

Spring 2003 Newsletter

Message from the Chairman

Welcome to the Spring 2003 newsletter. This time last year I predicted that the town centre redevelopment and the tram would be the issues of the year. I was right - but they are also the issues of this year!

On the town centre, I was appointed a director of the Ealing Centre Partnership in August last year in order to represent Local Agenda 21 interests. Despite being unwell our Secretary Brian Harris continues to represent the Society. Together with two other directors we represent community interests on the partnership board. Although we have not achieved all we would have liked I think we have managed to bring important contributions to the discussions. In particular, I am pleased to say that we have succeeded in gaining agreement to a planning event later this year to discuss the main development sites in greater detail. Such an event will ensure that all stakeholders with interests in the sites can have their say in a meaningful way.

The tram has predictably become a very controversial issue and the Society has yet to get a real feel for the members' views about it. We have been invited to participate in the consultation process and we need to hear your views as soon as possible. I am currently working on the assumption that most members are not necessarily opposed to the tram in principle but they are very concerned about the potential for diversion of traffic displaced from the Uxbridge road onto residential streets to make way for the tram. The AGM on 1 May will give an opportunity for you to have your say but if you have any immediate views that you would me to have please let me know.

Finally, I should mention that three of the Committee are standing down this year due to ill-health: John Delafons, Sybil McRobie and Kenneth Corden. John has been vice-Chairman for nearly 10 years and has written many learned articles on town planning issues; Sybil has been a member of the committee since the earliest days of the Society when it became involved in the original redevelopment plans for the centre of Ealing. Ken has been membership secretary in recent years and has been responsible for ensuring that our membership lists are kept up-to-date and collecting subscriptions. We are very grateful to them for the work that they have done for the Society over the years and wish them well in the future. I'm pleased to report that two new members have recently been co-opted onto the committee: Paul Fitzmaurice, who has written an article elsewhere in this newsletter, and Adrian Cook who will be speaking on the restoration of the gardens of

Chiswick House at the AGM this year. Nevertheless, further help with the work of the society is always welcome. If you would like to contribute to the work of the Society we would be delighted to welcome you to committee meetings, perhaps initially as an observer.

Bob Gurd

BIDS - Ealing chosen for pilot scheme

Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) are a new government initiative and Ealing has been chosen of one of 22 pilot schemes that are taking place throughout the country. The idea is to improve towns by involving local businesses in identifying projects and services to revitalise the business environment.

Under the scheme local authorities must identify the services they currently provide and those they are obliged to provide. The local businesses will then decide what they themselves specifically want, for example lighting, pavement maintenance, waste and rubbish clearance or street wardens. It will then be costed and proposed as a business levy on each participating business. The businesses within the defined area of the BID will then vote on the proposals and if agreed by a majority it will become mandatory on all businesses within that area. The local authority will administer the vote and collect the levy, the funds of which will only be for use within that BID area.

The pilot scheme will take two years to set up and will be run by Ealing Centre Partnership. ECP will identify the area to be covered in the Ealing Broadway area, ensure the proposals harmonise with the local Unitary Development Plan and persuade businesses of the value of participating. Essentially this is a business initiative but, if successful, should bring benefits to everyone - both businesses and the public. The Society will expect, as suggested by Government, to be consulted on any proposals but will not have a vote - the vote is only for the businesses which will have to pay the supplementary levy.

Should the pilot schemes be successful there will eventually be enabling legislation and BIDs will cover the whole country. At the moment Ealing is in the forefront of the pilot schemes and we will be supporting and monitoring the process closely through the community directors of Ealing Centre Partnership.

Civic Society Annual Awards 2002

Christ the Saviour Church Hall wins Highly Commended Award

The 2002 Annual Awards ceremony was held on 17 October at Ealing Town Hall. This year there were seven nominations: the new Play Space in Walpole Park, the Derwent Yard residential development in Northfield Avenue, the Trailfinders Sports Club in Vallis Way W13, the single residence Dunvegan in Carlton Road, the restored house at 8

Castlebar Hill, the restored Himalaya Palace Cinema in North Road Southall and the new Christ the Saviour Church Hall in Ealing Broadway.

