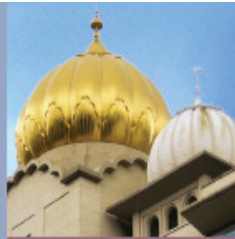




EALING CIVIC SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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

Autumn 2009

Ealing Civic Society Events 2009

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

The ECS Annual Lecture

Thursday, October 22, 7.30 pm

The Queen's Hall, Ealing Town Hall

Speaker: Professor Sir Magdi Yacoub FRS:

Hearts and Minds

The ECS Annual Awards Ceremony

Thursday, November 12, 7.30 pm

Liz Cantell Room, Ealing Town Hall

Speaker: Steven Sackur

Chairman's report

Welcome to this issue of the newsletter.

Robert Gurd starts by looking back at the momentous Arcadia public inquiry:

"For services beyond the call of duty". That was the inscription on the fine china mugs recently presented to Judy Harris, Tony Miller, Corinne Templer and myself by the Executive Committee to mark our involvement with the recent Arcadia public inquiry. We were all touched by the thoughtful gift: little did we realise what we were letting ourselves in for when we agreed all those months ago to become involved with SEC in the public inquiry.

Our appearance at the inquiry was the climax, but the preparation of the written evidence and collating briefing material for the opening

statements and cross-examination was itself an exhausting process, quite apart from having to give daily support to our instructing solicitor and barrister (Pat Thomas and Tom Cross) both before and during the three weeks of the public inquiry itself. Our thanks go to them for their advice on the tactics to be deployed during the inquiry. I am sure that our case was markedly improved as a result of their input.

We also have to thank all of those members of the public, including those of you from the Society, who contributed a total of £20,000 in the public appeal to pay for our legal advice, and for giving their support from the public gallery. Our thanks must also go to our president, Sir Peter Hall, not only for recommending our instructing solicitor, but for contributing a very thoughtful piece to the inquiry on its last day. Sir Peter's full address can be seen on the ECS website, but his overall conclusion is particularly telling: "*[a] development that I believe would fatally and permanently compromise the built quality of one of the most remarkable suburban environments to be found anywhere in England.*"

Thanks also go to Charles Mynors (who you may remember gave one of our public lectures some years ago) for giving advice behind the scenes. Honourable mention must also go to Eric Leach, vice-chairman of West Ealing Neighbours and also a member of the Society, who wrote an entertaining daily blog of proceedings.

As for the outcome, the Planning Inspectorate has indicated that the final decision, to be

taken by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, John Denham, is due on or before 7 December (although this timetable is not set in stone). The Inspector's report is likely to hit his desk in the next few weeks.

My own judgment, for what it is worth, is that the decision could still go either way. It all depends on whether the Inspector and the Secretary of State feel they could live with the prospect of changing the character of Ealing for ever, which would be an inevitable consequence of the development. If you feel strongly that they should turn down the application there is still time to lobby your local MP in the coming weeks. You can ask for your letter to be passed on to the Secretary of State.

You may recall the piece in the last newsletter about the halt to works on the former ex-Empire cinema site in central Ealing. After months of lack of response by Empire Cinemas to our enquiries, we now learn from Ealing Council that Empire intend to seek "some amendments" in the autumn to their proposals for a 16-screen cinema complex. Apparently, the planning rules are due to change in October to enable amendments to existing consents to be submitted without the applicant putting in a completely new application.

Meanwhile, the site remains vacant apart from the supporting facade (which narrowly escaped demolition thanks to the insistence of the Council) and an unsightly pile of rubble at the rear. A local resident was recently informed by Empire that the delay was due to changes to the internal configuration of the screens because of the need to adapt to digital projection: Empire said they were planning one screen with digital & 35 mm specifically for the possible use of Ealing Studios and Bollywood films. It remains to be seen whether any of these plans will be carried out.

As for other news, Ealing Council is just embarking upon a consultation exercise on the issues and options under the Local Development Framework (successor to the Urban Development Plan - UDP) which will determine new development in Ealing for the next 20 years or so. This sounds very dull but the Arcadia inquiry showed how crucial every word in the existing UDP can be when the Council determines important planning

applications. Unfortunately, there has been very little publicity about the public meetings but we have alerted members by e-mail of the timetable. Please try to attend the one in your area if you possibly can. To receive updates between newsletters please send your e-mail address to info@ealingcivicsociety.org if you have not already done so.

In the meantime we are looking forward to what should be a fascinating public lecture from Sir Magdi Yacoub, the world's leading cardiac surgeon and long term Ealing resident, on 22nd October. I look forward to seeing many of you then.



Professor Sir Magdi Yacoub FRS

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Walpole Park *Parks for People* bid

There was standing room only at a packed meeting in Pitzhanger Manor's Georgian Eating Room on August 25th. Despite the very short notice (invitations having arrived on local residents' doormats only two days before the meeting) and the timing at the height of the holiday season, the number of people present far outnumbered the available chairs - a familiar situation to those who've taken part in other Ealing Council consultations.

The Council is preparing two bids to the Heritage Lottery Fund: one for restoration and development of Walpole Park (under the *Parks for People* category) and another for Pitzhanger Manor itself.

Last year's consultation on the future of the park indicated that what users most want is for:

- 'features already present to be improved and better maintained'; and

- 'a strong desire to see regular park ranger patrols'.

