Court  
rowers, dragonboaters, keeps me young.  
I love Canbury Gardens' passing traffic,  
the river's moods, the running dogs,  
the stillness of the night time shadows.  
Folk replace the flowers draped across my back.  
A photo hangs sometimes."

"Indeed," says he, "I've none of that  
adornment, to celebrate my life.  
Only the squirrels, the occasional bird,  
courting couples. Thank heavens I'm not comfortable enou  
For much of *this* and *that* at *what not*.  
But, all in all, I'm happy here.  
I like to hear the trains  
trundle across the railway bridge,  
watch stately swans drift by,  
pursued by toddlers grasping bread."

They sit on, two benches  
Contemplating the vastness of the passing days, the years.

Companions.

Immune, at last, from human tragedies and tears

Cath Howe

#### Bollards for Barrage Balloons

Every pilot's nightmare, especially the cables –  
they had a habit of moving overnight.

Not allowed to mark them on maps, they had  
to fly at just the right height, hit or miss.

Bell-shaped bollards  
held them down, kept them on a level,  
give or take an inch or two.

But that inch mattered – no give or take with Blitz-  
time bollards, now there's a London-bollard-blogspot.

Bollards breaking down barriers,  
flattening out – letting people pass through spaces,

enter new zones, silently uplifting once they've gone,  
creating new boundaries – rule and divide.

Alison Hill

QUITE A NICE SORT OF PLACE TO LIVE ! (Basil Hunt ... June 18<sup>th</sup> 2015).

It is a long time ago now, that I left the area in which I was brought up : a smoky , foggy midlands mining town with crumbling pavements and roads, noisy old buses and two railway stations from and through which thundered – on their diverse routes – the big mainline trains which shook the rickety stairways, and the humble local crawlers or long, heavy industrial waggons piled with coal and iron, each one adding its sharer of gritty black smoke for the townscape and the people's lines of laundry and unfortunate eyes.

To be fair, there was a lot of good too, with the friendly neighbours and local tradespeople, the park which had been a showplace until the war stole its fences and keepers, and still offered the solid citizens their venue for cricket, bowls and even football, while others could sit and watch from seats under the green of trees, or walk the dog (on its lead) and lick a summer-time icecream. For real country you needed only a short journey, or, feeling energetic, could climb the breezy Misk hills to come out eventually in a rare remnant of the once famous Sherwood Forest.

No point pretending that I had never been away: my years at university had given me a glimpse of a different world – but it had never really become my home. On the search for a job, I had also tried out several regions; but it was only when I came to the Kingston region, still unquestionably in Surrey at that time, that I felt I might want to settle down and stay. The offer of employment was made, and I had only a short time to decide.

I did manage to get a quick look round, and a chap to one or two people who were familiar with the territory. My best informants were the couple who had put me up for the night after the interview. Flo, clearly the dominant personality, and Jim ... who knew all the local bus-routes, short-cuts, and of course the pubs. They didn't go into great detail, but did take some pleasure in enlightening an obviously "green" young man about what to do and what to be aware about; strangely enough it was Jim who butted-in to give the overall verdict ... "Quite a nice sort of place to live!". Thus they both reassured me, and got me as their lodger for the first year, and I am grateful to them for both services!

The busy, frequent electric trains , relatively clean and easy to use, the neighbouring busy centres of Richmond and of Kingston with Surbiton soon won my heart. Despite the considerably higher cost of living and my relative poverty, I loved the fact that it was so easy to get up to London itself, to enjoy the endless facilities and experiences it offered .. some costing very little, while walking, looking, talking and listening were available completely free of charge.

Through everything ran the everlasting , ever present Thames, to remind me of Kingston and Richmond when up in town, and of noisy, wonderful London, when back "home". To walk along historic streets, past memorable buildings, into delightful parks and gardens enlivened by cheery families and visitors from round the world, that was to live. To buy at Kingston market, a hub of activity, with the Church and its grounds offering a quieter, peaceful refuge,; to find a bench where inevitably a conversation would soon start up; to throw crumbs of bread or other titbits to the waterfowl, and watch the little battles of greedy rivalry: who could wish for better.

To a boy from the grubby midlands, even the benches, the decorated litterboxes and the level pavements seemed to add a glow to the scene, while the cafés spilling out onto the roadways seemed to offer a nearly Parisian charm. This was Richmond or Kingston, this was the Thames and this was the doorway to the wider world. Above all of course, I was young.