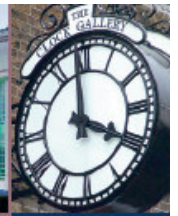




EALING CIVIC SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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

Special Anniversary Issue - August 2007

Ealing Civic Society Events 2007

Presentation on a draft master plan for Ealing

Wednesday 5th September, 7.00 pm
Liz Cantell Room, Ealing Town Hall

40th anniversary lecture and reception

Thursday 13th September, 6.45 for 7.00 pm
Pitzhanger Manor
(see inside)

The ECS Annual Award Ceremony

Tuesday 20th November, 7.30 pm
Liz Cantell Room, Ealing Town Hall
Speaker: Trevor Baylis

Chairman's report

Bob Gurd welcomes readers to this special issue of the newsletter.

This issue celebrates an important landmark for Ealing Civic Society -- our 40th anniversary. In our previous two issues, Paul Fitzmaurice has given us an account of the Society's evolution since the early days, but there were some significant gaps in our knowledge, particularly about ECS's formation and where the idea came from. I was delighted therefore to receive a call from one of the founder members, Margaret Bailey, who told me how it originally came into being.

Margaret recalls that the initiative to form the Society came from her and Neil Martin-Kaye, who between them decided that a new amenity society was needed for Ealing. Challenges were expected to arise from proposals for local government reorganisation about that time, which affected London in particular. There was

also an imminent threat to Ealing from the then Greater London Council's plan to create 'a new metropolitan centre' to compete with Kingston and Uxbridge.

Using guidance provided by the Civic Trust (which had been formed 10 years earlier) Margaret and Neil convened a public meeting in October 1967 with a view to drawing up a programme of events for the new society. The true nature of the threat came to light shortly after with the plans for redevelopment of the town centre. Paul Fitzmaurice's earlier contributions highlighted the concerns around that time, and in this issue we have some fascinating personal reminiscences from Corinne Templer, our honorary vice-president, and Joy Anthony, an original member of the first executive committee.

It is interesting to see how many of the threats are just as real today, not least from the proposals for redevelopment of the Arcadia centre and its surrounding land. Since our last newsletter, Glenkerrin has submitted a planning application for the Arcadia site which includes four towers, one of 26 storeys, opposite Villiers House (the tower block at the station). There have been delays in processing this application, apparently because some details - particularly of the architecture of the towers - were not originally submitted.

We understand that a new firm of architects (Foster + Partners) has now been engaged to redesign the original tower plans, presumably to try to bestow 'iconic' status on them and thus make them more difficult for the planners to turn down.



A model of the Glenkerrin scheme, looking towards the west. Villiers House is in the foreground with the Broadway down the left hand side.

As reported in the last newsletter, over 700 dwellings are proposed for these towers as well as the new retail space at their base. The reason given for such high density development is to recover the cost of rafting over the railway which the scheme would involve.



Shops on the north side of the Broadway which would make way for the Glenkerrin development.

