



Summer 2009

Ealing Civic Society Events 2009/10

A guided visit to Northala Fields
Details to be finalised

A programme of events to commemorate the 200th anniversary of Spencer Perceval's election as Prime Minister (see inside)

The ECS Annual Lecture

Thursday, October 22, 7.30 pm Liz Cantell Room, Ealing Town Hall Speaker: Professor Sir Magdi Yacoub

The ECS Annual Awards Ceremony

Thursday, November 12, 7.30 pm Liz Cantell Room, Ealing Town Hall Speaker: Stephen Sackur

A joint meeting with U3A

Thursday, April 22, 2010 Paul Fitzmaurice will talk about US President John Quincy Adams' connections with Ealing.

Chairman's report

Welcome to this issue of the newsletter. We start as usual with **Bob Gurd's** reflections on the topics of the day:

It was good to see so many of you at the AGM in April to hear a very lively presentation from Tony Palmer about the potential destruction of Ealing at the hands of developers. Not everyone agreed with his opinions but those who attended were very impressed with the forcefulness of the presentation. I should say that some in the audience felt that he had

perhaps unfairly criticised Ealing councillors over the proposals, approved by the Council's planning committee last year. I should like to take this opportunity to put the record straight: there were a few brave councillors, from both the majority party and the opposition, who went out of their way to speak out against the Arcadia and Dickens Yard developments. But it is very much to be regretted that they are in the minority.

On Dickens Yard, there is still some mystery surrounding the development. It does not yet, at least at the time of writing, have approval from the Mayor of London. The outstanding issue apparently relates to questions about onsite generation of renewable energy, but it seems to be more complicated than this since it is taking a very long time to reach a conclusion. Indeed, one might wonder whether the developers, St George, are deliberately dragging their feet to avoid having to pay the large capital sum to the Council for the site until the property market improves, although we have had no official confirmation of this.

But all eyes are on the Arcadia site, for which the public inquiry will have started by the time you read this newsletter. The inquiry, in which the Society is playing a major role (together with Save Ealing's Centre, to which we are affiliated) runs from June 23 until the middle of July. We urge you to give us support by attending the hearings, which are open to the public in Ealing Town Hall from Tuesday to Friday each week [10 am - 5 pm, earlier on Fridays]. Check the SEC website www.saveealingscentre.com for progress reports. Members of the society who have contributed to the fighting fund – currently in the region of £20,000 – are to be thanked for giving so generously towards supporting what we believe is a just cause. The final decision will be taken by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (John Denham) but is not expected for many months – possibly not until the New Year.

One of the casualties of delays in the outcome of decisions on Arcadia and Dickens Yard is the fate of the 'section 106' money from both of these developments. Large sums of money were due to be spent on various improvements in central Ealing, including to the Town Hall complex which everyone agrees is overdue for major refurbishment (even though principal rooms were recently redecorated at a cost of £600,000). I am pleased to say that the leader of the Council, Jason Stacey, and Cabinet member responsible regeneration, David Millican, have both been very receptive to the ideas from SEC and the Society to convert some of these rooms into spaces for arts and leisure facilities: some of you will remember that we have supported proposals from the Cinema Organ Society to install the Southbank Wurlitzer in the Victoria Discussions continue but these are Hall. unlikely to make much progress until the future of both planning applications is clearer.

Elsewhere in this issue, you will hear about our public lecture in October, which is later than normal this year in order for us to take advantage of a unique opportunity to hear a famous resident of Ealing, Sir Magdi Yacoub, the well-known heart surgeon, speaking about his life and times in the Borough.

We are also planning for our summer event – an interesting opportunity to see at close quarters one of the winners of last year's Ealing Civic Society award, Northala Fields, through a guided walk. Details are not yet finalised, but we will send an e-mail to members with more information when available. Let's hope for good weather on the day of the trip!

Finally, 2009 marks the 20th anniversary of the introduction of the award scheme. We plan to have a special award ceremony this year where the guest of honour will be local resident Stephen Sackur (of BBC News fame). As well as the usual items, there will also be a talk on the highlights of the award scheme

since its inception. I look forward to meeting some of you at these events in the coming months.

