



EALING CIVIC SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Working to preserve and improve our Borough



40TH YEAR 1967 – 2007

President: Prof. Sir Peter Hall Vice president: Corinne Templer

www.ealingcivicsociety.org

The
Civic
Trust

Summer 2008

Ealing Civic Society Events 2008

The ECS Annual Lecture

Tuesday June 17th, 7.30 pm

Liz Cantell Room, Ealing Town Hall

Speaker: Our president, Sir Peter Hall:

A Vision for Ealing

The ECS Annual Award Ceremony

Mid/end November

Liz Cantell Room, Ealing Town Hall

Speaker: to be confirmed

Chairman's report

Bob Gurd updates us on the current issues of concern to members:

In previous newsletters we have mentioned the work on the Town Centre study being carried out for Ealing Council by *Tibbalds*. Now, after some considerable effort, the report has finally been published. Those who have taken the trouble to read it may wonder whether the Council got good value for the money spent on it (reportedly some £100,000). Certainly its 125 or so pages (excluding annexes) contain some interesting material but it doesn't really move the master planning process forward. (We understand that more work will be done on the Arcadia/station/Haven Green area in the light of *Glenkerrin's* withdrawn planning application.) There is still the need for a 'vision' for the centre of Ealing. Save Ealing's Centre - to which we are affiliated - has been working on this and we have helped with the process. As for the *Glenkerrin* application itself, we know that they have been discussing options with the Council and we expect a

revised application to be produced later in the summer.

Also, the long-awaited planning application for *Dickens Yard* has now appeared. At the time of writing we are still studying the application in detail but our initial concerns are summarised below in a separate article. By the time you receive this newsletter we will have had our special meeting with St George where we hope some of our concerns will have been addressed. Interestingly, English Heritage criticised the earlier plans submitted by St George, particularly over the scale and massing, and the relationship with neighbouring Christ the Saviour church - similar to our own concerns. However, the government's Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) was more complimentary about these plans.

In the meantime, we can look forward to an authoritative view on the issues by our president, Sir Peter Hall, at our annual lecture on Tuesday 17th June. Sir Peter is Bartlett Professor of Planning and Regeneration at the School of Architecture and Planning, University College London, and is an honorary member of the Royal Town Planning Institute, which awarded him its Gold Medal in 2003. He was a founder member of the Regional Studies Association and is now also President of the Town and Country Planning Association.

Sir Peter's students have been working on their own vision for Ealing and he will be presenting the results of their work, as well as his own take on Ealing's future. Sir Peter will have the distinction of being the only one of our speakers so far to have delivered two

annual lectures - very appropriate for our president!



Our president, Sir Peter Hall

On *street lighting*, many of you will be aware of the controversy about removing some of the cast-iron columns from some Hanwell streets for use in the Heritage Quarter in South Ealing and Northfields [see our last newsletter]. Although the Society was not directly involved in the campaign, we can understand why local residents felt aggrieved by the removal of their own 'heritage'. We have to go back to the origins of the Council's street lighting PFI scheme to understand where the problems originated. This scheme was introduced with very little consultation, although the Society did try to get the Edwardian columns refurbished as part of the contract. We were told at the time that this would be prohibitively expensive, but we were assured that the preferences of conservation areas indicated during a consultation in 2002 would be incorporated into the PFI contract.

In the case of Hanwell Village Green, the consultation outcome was a preference for installation of new so-called heritage columns similar to those employed around Ealing Common, and work subsequently got under way with little or no controversy. However, the conservation area was later extended to include some streets around Hanwell Station and no consultation was undertaken with the residents in this area. So, not surprisingly, they were upset to find their cast-iron columns being replaced earlier this year.

After a great deal of local and national publicity generated by residents, the Council has now agreed to retain some of these columns in the vicinity of the Grade II listed Hanwell Station, but the remainder have now been removed to be included in the stock of columns to be refurbished for use in the Heritage Quarter. If the original PFI contract had been negotiated in a more open and transparent way, many of these problems could have been avoided – a lesson for future similar contracts.

Finally, I look forward to meeting as many of you as possible at our annual lecture on 17th June. Sir Peter will no doubt have some trenchant views on the right way forward for Ealing (and, equally, what he feels is the wrong way!).

* * *

The Dickens Yard planning application
Judy Harris, Tony Miller and Bob Gurd
outline their initial reactions to the recently submitted planning application:

We are concerned that past consultations on St George's proposals for Dickens Yard seem to have resulted in little significant improvements in the scheme. It appears to be in conflict with the Planning and Urban Design Brief for the site which was agreed by the Council as Supplementary Planning Guidance in June 2004. This states that one of the main design principles is that *building heights* should be between 6 and 8 storeys, depending on the impact on the listed Christ the Saviour church and Town Hall and uses to the north.