The nominations were judged by local architects John Scott and Jan Bienkowski together with landscape architect Janet Anderson who used to live in Ealing. The judges were impressed by all the entries but finally considered that Christ the Saviour Church Hall should be given the Highly Commended award which was received by the vicar, Rev. Father Davis and Churchwarden Mr Blavo. The judges commented that the constrained site next to the architecturally important Gilbert Scott church had been used to the full and had successfully linked to the church without detracting from it. The Himalaya Palace Cinema won a Commended award which was received by Mr Phander, the son of the owner. The judges felt that this was a laudable restoration of a community facility and an impressive recreation of the splendid interior after a very damaging fire.

Independently of these awards the Ealing Times had run a competition for the nominations whereby readers could vote online for their choice. This was won by 8 Castlebar Hill (which the judges themselves had considered a resourceful and careful restoration of a splendid family house). Accordingly the Society gave a 'virtual' e-award for the house which was received by the owner Mrs Bishop.

John Wibberley outlines plans for Pitzhanger Manor

The annual awards were given out by John Wibberley, the recently appointed curator for Pitzhanger Manor and after the ceremony John gave a presentation of his restoration plans for the Manor. John is a local architect who was involved in the initial works in the 1980s when the Central Library moved from the building. As well as being one of the Borough's few Grade I listed buildings Pitzhanger Manor is renowned for being rebuilt by Sir John Soane in the early 19th century to be his country home. John is a self-admitted enthusiast for Soane's works and has been involved in restoration projects for other Soane buildings - hence the spelling 'Pitzhanger' - reflecting its usage at the time of Soane. John is making an application to English Heritage for .1 million of funding to carry out further improvements. This will initially include the restoration of the lodge (on English Heritage's Buildings at risk Register) to enable it to be used as a workshop for local artists, the improvement of the surrounding areas of the building and grounds for both aesthetic and security reasons and obtaining consent for a caf. in the Gallery. He has many other exciting ideas for the building and grounds including the holding of chamber music concerts and poetry readings.

The Society is fully supportive of John's proposals for what is architecturally the Borough's most important building and is endeavouring to provide whatever assistance we can. We intend to update the membership in future newsletters as matters progress.

On the street where you live?

Have you ever wondered why your road is called what it is? In this occasional series on Ealing street names Paul Fitzmaurice describes the Wood family who in the 19th century were Ealing's largest landowners and the legacy they left us in the names of streets.

The Woods were a wealthy family with substantial coal mining interests in the Midlands who came to live in Ealing in the 1770s. They built Hanger Hill House on the brow of Hanger Hill (demolished about 1935) and resided there for the next century. From here they purchased further lands in the vicinity until they came to own 900 acres of Ealing north of the Uxbridge Road stretching into Acton.

In 1874 Edward Wood retired to live in Shropshire but the family retained their substantial property interests in Ealing. This period coincided with a property boom brought about largely by the arrival of the Metropolitan District Railway at Ealing Broadway (which crossed the Woods' Lands). The size of the Wood estates enabled a coherent policy of house building under the plans and designs of Robert Willey, local architect, in conjunction with the Local Board. The houses were targeted at the more wealthy middle classes (with the typical large Victorian family) on long leases. This development was one of the features of the growth of Ealing to earn it the characterisation 'Queen of the Suburbs'.

In 1906 the major part of the Woods' freehold property in Ealing accounting for some 850 houses was sold to the Prudential insurance company for .250,000. The remaining undeveloped Wood property east of Hanger Lane, being the original Hanger Hill House estate, was largely used as a golf course. In the late 1920s it was sold off for development into what are now the Haymills and Hanger Hill Garden estates. Today the only remaining legacy of the Wood family and their estates are in the street names. Some of these are very obvious, others require a little research and the remainder are 'educated' (or otherwise) guesses.