The 2009 Annual General Meeting

The Society's AGM was held at the end of April, with guest speaker this year Tony Palmer. **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 2008/09. 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 successful outcome of the debate about Ealing's cast iron lampposts.

Tony Palmer then gave us a forthright and thought-provoking – indeed controversial – presentation under the title of "The destruction of Ealing". It was standing room only in the Telfer Room by the time the meeting started, with extra chairs packed into all available corners. He started his talk with a map of Ealing 200 years ago and went on to describe changes up to the present day.

He was particularly critical of Ealing Council – both officers and members – who he said, with some honourable exceptions, appear to wish to steamroller through almost any proposal for shops and high rise flats in the centre of Ealing under the guise of 'regeneration'. The so-called 'master plan' for central Acton also came in for some fierce criticism, if not ridicule.

He said he was not opposed to redevelopment per se; indeed he felt strongly that Ealing could not be, and should not be, just another Chiswick or Richmond. What is needed is a new vision for central Ealing, starting with the area round the station and the Arcadia site. This would incorporate a wide piazza at the south end of Haven Green with space for open-air cafés, market stalls and water features. The piazza would form a new central focus for Ealing, bringing people together for recreation and cultural activities, not just as yet another shopping centre.



Tony Palmer's vision for the Arcadia site, showing the exit from Ealing Broadway station directly onto the new piazza.

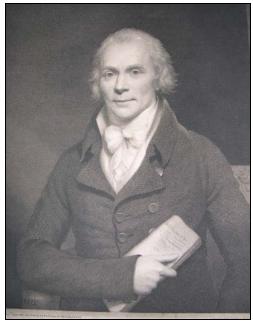
Central to the idea would be a link from the Crossrail (redeveloped) station to the middle of the piazza, incorporating an underground car park and shopping mall, and providing an integrated public transport hub with bus station/ interchange. He also proposed radical changes to the traffic flows around the site including closure of the Uxbridge Road at that point. The debate will no doubt continue for some while.

* * *

Celebrating the Spencer Perceval 200th Anniversary

The programme of events to commemorate the 200th anniversary of Spencer Perceval (1762 - 1812) becoming Prime Minister in October 1809 has now been finalised. As Paul Fitzmaurice described in his article in the Spring Newsletter, Perceval had strong local connections, having himself lived in Ealing from 1808 to 1812, and members of his family continued to live here after his death, occupying Pitzhanger Manor from 1843 until 1900. All Saints Church on Ealing Common is known as the Spencer Perceval Memorial Church, built with money left in his youngest daughter Frederica's will.

Several different events are being prepared for the first week in October: two talks on Perceval's life and his links with Ealing; the unveiling of the Civic Society plaque on All Saints Church followed by a concert; and a guided heritage walk reflecting the theme: *The Perceval Family in 19th Century Ealing.* In parallel, there will be an exhibition to Perceval's life in Gunnersbury Park Museum.



The Right Honourable Spencer Perceval (courtesy All Saints Church)

The dates for your diaries are as follows:

Thursday 1st October, at Pitzhanger Manor and Ealing Central Library	Talks by: Hugh Gault : Spencer Perceval, the Prime Minister and Jonathan Oates: Spencer Perceval and his connections with Ealing
Saturday 3 rd October, at All Saints Church	A concert by Ealing Symphony Orchestra and a talk by Stephen Pound MP: <i>Perceval the parliamentarian</i> . The event opens with the unveiling of the Ealing Civic Society plaque to Perceval.
Thursday 8 th October	A guided heritage walk led by Paul Fitzmaurice from All Saints Church to St Mary's Church to Pitzhanger Manor House, where refreshments will be served.
Saturday 3 rd October - Sunday 3 rd January, 2010, at Gunnersbury Park Museum	An exhibition about the life of Spencer Perceval and the building of his memorial church, All Saints. Includes memorabilia which have rarely been seen before.

Further details of all the events, including timings, costs and where to book tickets will be available on the Pitzhanger Manor website:

www.ealing.gov.uk/pmgalleryandhouse

and are also included in the gallery's summer brochure, as well as in an Ealing Central Library brochure and 'Around Ealing'.

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Restoring and upgrading Gunnersbury Park?

