



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

Spring 2009

Ealing Civic Society Events 2009

Annual General Meeting

Tuesday 21st April, 7.30 pm

Telfer Room, Ealing Town Hall

Speaker: Tony Palmer: *The destruction of Ealing*

The ECS Annual Lecture

June

Details to be announced

A programme of events to commemorate the 200th anniversary of Spencer Perceval becoming Prime Minister (see inside)

The ECS Annual Award Ceremony

November

Chairman's report

Welcome to this issue of the newsletter, which looks forward to our AGM on 21st April. **Robert Gurd** once again provides an introduction to the topics of the day:

The two main issues of last year were of course the major development proposals for Dickens Yard and the Arcadia site in Ealing town centre. You will know by now that both applications were passed by the Council's planning committee, in October and December respectively, but some uncertainty still surrounds their future. At the time of writing the Mayor of London has not yet passed judgement on the scheme for Dickens Yard, although most people expect this to be a formality. The delay has apparently been caused by his need to receive more

information on renewable energy generation on the site.

The Mayor has approved the Arcadia application, but to many people's surprise, it was then 'called in' by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (Hazel Blears) for determination. This will result in a local public inquiry, probably in the summer. Save Ealing's Centre (SEC), to which the Society is affiliated, will be playing a full role in the inquiry. SEC may need to appoint a barrister, which will of course require funds. Full up-to-date details can be found on the SEC website www.saveealingcentre.com.

A more recent threat to Ealing has arisen from a proposal by a housing association to demolish four Victorian houses in Madeley Road and Hanger Lane and replace them with a high density five-storey monstrosity which fails to relate in any way to its surroundings. We are campaigning with local residents to fight this inappropriate development.

On a happier note, efforts by Save Ealing Antique Lampposts (SEAL) with which the Society is associated, are now bearing fruit. Following a successful public consultation in the autumn of last year, a design for the restored cast-iron lighting columns was agreed, and installation in the Heritage Quarter in Ealing has started to gain momentum.

We had some misgivings about the proposed design solution, which involves extending the columns at the base with a new casting in order to raise the height of the lamp fitting and to accommodate the necessary

switchgear. But most people seem to agree that the result is satisfactory, giving a far higher standard of lighting in the streets which have so far been relit.



An example of the 'old' Heritage lighting (left) and the 'new' Heritage lighting (right) in Lammas Park Road, W5. (Photo courtesy of SEAL)

We have been continuing to monitor rollout of the street lighting PFI in conservation areas, and most of the area panels have reached agreement with the Council over their preferred design solution. Modern heritage lighting has now been installed in the Hanger Hill Garden estate, the northern end of The Avenue (West Ealing), Ealing Green and Hanwell, and has started in Bedford Park and on the Brentham Garden Estate.

Finally, may I invite all members to our AGM on Tuesday April 21st. The formal notice of the meeting is shown on the back page. We would welcome additional nominations of those interested in joining the executive committee.

Our guest speaker this year will be Tony Palmer who, in addition to being a resident of Ealing with strong views about its current state and threats to its future, has also produced a very wide-ranging filmography, from early works with The Beatles, Cream, Jimi Hendrix and Frank Zappa, to portraits of Walton, Britten, Stravinsky, Maria Callas, John Osborne, Margot Fonteyn and Menuhin.

Please do come to hear Tony expand on his theme: *The destruction of Ealing*.



Tony Palmer, our AGM speaker

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The new Ealing Civic Society website

Thanks largely to the efforts of our web manager Philippa Dolphin and others, our new much improved website is finally live. Our thanks go to our previous webmaster, Simon Hay, for maintaining the old site for the last seven years, at no cost to the Society.



The new website is bigger and more colourful, and has many new features including the latest news of town centre developments, and pictures and details of Award winners and our plaques over the years. There is also a growing gallery of historic photos of Ealing which we hope will be of particular interest. We now have an archive of ECS newsletters right back to March 1998, and links to the web sites of local residents' associations and other organisations concerned with planning and the built environment.