The most obvious examples of road names are those with the word 'Wood' in roads such as Woodfield Road, Woodville Gardens and Woodgrange Avenue. There are also other family names. George Wood married Mary Hamilton - Hamilton Road - and Edward Wood married Isabella Boileau - Boileau Road. Gordon Wood was one of Edward's sons hence Gordon Road. It has even been suggested that as the Woods were members of the Carlton Club which accounts for Carlton Road.

When Edward Wood left Ealing he retired to Culmington Manor in the Craven Arms district of Shropshire where there is a nearby village called Corfton, resulting in Culmington Road, Corfton Road together with Craven Road. Of these the Culmington Road land was slightly curious as it was somewhat isolated from the other Wood estates in being south of the Uxbridge Road and was only a long narrow field with a footpath across it. One can only conclude that the Woods foresaw the likely need for a roadway

linking Ealing Dean to the old village around St Mary's church and the potential for building development.

The Heritage Centre, Greenford

The Heritage Centre at Greenford formally opened last October and is open to the public at weekends. Describing itself as 'a nostalgic journey through the 20th century' it houses a fascinating display of artefacts covering the borough and surrounding areas of West Middlesex together with pictures and commentaries on our local history and heritage. There is also a large collection of local history books available for consultation. The curators, David and Chris Blackwell, are very keen to expand the collection and would very much welcome any information or donation of items to establish the Centre further.

The Centre is well worth a visit. It is at Ravenor Farm, Oldfield Lane South, Greenford (a few minutes from Greenford Broadway) and is open 10am to 4pm on Saturdays and 1pm to 4.30pm on Sundays. If you would like to discuss donating an item or information David and Chris can be contacted in the evenings on 020 8579 0178.

'The Elms', Twyford Crescent, Acton

Of the many nationally and locally listed buildings in the Borough of Ealing, many have changed from their original purpose and tend to be overlooked. Huw Foxall describes one such building - a country villa now part of a school.

About . mile to the east of Ealing Common station slightly back on the north of the Uxbridge Road is Twyford Church of England of School. Set in this complex is a splendid looking Grade II listed building originally known as the Elms, now rather out of character with its immediate area of Acton. The Elms was built in 1735 for Sir Joseph Ayloffe, Keeper of the Record Office. For the times it was a relatively modest villa but one which afforded good country air and was close to London. Most of the house survives today albeit subject to modification over the centuries.

Of particular interest on the left on entering the building was the Salon which was panelled throughout and had an impressively ornate ceiling depicting the Judgement of Paris accredited to the Venetian artist, Francisco Sleter. The main picture was later moved to the Victoria and Albert Museum and the roundels to Gunnersbury Park Museum. The most striking feature which still stands today is the magnificent main staircase to the right with elaborately carved Corinthian columns. Also on the ground floor were the fore and back parlours, now used as a conference room and an office, but which are essentially unchanged and retain the elegance of the mid-eighteenth century.

Around 1749 the ownership passed to the Wegg family who occupied the house for almost a century. Samuel Wegg and his descendants acquired additional adjacent land and modified and expanded the house considerably, including the addition of a wing

subsequently pulled down in the 1950s. Outhouses including a laundry, washhouse and stables similarly no longer survive.

In the middle of the 19th century the house was acquired by a distant relative of the Weggs, Charles Gray Round, who let the house and adjoining lands to tenants. Later these were acquired by Captain Ronald Scott and for the first time the buildings adjacent to the Elms were put to industrial use, being the site of the Electric Light and General Engineering Works. In due course a toy factory was established between the Elms and the Uxbridge Road, which survived well into the latter half of the 20th century.

In 1954 Middlesex County Council purchased the building for use as a school which became known as Acton Central School. After several changes of name and further construction of buildings the name 'Twyford' was used for the first time in 1961 and following the 1965 local authority changes it became part of a large comprehensive school. In 1981, in the face of falling school numbers, the property was sold to the Diocese of London which established Twyford Church of England High School.

Today the Elms houses the key administrative functions of the school, however in most respects the house is largely unchanged from that defined by the Weggs in the first half of the 19th century.

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