



Autumn 2004 Newsletter

Ealing Civic Society Annual Award Ceremony

**Tuesday 19 October 2004
Telfer Room, Ealing Town Hall at 8pm**

*Awards to be presented by Paul Velluet, Asst
Regional Director (London), English Heritage*

Chairman's message

The last few months have seen some interesting developments for the Society. As a result of our involvement with the Council's Urban Design Group we have for a one-year trial extended our award scheme (which celebrates its 15th year in 2004) to include a new design award for projects that have received planning permission but have not yet been built. We have also been involved in the exciting work currently going on in Acton town centre and the South Acton neighbourhood. Various projects are underway to improve the environment of Acton town centre for which new money is available. One project of particular interest and resulting from an approach from the Society and South Acton Residents' Group (SARAG) is the characterisation study being carried out by English Heritage in South Acton. This landmark project, which was referred to by Simon Thurley, Chief Executive of EH, in a recent talk to the London Forum, is designed to capture the history of the area which started life as a slum clearance project shortly after last war and has since grown to one of West London's largest housing estates. The area is due to undergo further regeneration with injection of considerable sums of capital funding from government to improve the existing housing and to build new housing for both private and public sectors. SARAG are keen to ensure that lessons are learned from the mistakes of the past and so ensure that the area is enhanced and the community strengthened. They are particularly keen that the area is better connected to its surroundings

by introducing a north-south link and reinstating some elements of the former street pattern that was lost during slum clearance. The Society's involvement in these regeneration projects is a new venture for us coming as a result of our participation last year in the Civic Trust's Pathfinder Project. An historical walk around S Acton led by Peter Guillery, the EH senior architectural investigator undertaking the project, will take place on **Sunday 17 October** starting at 2pm from outside the Change Base, 100 Bollo Bridge Road, W3

Closer to the centre of Ealing, you will no doubt be concerned about the impact of the tram which is currently subject to public consultation by Transport for London (TfL). We have consistently said that we are not against the tram in principle but we are concerned about the potential for diversion of traffic from the Uxbridge Road into surrounding residential streets, in particular in the vicinity of the pinch points which all occur in the Borough. Unfortunately, TfL has failed to take on board many of the suggestions put forward in good faith by a number of community and residents' groups for dealing with this issue resulting in genuine concern on the part of affected residents. There are continuing concerns about the potential cost of the project: a recent National Audit Office report was very critical about new tram and light rail projects in this country and made unfavourable comparisons between the way they have been implemented here and on the continent. It may be as a result of this report that the Government recently withdrew its support for several light rail projects outside London. In the capital itself, we find ourselves in a special position because of the Mayor's responsibilities for transport. However, he has yet to convince many people in the borough that the tram would be a cost-effective solution to the undoubted problems of congestion that beset us. Please ensure that you make your views known to TfL, whatever they may be. If you have not received a mailing

from them please contact the helpline (0800 106086).

Bob Gurd, Chairman

Ken Corden

Ken Corden sadly passed away earlier this year having served on the Executive Committee for nearly ten years of which he was our Membership secretary for over five. Members will remember him sitting at a desk near the entrance door at events efficiently collecting subscriptions. Ken was very much a family man but he was also very keen to contribute to the local community -- we are very grateful for the work that he did for us and our sincere condolences go to his family.

Ealing Civic Society Public Lecture

John Templeton recalls a landmark occasion

The annual Civic Society lecture was given in Ealing Town Hall on 24th June by the Society's President, Sir Peter Hall, who lives in Ealing. His theme was the Mayor of London's big debate - the need for sustainable development in London.

The ideal urban form was compact, walkable, public transport-based, and close to an urban core, Ealing being a good example. Ealing from the 1860s was very much a creation of the railways and was built within a very short period of time. The Borough Engineer, Charles Jones, worked closely with major landowners over some 50 years including the Wood family whose estate, on rising ground to the north of the railway, was laid out as an interesting and attractive town planning project long before the first town planning act of 1909. This was a highly sustainable urban form, with quality arcadian roads leading up the hill from Haven Green, probably influenced by Bedford Park.