Jura Consultants, who have been working on a range of options for Gunnersbury Park and its many crumbling listed buildings, have now recommended a preferred option which they have called 'Restore and Upgrade'. This is intended to meet a number of objectives:

- restoring the Large Mansion for use as a restaurant, exhibition, conference and functions service, with staff living above;
- restoring the Small Mansion for use by the museum;
- restoring the stables as an accessible museum store;
- refurbishing the Orangery as a tea room;
- refurbishing the temple and Princess Amelia's Bath House;
- restoring the Potomac Tower, the Gothic ruins and the historic boundary walls;
- carrying out significant works to the landscape by reinstating lost features;
- removing detrimental aspects and generally upgrading the area; and
- building a sports hub near the Potomac Pond.

This approach would be most likely to receive support from English Heritage and the Heritage Lottery Fund. But the capital costs have been calculated at £39m. Although the consultants have identified a number of possible funders who may be prepared to contribute to the cost, there is still a likely funding gap of £16.8m. English Heritage will require Hounslow and Ealing Councils to come up with a robust business plan to demonstrate how the project could be funded, which is likely to involve "enabling development". It is possible that this would mean selling a small part - 5.4 acres - of the 186 acre site for housing development, on the west side of the park along Lionel Road. The Society has not vet taken a view on this potentially controversial proposal.

The next step is a consultation via questionnaires to households in the neighbouring area, and via the Hounslow web site. It is hoped to have an exhibition in the Gunnersbury Museum during July and August

which will explain the proposals and allow an opportunity for comment. The likely deadline for the consultation period is the end of August. For further information see:

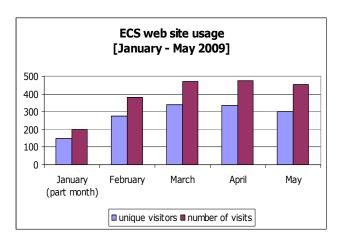
www.hounslow.gov.uk/ or www.qunnersburyfriends.org/

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The new Ealing Civic Society website Philippa Dolphin, our web-manager, describes reaction to the new website:

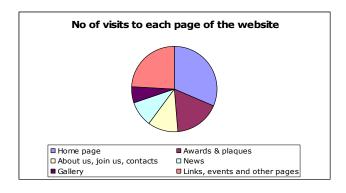
The Society's website was launched in mid-January 2009, and usage has been steadily growing since then. Our excellent hosting service (4Uhosting.co.uk) provides us with a vast number of statistics about its usage – some more useful than others! We can track the number of unique visitors (around 300 a month), the total number of visits to the site, pages accessed, hits and bandwidth, by month, day of the month, day of the week and even hour of the day. We also know the browsers used and the search terms which brought people to our site.

The number of visits grew rapidly from the launch up to a peak in April when we announced the site in the last newsletter, although there was a slight decrease in May.



Most usage is between 10 am and 5 pm, although there is quite a late surge between 11 pm and midnight. We also know where our users are based: most are in the UK as might be expected, but why the interest from the Ivory Coast?

Most visitors start with the home page but interestingly, 1 in 6 also looks at the 'awards and plaques' pages – more than any other single category.



We expect that visit numbers will continue to grow when we add new content – including this newsletter – and are linked to more web sites. We have already added links to a number of local residents' web sites, but if you run or are involved with any others please let us know, and also add a link to us on your own site: http://www.ealingcivicsociety.org/.

The Empire cinema latest

All that remains of the Empire (ex-Forum) cinema opposite Ealing Town Hall, is the wafer-thin faience (fired clay) façade held up behind a supporting steel skeleton.



The remains of the façade of the Empire Cinema (taken from the rear)

Apparently, problems have arisen settlement of the facade following demolition of the building behind it. Discussions have been taking place with the planners about how to safeguard it from collapse and also the best way to restore it. The original manufacturers of the faience in the 1930s have apparently been retained by the architects of the new building, Lyons, Sleeman & Hoare, to oversee We have said that it is its restoration. important that this, the only remaining element of the original building, should be properly preserved and not be dismantled on a pretext of safekeeping. There have been wellknown examples of similar 'safekeeping' where the artefacts concerned have conveniently disappeared and never re-erected.