We hope to update the site more frequently than the old one, so check regularly for details of our forthcoming events and other news. We are very grateful to our web designers,

Lawrence and Beavan, for their patience and flair and for very generously subsidising the development cost. Why not take a look: www.ealingcivicsociety.org

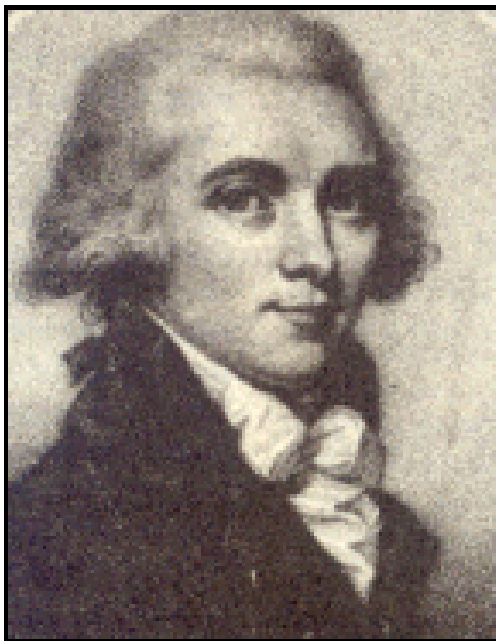
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A famous Ealing resident

Paul Fitzmaurice reminds us of the fate of Spencer Perceval, Ealing's forgotten prime minister:

Mention the name Perceval to anyone in the context of Ealing and the responses are varied: the Council offices on the Uxbridge Road? an assassination lost in time? All Saints' Church on Ealing Common? Pitzhanger Manor?

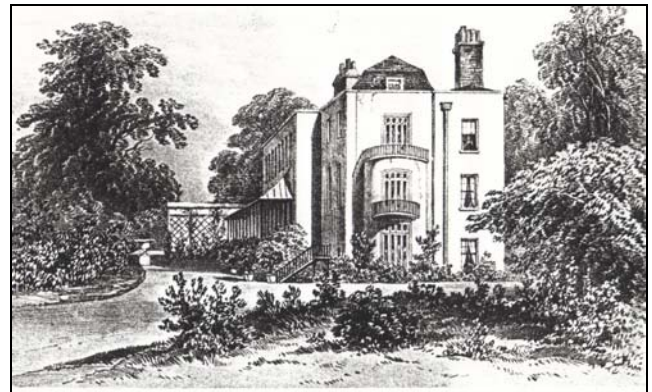
All of these answers are partly correct, and 2009 is now perhaps an opportune time to consider the relevance of Spencer Perceval, the only British prime minister to have lived in Ealing.



The Right Honourable Spencer Perceval

Spencer Perceval was Prime Minister from 1809 until his death in 1812 at the age of 49. He has the unenviable record of being the only British prime minister to have been assassinated: he was fatally shot in the House of Commons on 11th May 1812, by a John Bellingham who held a grudge against the government for a failed business venture in Russia. The fact that Bellingham was probably insane, and also mistook Perceval for another government minister, counted for little in his defence – he was tried and hanged within seven days of the shooting.

In 1808, Perceval and his family (he had 12 children) had moved to a large mansion called Elm Grove, on the south side of Ealing Common, and it was from here that he made his final, fateful trip to the House of Commons. After his death, the Government provided a very substantial pension and lump sum for the benefit of his family, and they continued to live at Elm Grove. His widow, Jane, later married Colonel Henry Carr, the son of the vicar of Ealing.



Elm Grove, home of the Perceval family

Upon Jane Carr's death, her four unmarried daughters moved to Pitzhanger Manor to live next door to their sister Isabella who had married Spencer Walpole. All the sisters lived on until well into their eighties. They were known as 'the ladies of the manor house' and were treated almost like royalty in Ealing.

The last Perceval daughter, Frederica, died in 1900 at the age of 95, and her will made provision for a church to be erected in memory of her father. The Rothschild family of Gunnersbury donated the land on which Elm Grove had been standing, and in 1905 All Saints' Church (sometimes known as the Spencer Perceval Memorial Church) was built on the site - Perceval had been born on 1st November, All Saints Day, 1762.

Although Perceval's tenure as Prime Minister was unexpectedly short, he and his family had a significant influence on 19th century Ealing. Their memory lives on in the name of the Council's main office block, and also in the church itself which is well worth a visit and contains various memorials and artefacts to Perceval. We are currently in discussions with All Saints' about the possibility of installing one of our commemorative plaques outside the church.