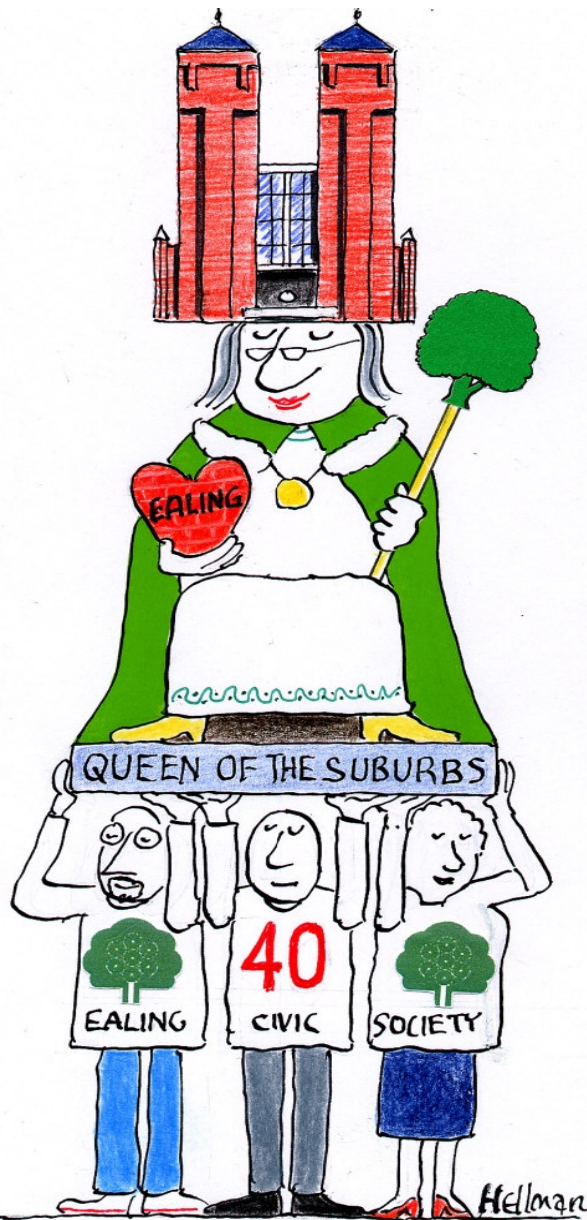
The test of a new building in a conservation area is that it should protect or enhance the area. It is a moot point whether the proposed towers would indeed be an enhancement: one person's enhancement is another's desecration! The committee is giving considerable thought to how the Society should respond to this application. One possibility is to draw on updated guidance on tall buildings due to be published shortly by English Heritage and CABE (the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment). A consultation draft of the guidance was published earlier this year, recommending that local authorities should devise a development plan specifically related to the construction of tall

buildings. Such plans should be explicitly clear about where tall buildings should and should not go and must identify these areas in advance. Local authorities should also consider commissioning detailed urban design frameworks in order to inform the planning process, including the need to assess the impact on important views and skylines. As far as I'm aware, Ealing Council has done none of this. It is possible that we will have to marshal the same sort of resources to deal with this issue as were assembled 40 years ago to deal with the redevelopment of Ealing Broadway Centre, over which the Society had such influence. If you have any ideas, please let me know.

Which brings us back to the founding of the Society in 1967. Like all organisations, we have had our successes and our failures but I think the secret of our success has been the commitment of all the people who have been involved in the work of the Society over the decades – and very often a deep personal commitment. This commitment has been sincerely held, because all of us involved with ECS believe that Ealing is a unique place, with a unique character which needs to be cherished.

But we must also be realistic, because we understand that preserving in aspic is not an option. We appreciate that we have to move forward and accept that things will change. But change must be done in a way that does not destroy the character of the place that we are trying to protect. We owe all those involved in the Society over the last four decades a huge debt of gratitude for the amount of work they have put into trying to realise these principles. Here's to the next 40 years!

Before finishing this 40th year message, I should record the recent passing of two of our stalwarts from those years – *Sybil McRobie* and *John Delafons*, both of whom died in June. Sybil - among many other achievements such as involvement in the early days of national political and economic planning, and as a long standing local school governor – was one of early champions of the Society, and served on the executive committee from the very early days until the turn of the century. John had a very distinguished career as a senior civil servant and planning expert, and served as vice-chairman of the Society. They will be remembered with affection by ECS members.



We are indebted to Louis Hellman for kindly donating this contribution to our 40th anniversary issue.

Finally, I should mention again the Society's *Annual Architectural Award*. Each year we make awards to recognise and encourage building and environmental projects that make a noteworthy contribution to the community in the London Borough of Ealing. The deadline for entries this year is 14th October, in time for judging before the award ceremony on 20th November. Further details and nomination forms will be available on the website at www.ealingcivicsociety.org. Please also look out for this year's Open House weekend on 15/16th September. Details of properties open in Ealing will be at www.londonopenhouse.org before the end of August.