In the meantime, building work on the replacement 16-screen cinema development has stopped. Nevertheless, Empire Cinemas have assured the Council that they intend to restart work as soon as the façade issues have been resolved. We have been trying to arrange a meeting with Empire for some months now to clarify their plans for the site, so far without success. The cynical amongst us still wonder whether, now that the old building is out of the way (and therefore beyond the reach of English Heritage) plans might not emerge from the rubble for a completely different building on the site!

News in brief

Developments at Boston Manor Park

(with thanks to the Ealing Fields Residents' Association)

Many of us use Boston Manor Park and will be aware of recent improvement work carried out there, not least the excellent café run by volunteers. Many of these improvements should be credited to the Friends of Boston Manor Park. The Friends were therefore shocked when they learnt, having had no prior consultation, that Hounslow Council and GlaxoSmithKline have come up with a plan where GSK would contribute towards refurbishment of the House, but in return want permission to install a 600-space car park in the grounds, under the elevated section of the M4. Boston Manor is a grade I listed building and is on the English Heritage register of buildings at risk. Friends of Boston Manor have some serious concerns about the proposal, which is about to go out to public consultation. More details can be found at: www.brentfordtw8.com/info/ bostonmanor01.htm.

The ECS Annual Lecture

This year we are very pleased to have secured the time of Professor Sir Magdi Yacoub as our guest speaker at our premier event of the year, the Annual Lecture. Sir Magdi has lived in Ealing for many years and his children were educated here. His talk will include thoughts about his humanitarian work, particularly in Africa. [He was born and brought up in Cairo, and came to England in 1962.] He founded the *Chain of Hope* charity, which

sends teams of medics to the developing world to treat children suffering from heart disease free of charge. Most readers will remember that he was involved in the first UK heart transplant, and is responsible for making Harefield Hospital the leading training centre for heart surgeons in the UK. Put the date in your diaries now: Thursday, October 22.

The 2009 ECS Architectural Award

This year's award evening will take place on 12th November. Once again we would like as many nominations as possible, so let Judy Harris, our Secretary – contact details below – know about any impressive developments, buildings or landscaping in your local area. The panel of architects will be assessing a short-list of schemes on their merits and the winners(s) will receive a plaque or certificate.

Planning our meetings for 2010

You will see from the events box on the front page that we already have one event listed for next year. The Committee tries to look as far ahead as possible in its planning, particularly in identifying significant speakers and getting dates in their diaries. If you have any suggestions for future speakers who have connections with Ealing please let us know, particularly if you know them personally: it is very much easier to arrange a speaker by personal contact than by 'cold-calling'.

We are also thinking about other events of a more social nature: the guided walk to Northala Fields mentioned earlier, and a group visit to the Emery Walker house in Hammersmith followed by a tour of the Fuller's brewery nearby. Members might like to mail us if they would like to take part.

Are you gift-aided?

Gift Aid is tax relief on money donated to UK charities. Your subscription to Ealing Civic Society counts as a donation. If you are a basic rate taxpayer we can claim tax relief on it, but only if you've completed and returned a form to us. It doesn't cost you a thing – but it currently means an extra 25p for every pound the Society receives from you. So your standing order subscription is worth £8.75 a year rather than the £7 you pay, and an £8 subscription is worth £10. For UK taxpayers, there's no easier way of giving more to a cause you support.

All members who haven't signed a Gift Aid form will have received one with this Newsletter. Please return it to us – Gift Aid can be claimed up to six years in arrears, so it could make a big difference. If there's no from in your envelope, you've already signed up or told us you're not eligible, so thank you.

Postcards of Ealing, Queen of the Suburbs

With this copy of the newsletter we have included one of the postcards produced by the Society last year, showing different scenes in and around Ealing. ECS members can now take advantage of an amazing bargain offer to buy at less than half price – 10 postcards for only £1.50 + 50p p&p. [They are retailing in local shops for 50p each or more]. Just send a cheque for £2.00 made out to Ealing Civic Society to Christine Gratus, Joint Membership Secretary, 32 The Grove, Ealing W5 5LH.

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Reading this and not a member?
Why not join us?
Phone 020 8567 4682 or see our website
www.ealingcivicsociety.org