This October sees the 200th anniversary of Spencer Perceval becoming prime minister. ECS is part of a small group including All Saints' Church, the Council's Library Services and Pitzhanger Manor, endeavouring to produce a programme of events to celebrate the anniversary. Proposals include talks on Spencer Perceval, an exhibition, an historical walk and a concert. We will give fuller details of the programme in our next newsletter.

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Planning matters

Tesco stores have applied for planning permission to redevelop their Greenford store. Tesco plan to rebuild and extend the existing store (converted from the former Granada Cinema in the 1960s) behind the retained cinema facade. The new building would be in an art deco design to complement the restored front facade. Although ECS have suggested points of detail on the proposals, we feel they are generally along the right lines and will bring much-needed regeneration to Greenford. The original interior of the cinema was designed in a classical style by acclaimed early 20th century theatre designer Théodore Komisarjevsky. Regrettably, most of the interior was destroyed during the conversion into a store, but Tesco very commendably plan to salvage and reproduce some original plasterwork that survives in the auditorium ceiling elsewhere in the new building.

We have also commented that a hotel proposal at Orbit House on Western Avenue will have an unfortunate impact on the adjoining residential area. And we feel that a proposal to replace a single bungalow by seven terraced houses in Mountfield Road W5 would be an overdevelopment in a conservation area. Nevertheless, despite a presentation by a resident and the local Councillor, this last was permitted by the Planning Committee.

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The 2008 ECS Annual Award

*The Society's annual award ceremony took place in Ealing Town Hall last November. Here, **Greg Birdseye** provides the headlines for members who could not get there on the night.*

The Society's award scheme, founded in 1989, aims to stimulate interest in development and conservation in Ealing, as well as to encourage

a high standard of architecture and design. Entries are invited from recently completed developments in the borough, and are judged by a panel of experts. This year's panel consisted of local architects John Hummerston and Franklyn Nevard, together with landscape planner Tom Venables.

The shortlist covered a wide range of buildings and facilities, including a church extension, school buildings and a new countryside park:

- Grange primary school in South Ealing – opened in September 2007, a replacement for the original 1920s school buildings;
- Kingsdown Methodist Church on Northfield Avenue – a new 2-storey frontage added onto the existing church, providing improved access and other facilities as well as allowing more light through to the interior of the church;
- Mount Carmel primary school in Little Ealing Lane – provision of new classrooms and remodelling of existing facilities including the school library;
- Northala Fields just off the A40 in Northolt – a unique new feature on Ealing's skyline;
- Northfields library remodelling, to provide a much improved customer experience; and
- Twyford Church of England High School in Acton – an extension/conversion of the existing school to provide a new canteen, staff common room and science laboratories.

The judging panel carried out visits to each of the sites and assessed them with four criteria in mind: design; fitness for purpose; contribution to landscape; and other factors such as energy efficiency and re-use of materials.

After much deliberation, the Society's 'Highly Commended' award was given to Northala Fields. The panel scored the development highly against the criteria and was particularly impressed with its innovative use of waste materials (from the demolition of the old Wembley Stadium and the construction of Westfield shopping centre) as well as the fact it was self-funded using waste disposal charges. The panel was very impressed by the

development, and further felt that if the promised facilities such as toilets and a visitor centre had already been provided, the scheme would have merited one of the Society's much-coveted plaques – awarded in the past to winners such as the Hoover building in Perivale and the internal refurbishment of St Mary's Church in South Ealing.



A 'Commended' award was also given to Northfields library as a welcome addition to the streetscape, with a very effective and eye-catching front elevation providing good disabled access.



The new front elevation of Northfields library.

The certificates were presented by guest of honour, Dr Stephen Inwood, historian and academic, and author of several best-selling books on the history of London. Dr Inwood then gave a very entertaining and informative talk on London's iconic buildings and their designers since Roman times, suggesting that

each would have been worthy of a Civic Society award in its time.