The Mayor wants higher density housing close to transport nodes with 50% affordable housing. The London Plan identifies Ealing Broadway as a Metropolitan Centre and a key West London transport hub for Crossrail, the Heathrow Link, and the Uxbridge Road tramway so is therefore a key location for higher density housing. It's surrounded by conservation areas, so what flexibility is there?

Recent studies have shown the feasibility of higher densities within 10 minutes' walk of a

town centre and transport hub. Big increases in density are possible within the 'shatter zones' between town centres and existing housing areas, but the problem in Ealing is that these zones are very narrow, with high quality 19th century housing areas almost touching the town centre. Higher densities might be achieved within the conservation areas but would affect their quality so it would be better to divert the demand elsewhere.



Sir Peter with Bob Gurd (photo: Patrick Chapman)

The answer according to Sir Peter was to unlock the vast derelict and underused lands at Park Royal, criss-crossed by numerous railways, which could provide sustainable access to the centre of London. Divided between three Boroughs, this 'Bermuda triangle' could yield vast housing gains and relieve the pressure on the established areas. It is in pressurised West London rather than East where there is the major need for more housing but also where the existing rail network could be enhanced, with interchanges between the West London line and the radial lines in the Old Oak area. Although the Treasury holds the key to infrastructure development of this nature it would be very cost-effective. The new housing developments along the Uxbridge Road will put increased pressure on the road network and on local facilities and will not be located within easy walking distance of a transport hub. Almost uniquely among European cities, London's population had been growing steadily since 1983 and the exodus had been more than met by a growing inflow from abroad, leading to growing pressure on land and infrastructure.

Sir Peter said that London spent a lot less on transport than European cities such as Paris or Madrid (which had doubled its rail system in the

past eight years). London would probably drop out of the Olympic frame because of the lack of adequate public transport. Britain had failed to show imagination and had backed away from difficult decisions (e.g. improving the North Circular Road at Ealing Common, whereas a similar problem in Paris' s affluent sburbs was resolved by building two 6km tunnels, one for heavy goods vehicles and one for light traffic).

The audience shared Sir Peter' s frustration at the lack of a co-ordinated plan to achieve sustainable development on the model laid down in Ealing over a century ago, when the motor vehicle was in its infancy.

Green plaque scheme

Michael Tiley tells us about an exciting new scheme for the Society

Following the generous offer of Waitrose Ltd to pay the cost of erecting an Ealing Civic Society Plaque at the site of their first shop, which opened 100 years ago at 263 Acton Hill, it was agreed the Society should use this offer as an opportunity to initiate our own "Green Plaque" scheme.



The scheme will commemorate famous people and organisations who have lived or operated in Ealing along the lines of the English Heritage "Blue Plaque" scheme, which is poorly represented in Ealing. Our initial thoughts are that the plaques should be of the same size and shape as the EH Blue Plaques. However, they would be ceramic, green in colour with white lettering and a white circle at the outer edge enclosing the words "Ealing Civic Society" in the top half and the name of any sponsoring organisation in the bottom half. A mock-up of the Waitrose plaque is pictured.

There remains much to be done before the first plaque can be erected. We have to find and obtain permission from the freeholder of 263

Acton Hill and obtain permission from the Council, as it is a Grade II listed building. We do not anticipate much of a problem with the Council but obtaining permission from the owner may cause problems.

We need to draw up some more detailed rules and criteria for choosing suitable individuals and organisations for our proposed scheme. Also the plaque scheme will need to be funded (each plaque costs around £500) possibly by related sponsors. Thus there may be a Neville Shute society that might be willing to pay for the cost of a plaque to be erected on the novelist's house in West Ealing. There is certainly a Thomas Merton Society which might be persuaded to pay for an ECS plaque to be erected on the house where he lived in Carlton Road. If you have any ideas about the scheme please contact one of the members of the committee.

The history of Ealing cinemas

Paul Fitzmaurice recounts our AGM lecture

Sixty people braved torrential rain to attend the AGM on the 27 April and listen to an entertaining and informative lecture given by Richard Gray, chairman of the Cinema Theatre Association. The lecture had been arranged to celebrate the 60th anniversary that month of the soon to be redeveloped UGC cinema which was clearly visible from the Nelson Room of the Town Hall.