It turned out the meeting had been called as a requirement of the *Parks for People* bid to consult local stakeholders in advance of the application, which is itself a two-stage process. The first stage, which was due to be completed by 31st August, amounted only to expressions of interest in applying for a grant. If successful, this is to be followed by a more detailed bid for the specific projects to be included in the second round, next April. The Council will hear in December whether this first stage bid has been successful. A separate bid covering the Manor House (again a two-stage process) will be submitted in January next year.

Somewhat oddly, those at the meeting could not be told what the outline bid contained (apparently because the bidding system is confidential) nor were they given the opportunity to indicate what they thought important to be included in any proposals for park restoration. This was considered to be "premature". Discussion was therefore limited to an outline by the retained architects of the key elements of the park, and a general discussion about its future, including the possibility of setting up a 'friends' group or similar.

Those present were assured that they would be kept informed about future developments. But, even though the Society is represented on the Pitzhanger Manor Stakeholder Group (which last met as long ago as February), we had not been informed of the bidding process, nor even invited to talk to the bidding team. The omens are not good perhaps!

* * *

Gunnersbury Park latest

In the last newsletter we outlined the findings of the consultants tasked with exploring options for safeguarding the future of Gunnersbury Park and its 20 or so deteriorating listed buildings. Consultation on the findings, including the most controversial of the recommendations – to sell off part of the park for housing to provide funding for restoring the buildings – is closing on 30th September. So there is probably still just time for members to comment.

The proposals have provoked strong views, both for and against. In essence, a hard decision has to be taken: on the one hand, whether the park area should remain sacrosanct; on the other, whether the sell-off represents the only realistic opportunity of raising the necessary funds to safeguard and restore the crumbling heritage. Opponents feel the proposal could set a bad precedent; those in favour feel that if the current opportunity is missed, nothing might happen for yet another generation, by which time any hope of rescue would be too late.

Unfortunately, the consultation document is badly worded and respondents are given a biased final question: would they like to see Gunnersbury Park continue as it is *or* restored with works partly funded by disposal of land on Lionel Road North? We suspect that few people would disagree with the restoration proposals but many would disagree with the means of achieving them – disposal of metropolitan open land and the loss of a significant number of mature trees.

The Society has debated this issue at length, and has decided that it is not prepared to answer the Council's final question. Instead, it is responding by saying that it agrees with the proposals for the restoration of the buildings and the grounds, but to agree the means proposed would go against all its principles it stood for (i.e. protection of metropolitan open land and of trees). Its preferred option would be to explore once again potential funding from other sources. It would wish to be re-consulted if land disposal proved to be the only practical option.

The consultation document and questionnaire can be found at:

http://www.hounslow.gov.uk/index/leisure_and_culture/local_history_and_heritage/gunnersbury.htm

Further background can be found at:

www.gunnersburyfriends.org/.

News in brief

Celebrating the Spencer Perceval 200th anniversary

We hope you already have the dates in your diary for the programme of events to commemorate the 200th anniversary of

Spencer Perceval (1762 - 1812) becoming Prime Minister in October 1809. As a reminder:

Thursday 1 st October, at 1.30 pm, Pitzhanger Manor, repeated at 6.00 pm at Ealing Central Library	Illustrated joint talk by: Hugh Gault: <i>Spencer Perceval, Prime Minister</i> and Jonathan Oates: <i>Spencer Perceval and Ealing</i> [Tickets £2, available from: 8825 8194]
Saturday 3 rd October, at All Saints Church (7.00 pm)	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. [Tickets £4, available from: 8992 2333]
Thursday 8 th October	A guided heritage walk led by Paul Fitzmaurice from All Saints Church via St Mary's Church to Pitzhanger Manor House, where refreshments will be served. [Tickets £2, available from: 8825 8194]
Saturday 3 rd October - Sunday 3 rd January, 2010, at Gunnersbury Park Museum	An exhibition about the life of Perceval and the building of his memorial church, All Saints. Includes memorabilia which have rarely been seen before.

Further details of all the events are available on the Pitzhanger Manor website: www.ealing.gov.uk/pmgalleryandhouse.

The 2009 ECS Award

This year's award evening will take place on 12th November with guest speaker Steven Sackur, current affairs presenter on BBC World News and BBC News Channel. There is still time to nominate entries for consideration by the judges, so let Judy Harris, our Secretary (contact details below) know about any impressive developments, buildings or landscaping in your local area. Further details and the entry form are available on the ECS website.

"The future is local"

Ealing is now one of several communities across the UK which have set up 'Transition Town' initiatives to help us adapt to the consequences of peak oil and climate change. The world is running out of cheap and plentiful oil, and we need to plan now for a low energy future, and to explore local sourcing of food and other resources. A series of free films is being shown in St Mary's Church in South Ealing (the best and only cinema in Ealing), in order to raise awareness and bring people together with ideas and enthusiasm. Two films have been shown so far: *The Age of Stupid* and *The End of Suburbia*. Soon, groups will be set up to look at growing food, transport, building, waste and recycling and strategy. Find out more at: www.ealingtransition.org/.

2009/10 Executive Committee

Corinne Templer (Hon. Vice President)

20 Mattock Lane W5 5BH (8567 5353)

Robert Gurd (Chairman)

60 Beaufort Rd W5 3EA (8998 4417)

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)

Philippa Dolphin

52 Warwick Road W5 5PX (8579 1808)

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