The *bulk, mass and height* of the proposed buildings create an enormous impact on views of the historic core, the 'jewels' of the Town Centre Conservation Area. The importance of such views was emphasised in the three Conservation Area assessments that relate to the town centre. The proposed high flats on Longfield Avenue opposite Perceval House make a banal backdrop to the Grade II listed Town Hall as viewed from Ealing Green, so that the impact of the Town Hall spire is lost. The tallest block (14/15 storeys) would obscure views of the Town Hall from the north and have an unacceptable impact on the residential area of Gordon Road and streets to the north.

The 11-storey block which would overlook the school would dominate the view of the Grade

II* listed church from the top of the High Street. The 8-storey tower on the corner of New Broadway and the Town Square, already nicknamed the 'Helipad', would provide a vertical mass which conflicts with that of the church tower and spire and dwarfs the neighbouring Edwardian locally-listed shops (14-36 New Broadway). The listed buildings would be lost in a mass of tall, bland residential blocks.

The 9-storey blocks with flats for the elderly and shops are supposed to have a civic character in keeping with the Town Hall. But the bland facade along Longfield Avenue is disfigured by the cavernous vehicular entrance to the site. The cliff-like elevation of the block at the edge of the pavement would create a canyon with Perceval House, making a draughty environment for shoppers. Two fine mature trees within the site would be lost to the development

Market Street, the pedestrian link through the site from south-east to north-west, is shown in the photomontage in St George publicity material as a shopping area bathed in sunshine. However, the shadow diagrams provided with the application give a more reliable picture, showing shade for much of the day over most of the year. The buildings to the south, which are 6 and 8 storeys, provide the shading. This, and the overbearing high buildings to the north with their prow-like corner features, would make pedestrians feel dominated by the building mass. Unless a pleasant shopping environment is created, customers are likely to, as they do now, go elsewhere to larger or more attractive centres. The result would be that the intended 'aspirational' retailers would not be attracted to the site, and the floor space would be occupied by lower quality shops, with growing pressure to allow more cafés, drinking and gaming establishments.

The lack of *cultural or recreation facilities* was raised in consultation, but has been ignored. Young people want a sports centre, and a hotel or cinema were specifically mentioned in the supplementary guidance, but the only provision seems to be a replacement hall for use by the church and school, and a small gymnasium for the residents. Given the uncertain future of retail schemes like this, it is essential that adequate provision be made for recreation for young people who will constitute

a high proportion of the local population. Renovation of the Town Hall may provide the answer but this is currently uncertain given the high cost.

The large increase in population involved in the scheme would place a burden on *local schools, public open space and medical facilities*. 'Section 106' money is not enough: space is needed for at least some of these uses on the site.

Finally, the volume of *traffic and associated parking* generated by the development would be far in excess of the planning brief. The result would be more cars and daytime (non-commuter) parking on streets in adjoining residential areas, as there is no coherent plan for traffic management. A realistic plan acceptable to Ealing's residents is needed for the whole town centre, which the Council still does not have.

The planning application is available to view in the public reception area, Perceval House and on the Council's website. Also, there is a display in the Town Hall foyer showing a model of the development as well as some photographs of the proposals. The display is staffed by representatives from St George on Wednesdays (4-7 pm in the front hall) and Saturdays (11-5 pm in the Telfer Room) until 25 June. It is very important that objections are expressed formally to the Council by 28 June.



Model of the proposed development, looking north towards the railway: Longfield Avenue is on the left, with the Town Hall in the foreground and the spire of Christ the Saviour church on the far right.

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Open House 2008

In another date for members' diaries we can give advance notice that the Open House London weekend will be on Saturday 20th and Sunday 21st September this year, when over 600 buildings in the Greater London area will be open to the public.