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News in brief

Demolition of the Empire (ex-Forum) Cinema, Ealing

Many of you passing through Ealing town centre will have seen the demolition of the former Empire Cinema earlier this year prior to its planned redevelopment as a 15-screen cinema. The Society tried on several occasions to get the cinema listed but failed, apparently because its sister theatre in Kentish Town, also designed by John Stanley Beard, is already Grade II listed and remains undivided whereas Ealing was 'tripled' with loss of many interior features in 1975.



The last days of the ex-Forum cinema auditorium from the rear.

However, a condition of the demolition was that a full photographic record of its interior should be carried out (by the Museum of London). Some of the cinema's features such as panelled doors, handles and balustrades have been salvaged for reuse in the Kentish Town Forum where these have been lost over the years. The cinema once had a Compton organ (manufactured in Park Royal) but this was moved to Wormwood Scrubs in the early 1960s and is believed still to be playable. It is sad that this fine building has been demolished in its 75th year, not only because of its historic interest and design qualities but also because it was originally built as a theatre with full stage facilities, together with a café and dance floor - all things which Ealing could do with today.

Gunnersbury Park developments

Jura Consultants have been engaged to look at options for the buildings and park at Gunnersbury. Paul Jardine, one of the consultants, gave a presentation to a stakeholder group in January about the kinds of projects they have previously been involved with, including a number of houses and a castle in Scotland, and a Welsh park. Some of the solutions involved obtaining funding from a range of sources and then providing accommodation for libraries, local museum services, cafes, a boutique hotel, and flexible space for local business. Their web site www.jura-consultants.co.uk describes some of their successful projects.

Jura are now looking at a range of options for Gunnersbury over a period of 3 months. They will explore and, where possible, value the costs, benefits and uncertainties of each option. By the end of the process they will be able to present different packages for consideration by Ealing and Hounslow Councils. But Paul warned that finding and implementing a sustainable future for Gunnersbury could take 10 years. Although he remained upbeat, it is obvious that the current financial climate will make this more difficult.

Meanwhile, Friends of Gunnersbury Park and Museum are setting up a web site www.gunnersburyfriends.org to disseminate information and gather views from members.

Hanwell Community Centre

After years of discussion and debate, a contractor has now been appointed to carry out improvement work on Hanwell Community Centre and give it a new lease of life at a cost of £2.2 million. Ealing Council's Cabinet decided at the end of February to appoint Durkan Limited to carry out urgent repairs on the Grade II listed building, which English Heritage has identified as being at risk. The restoration project will include structural work to repair leaking roofs and saturated walls and draughty windows. As part of the proposals, the Council is planning to move its own training department to the community centre, displaced from 'The Village' behind Ealing Town Hall. Durkan will also build a learning and development centre to provide new facilities for meetings, training courses and community learning.

Reading this and not a member?

Why not join us?

**Phone 020 8567 4682 or see our website
www.ealingcivicsociety.org**

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**The 2009 AGM will be held in the Telfer Room, Ealing Town Hall
7.30 pm, Tuesday 21st April 2009**

Agenda

1. Apologies for absence
2. Chairman's Report for 2008
3. Adoption of the Chairman's Report
4. Treasurer's Report for 2008
5. Adoption of the Treasurer's Report
6. Appointment of Auditors
7. Election of Officers:

Currently:

Chairman – Robert Gurd

Secretary – Judy Harris

Membership – Deirdre McClellan/Christine Gratus

Web manager – Philippa Dolphin

Vice-Chairman – vacant

Treasurer – Huw Foxall

Newsletter Editor – Greg Birdseye

8. Election of other committee members:

Currently - Tony Miller, Mary Sergeant, Corinne Templer, Mike Tiley, Paul Fitzmaurice, Margaret Gold.

All current members of the Executive Committee have indicated a willingness to stand for a further year. In accordance with the constitution, further nominations for election to the committee may be made by members of the Society. They must be submitted in writing to the Secretary [Judy Harris, 72 The Knoll, Ealing W13 8HY] at least 14 days before the Annual General Meeting, supported by a seconder (also a member of the Society). The consent of the nominee must first have been obtained. If the nominations exceed the number of vacancies, a ballot shall take place.

9. Motions and any other business submitted to the Chairman in writing prior to the meeting.
10. Talk by Tony Palmer: *The Destruction of Ealing.*