After an explanation of the evolution of the cinema in this country and aided by some marvellous slides of old local cinemas stretching back to the early 20th century, Richard gave us a whirlwind tour of the borough's cinemas. Starting in central Ealing the first cinema in 1910 was part of the Pykes Circuit which showed in an assembly room of the old **Lyric Theatre** in Ealing Broadway before using the main theatre auditorium. Confusingly it had a variety of names: it was known as the **Broadway Palladium** when it was demolished in 1958 and replaced by the present WH Smith building.

The **Walpole** cinema in Bond Street was built in 1912 in an old skating hall and was demolished in 1981 although the facade arch still remains near to the site just off Mattock Lane. The next to be built (1913) was what is the now the Gosai cinema at the top of Northfield Avenue.

Formerly known as the **Kinema** and the 'Lido', it is currently being demolished and despite its impressive exterior it was never popular – the viewers of the *Watchdog* programme once voted it the worst cinema in the country!



Artist's impression of new UGC cinema (courtesy UGC)

The early 1930s was very much the golden age of cinema building and Ealing has two good examples. The UGC was built as the **Forum** designed in classical style by John Stanley Beard (who had earlier designed the Walpole). The Forum's old cinema organ is now used in the chapel of Wormwood Scrubs Prison! The Grade II* listed Odeon opposite Northfields station designed by Cecil Masey, originally called the **Avenue**, was 'saved' after a campaign by Richard and members of the Civic Society among others in the 1980s. Known as 'Spanish City' it is renowned for its exotic interiors which are still remarkably well preserved within the Ealing Christian Centre. But there was much head scratching about some of the little-known cinemas Richard had unearthed - the **Elite** in Northfield Avenue, the **Theatre Charming** in West Ealing Broadway and the **Grand** in Cherington Road, Hanwell - some of which still stand, albeit adapted.

The catalogue of 'lost' cinemas includes in Acton both cinemas by the noted cinema designer George Coles, the **Savoy** in Western Avenue and the **Odeon** King Street, demolished along with the **Globe** in the High Street and the **Ritz** at Hanger Lane, leaving just the Grade II listed **Dominion/Granada** by Frank Bromige in the Vale still standing but now used as a bingo hall. In Southall it is similar story: the **Dominion** (also by Bromige) on Southall Green has been demolished; the **Odeon** and the **Gem** in the town centre still stand but it is only the

oriental **Himalaya Palace** in South Road (one of George Coles' more imaginative designs) that still functions as a cinema. Restored in recent years to its full glory, it featured on the *Restoration* series recently and won a Commended award in our Design Awards in 2002.

2004 Award Scheme entries

At the time of writing the following built and design* award entries had been received for the scheme:

- Horsenden Hill Farm Environmental Play Area;
- Northolt Manor House moated site, Northolt village;
- Brent Lodge Park, Hanwell playground;
- Southall Park - older children's playground;
- Southall recreation ground, playground redesign;
- Rectory Park stage 1-4 playgrounds;
- Notting Hill and Ealing High School West Wing, W13;
- St Mary' s Church Restoration, St Mary's Rd, W5;
- Pitshanger Library refurbishment, W5;
- West London College, Ealing Green, W5*;
- Cavalier House, Uxbridge Road, W13*.

Latest details of entries will be available online at www.ealingtimes.co.uk where you can vote in that paper's e-award scheme.

Crossrail - Round 2 Consultation

The final detailed proposals for this long-awaited east-west rail link through central London, with a tunnel from Paddington to Liverpool Street, would revolutionise public transport through the Borough. The previous consultation earlier this year proposed one branch to Heathrow (only stopping at Ealing Broadway) and another to Kingston. The Kingston branch has now been dropped and replaced by a branch to Maidenhead with a spur to Heathrow, both serving all five stations along the main line through the Borough. Our two key stations, Ealing Broadway and Southall, would be substantially upgraded with spacious entrances, ticket offices, full disability access and longer platforms to provide for 10 coach trains with a peak hour service of 10 trains an hour to/from central London. Acton Main Line, West Ealing and Hanwell would also be upgraded to allow for Crossrail trains. The timetable proposes that the Crossrail service could commence by Summer 2013.