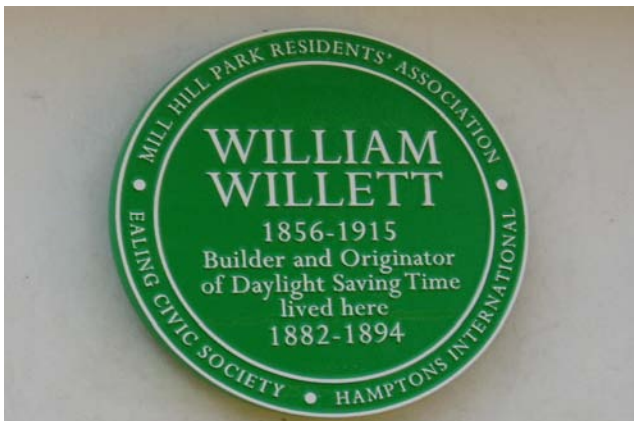
At the time of going to press the full programme for Ealing is not yet available. However, Pitzhanger Manor will be open on both days for regular guided tours. With the recent announcement of substantial development funding for the house why not reacquaint yourself with this impressive building? On the Sunday, following the 10.30 am tour of the manor, Committee member Paul Fitzmaurice will lead a history walk from PM down Ealing Green to St Mary's Church, starting at 11 am.

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Plaques update

Members may remember the unveiling in March 2006 of the Society's first 'green' plaque (jointly sponsored by the Mill Hill Park residents' association in Acton) in memory of William Willett, the originator of daylight saving time. Mike Tiley brings us up to date with some recent developments:

Ealing's collection of commemorative plaques is building up slowly. In addition to the green plaque for **William Willett** at 16 Avenue Crescent, Mill Hill Park, Acton W3, the Society has installed a 'bronze' plaque on the pavement outside what was the first branch of **Waitrose**, then known as 'Messrs Waite, Rose & Taylor' after its founding partners, on Acton Hill W3 (now the Babylon Pizza House). (We use bronze plaques where they need to be put into the pavement.)



The ECS green plaque installed in Acton in March 2006

There are also four English Heritage 'official' blue plaques in Ealing:

- for **Alan Blumlein**, the inventor, on the Haymills Estate at 37 The Ridings W5;
- for **John Lindley**, the Kew botanist, at Bedford House, the Avenue W4;
- for **Sir Michael Balcon**, the film producer, at Ealing Studios, Ealing Green W5; and most recently
- for **Dorothea Lambert Chambers**, the seven times Women's Wimbledon Tennis Champion, at St Matthew's Vicarage, 7 North Common Road W5.

The Society's aim is to raise awareness of our heritage by promoting further plaques in memory of famous residents of Ealing. We prefer to initiate or to encourage the erection of English Heritage plaques, and to erect our own green plaques for suitable individuals not eligible for an EH plaque, or for historic buildings - which are not covered by the EH scheme. (EH only erects one plaque for a person and so turns down suggestions for a blue plaque where they already have one elsewhere.) We also have a rule that the proposer for one of our own plaques must be prepared to raise the cost of its manufacture and erection (about £600+), which is a good test of their commitment to their proposal, as ECS does not have a plaques fund!

Two new blue plaques could be on the way in Ealing. One, for **John Compton**, the builder of cinema, cathedral and church organs, has been approved by English Heritage for erection, possibly next year, at his former home at 37 Audley Road W5. Another would be at the former home of **Fred Perry**, the Men's Wimbledon Tennis Champion, at 223 Pitzhanger Lane W5. The proposal is due to be formally submitted to English Heritage by the Brentham Heritage Society (with advice from ECS) on the 100th anniversary of his birth, in May 2009. English Heritage is also reviewing its earlier decision not to erect a plaque for the author **Nevil Shute**, at his former home at 16 Somerset Road (although we understand that the current owner of the house is unlikely to give permission for a plaque to be erected there at present).

There are several ideas for our own ECS green plaques:

- **Dame Margot Fonteyn** at one of her childhood homes in Ealing - either 44

Waldeck Road or 3 Elm Road Ealing W5 (there is a proposal for an EH plaque at her former home in Kew where she lived after she became famous);

- **Fred Perry** at the Brentham Club where he first learned to play tennis (and perhaps many years hence our successors might want to commemorate other sports stars at the club where they played and developed their sporting skills, such as Mike Brearley the former England cricket captain, and Peter Crouch the international footballer);
- **Ho Chi Minh** who, before World War One, had a job as a dishwasher at the Drayton Court Hotel in The Avenue W5, some time before going on to become the first president of the Democratic Republic of (North) Vietnam;
- at the **NatWest Bank building** on Ealing Broadway W5, which was designed by Charles Jones as the first council offices for the Ealing Board, before it became Ealing Council and moved to the present Town Hall on New Broadway W5, also designed by Charles Jones.



The Brentham club where we hope to have a plaque to commemorate Fred Perry's early playing days.

Do our members have any more suggestions of famous former residents (or famous buildings) as suitable candidates for plaques? The criteria for consideration are that an individual must have died at least 20 years ago, or have reached the 100th anniversary of their birth. We look forward to hearing from you.

