

April 1999 Newsletter

Please note that the newsletters contain un-edited extracts which have not been updated

SOCIETY MARKS TEN YEARS OF REWARDING DESIGN

On 22 October 1998 we were delighted to celebrate the tenth annual design awards with a stimulating evening hosted by our Vice Chairman, Prof John Delafons. Adrian Cave, for the panel of expert assessors, gave an illustrated commentary on the short-listed schemes, and the presentations were made by society member Prof Heinz Wolff. In congratulating the winners he was kind enough to praise the work of the society, and he emphasised the importance of local environmental groups in the face of continuing development pressures.

As with previous years the entries were examined in detail by the panel (which comprises Louis Hellman, Hilary Templer, and John Wall, with Adrian Cave) and to whom we are very grateful for their hard work and advice. The Executive Committee decided that three schemes were worthy of recognition but, as they were so different in character, no one scheme should be singled out for an Award. All three were given a 'Highly Commended' certificate:

Neighbourhood Care, Southall. This voluntary organisation provides services for elderly Southall people, including lunches, a library, games room and advice. Now housed in the former Featherstone Arms pub, refurbished and converted into an attractive and lively social centre.

North Acton LT Station. The east entrance to the station, which was dark, dinghy and unsafe, has been transformed into an accessible pedestrian entrance; similar improvements to the west entrance, and the entrance hall, are now underway

Marks and Spencer's, Ealing Broadway. The new top-storey extension to this very prominent Town Centre building has added one-third to the floorspace, greatly improved the visual interest of the building, and was achieved without closing the store. We look forward to celebrating more excellence in design - your nominations for 1999 will be welcome.

STREET TREES

Sybil McRobie reports that the council's street tree budget for 1998/89 has been entirely cancelled, following a sharp reduction in planting last year. Over 500 street trees will consequently not be planted. The society is very concerned that large areas of the borough remain with few suitable street trees, and that replacement planting of old or diseased trees has been curtailed. However, following representations from the Society, we are pleased to now hear that the council has agreed to reinstate the budget in the 1999/2000 financial year.

THE LOCAL LIST

We have been asked to put forward suggestions for updating the Local List - the buildings of local architectural or historic interest - prepared by the Borough and last updated in 1995. These buildings are by definition of local interest only and have more limited protection than Listed Buildings. Nevertheless, local listing gives recognition to buildings which help identify the historic and social character of Ealing. The current Local List (which with the Statutory List can be found in the Ealing Unitary Development Plan) includes many interesting buildings and structures, large and small, from the Drayton Court Hotel and Aladdin Factory to cattle troughs and iron posts. There is some way to go with recognising the smaller-scale but historic items, industrial buildings and structures, and buildings associated with the Borough's historic figures. If you have suggestions, do please take this opportunity to help us update the local list. Contact Brian Harris (72 The Knoll W13 8HY).

Ealing's Conservation Areas

Bedford Park

by Beryl Brownsword (Bedford Park Society)

Victorian speculative developers were moving away from the rigid schemes of the eighteenth century when, in 1875, Jonathan Carr acquired 24 acres on the western fringe of London and began to lay out Bedford park. The setting was rural, but Turnham Green station was already there, so access to the city was easy. Detached, semi-detached and terraced houses designed in the 'Queen Anne' style and with private gardens, were sited along tree-lined streets, setting a pattern for many later developments.

The first architect employed was E W Godwin, followed two years later by Richard Norman Shaw, who remained in control until 1880. Although several of the larger houses, including that built by Norman Shaw for Jonathan Carr himself, have been demolished, making way for blocks of flats, the majority remain and (after years of decline) are family homes again. Studios were included in the concept of the development but these have almost all been converted, no longer occupied by the working artists who were so much a part of the flourishing original community.

The Club, which was until 1939 the centre of social life, is now a Buddhist Vihara; the tennis courts, where throughout my childhood the ladies provided summer Sunday teas, were used as allotments during the war and never restored. But the Church of St Michael and All Angels, and The Tabard Inn, are still at the hub of Bedford Park. The Art School was destroyed by bombs and the Chiswick Polytechnic, succeeded by the Arts Educational School, took its place.

Two primary schools regularly use the Green which, in early June when the ancient chestnuts are in bloom becomes, in earnest, the 'village' green with roundabouts and dodgems, plant and cake stalls. All the fun of the fair. For the rest of the year the streets, tree-lined still, and the houses, protected by 'listing', offer an interesting urban walk during which you may discern the different ways in which the Victorian architects - Godwin, Shaw, May, Adams and Wilson - interpreted the Queen Anne style. Individuals all, but creating a neighbourhood of unified character which we seek to preserve.

Two houses of later date not to miss are on South Parade: No. 2, by Dugdale and Ruhemann (1938) and Voysey's delightful contrast to red brick at No.14. A booklet, 'Two walks in Bedford Park', published by the Bedford Park Society, is available from Tony Simpson, 32 The Avenue, W4 price £2.50.

THE LONDON FORUM

The London Forum is a federation of over 130 amenity societies, conservation groups and residents' associations across London, and Ealing Civic Society is an active member of the Forum.

The forum's activities are summarised as:

Representing its members on London-wide issues

Supporting local amenity and civic societies

Responding to consultation and policy papers

Publishing 'News Forum' an influential newsletter

Organising conferences and exhibitions.

You can find out more by leaving a message on 0171-250 0606 and support the forum by adding a voluntary £1 to your subscription, which we will pass on.