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The 2008 Annual General Meeting

*The Society's AGM was held at the end of April, with guest speaker this year John Stewart of HACAN Clearskies updating members about the plans for Heathrow expansion. **Greg Birdseye** provides a summary of proceedings for those unable to be present on the night:*

Bob Gurd gave a review of our activities during 2007/08, not least the Society's 40th anniversary events. He also mentioned the several planning issues of concern - Dickens Yard, Arcadia, and others - and referred to the successful campaigns that the Society has been part of, including the tram (now long forgotten, although we are no nearer a solution to the traffic problems on the Uxbridge Road), the design of the Hanger Lane railway bridges, and the fate of Ealing's cast iron lampposts.

Bob acknowledged the great contribution to our work, particularly on licensing issues, by Jim McLaughlin who was standing down from the executive committee. The remainder of the committee was re-elected [see box on back page].

John Stewart gave an excellent presentation on the Government's plans for a third runway and an end to alternate runway working at Heathrow, and the (deeply-flawed) consultation process - over 70,000 people responded to the consultation, and 3,000 attended a public meeting in central London in February. He referred to the conclusions of a damning economic appraisal, carried out for HACAN by consultants CE Delft, that the Government has failed to make any sort of economic case for expansion: the potential benefits are overstated and the downside of not expanding would not be anything like as serious as suggested. In short, the economic benefits are "negligible" and nowhere near enough to justify the seriously adverse impact of the scheme on the quality of life of local residents.

Finally, he said that the environmental impact of expansion, particularly in relation to the Government's own noise limits and the air pollution limits laid down by the European Union, had been blatantly fixed: the Government's proposals had massaged the potential improvement in how much cleaner and quieter planes might become, in order to meet the targets.

There is some optimism that the campaign is having an effect, but John Stewart nevertheless warned of the need for continuing and vigorous opposition to the proposals backed by the powerful coalition of BA, BAA and the Government. In response to questions he was concerned that, while the third runway might eventually be refused, the significant increase in flight numbers through maximising use of runway capacity by ending the current alternation pattern might slip through.

Bob concluded the meeting by thanking John for his contribution. Since John declined a speaker's fee for the night, the committee has subsequently agreed to make a donation of £100 on behalf of members to HACAN's appeal fund.

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The 2008 ECS design award

November might seem a long way off [see forthcoming meetings in the box on page 1] but now is a good time to start thinking about possible nominations for the Society's annual design award.

Full details will be on the ECS website, but in brief the Society has, since 1989, given awards to recognise and encourage buildings and environmental projects that make a noteworthy contribution to the community in the London Borough of Ealing. The winners receive a certificate and may display a Society plaque commemorating the award.

Past winners have included St Mary's Church restoration in South Ealing Road, the Sikh Gurdwara in Southall and the Hoover building on the A40, as well as some more 'human scale' developments such as the Cloister Road Surgery in Acton.

We are looking for schemes that enhance the environment by good design or landscaping, or service to the community in other ways. They

may include new buildings and those which have been substantially restored or refurbished, and landscaping and townscaping projects. The judges consider aspects such as good design, fitness for purpose and flexibility in meeting changing needs. Also important are energy efficiency, good pedestrian access, anti-pollution measures and the re-use of materials.

So, look about you now, and get those nominations in!

2008/09 Executive Committee

Robert Gurd (Chairman)

60 Beaufort Rd W5 3EA (8998 4417)

Corinne Templar (Hon. Vice President)

20 Mattock Lane W5 5BH (8567 5353)

Judy Harris (Secretary)

72 The Knoll W13 8HY (8997 8824)

Huw Foxall (Treasurer)

27 Regal Close W5 2SB (8998 6354)

Deirdre McLellan

(Membership – new members)

36 The Grove W5 5LH (8567 4682)

Christine Gratus

(Membership – queries/ finance)

32 The Grove W5 5LH (8579 0902)

Mike Tiley (Publicity Officer)

30 Devonshire Road W5 4TP (8840 7447)

Greg Birdseye (Newsletter Editor)

9 Dell Way W13 8JH (8248 3973)

Paul Fitzmaurice

18 Elers Road W13 9QD (8567 3024)

Margaret Gold

24 Lyncroft Gardens W13 9PU (8567 6158)

Tony Miller

6 Winscombe Crescent W5 1AZ (8930 5130)

Mary Sergeant

10 Eaton Rise W5 3ER (8997 1058)

Reading this and not a member?

Why not join us?

Phone 020 8567 4682 or see our website

www.ealingcivicsociety.org