I look forward to seeing you on the 13th September (6.45 for 7.00 pm) for our special 40th anniversary lecture and display at Pitzhanger Manor, followed by a reception with drinks and refreshments. Paul Fitzmaurice and I will be speaking about the changing face of central Ealing over the past 40 years.

* * *

Ealing in the 1960s, especially 1967

A new position of honorary vice-president was created at the AGM in April to honour **Corinne Templer's** long and outstanding contribution to the work of the Society. Here, Corinne adds her personal note to mark our 40th year:

As a young family we bought a house in Mattock Lane in Ealing in 1960, third choice over too pricey Hampstead or Notting Hill. After extensive work we moved in 1962 and our third child was born in the house. The suburb was good for a young family – parks, trees, greenery, good schools, good transport into and out of London for work and leisure, and good quality shopping; a bit light on culture perhaps but the West End venues were near enough. Here we were probably set for the next 20 years with like-minded neighbours and friends.

But the newly-formed Greater London Council had other ideas for Ealing. In 1965 it designated Ealing as one of six Metropolitan Centres around London to be "second only to the West End in terms of shopping, leisure, employment, entertainment, cultural and other activities". A public meeting in the Victoria Hall (as crowded as the tram meetings of recent times) howled down the proposals. Who wanted another Croydon here?

Unfortunately the Council did, reckoning it would bring wealth, prosperity and status to Ealing. To provide the requisite number of shops to warrant metropolitan recognition, Ealing and West Ealing had to be counted as one, and somehow these two totally different shopping centres, over a mile apart, had to be linked. In the heady 1960s, why not build a new dual carriageway road stretching all the way from the Common to the end of West Ealing, with five roundabouts and an overpass over the Uxbridge Road, destroying around 1000 dwellings to do so?



Some of the very fine Ealing houses along Mattock Lane which would have been blighted by the proposed road

Ealing Civic Society was the first major group to oppose the road as well as challenging the whole metropolitan concept. We, in Mattock Lane, were faced with becoming part of the new road and thereby possibly losing our newly restored house. We didn't immediately join ECS - which had a monk as president and a Liberal as chairman, and didn't immediately appeal to us; instead we helped form our local Walpole Residents' Association. However, soon ECS's clever members began to devise an alternative to the potentially destructive road, and suggested what was to be called the Spine Route - linking the Broadway and West Ealing via a new road alongside the railway tracks. (This idea was eventually scuppered by the Council allowing development along the proposed route.) In pure self-interest we joined the Society and over nearly 40 years, close and lasting friendships were made, urban issues were learned and absorbed, hard work was rewarded with highly successful campaigns, and ECS became an integral part of our lives.

We've seen people come and go - never in a huff but because they moved or passed away. We've seen the reputation of the Society soar with changing political and executive administrations: we knew far more of the history and background of Ealing than anyone in the town hall - and still do. We've been a force not only in Ealing but in the land - having made representation to many public and legislative bodies.

You did me the honour of electing me as your Vice President at the last AGM and I am proud to continue working for the Society. We started as a protest group against inappropriate and unwelcome changes to our town. We developed into a positive force for conservation and sensitive development. In the future we will have to combine both these aspirations to counter the looming threats - and I'm confident we will.

* * *

Absent Friends

*On a recent visit back to Ealing from home in Jersey, **Joy Anthony**, one of the original members of the Executive Committee, provided her own memories of the early days of the Society. She remembers in particular many "absent friends" now sadly departed, and other key figures of the times.*

Father Bernard Orchard was our first chairman. I never really forgave him for calling Barbara Gibbs and me "our coffee ladies" - I was chair and Barbara secretary of Education Committee. But otherwise I think he was a good and worthy chairman - although I don't think he ever quite came to grips with what we were all about!

Brian Sear followed as the Society chairman, having been secretary before that. He was a communist (which caused some rumblings and trouble, but if he was establishing a bridgehead with Moscow I was too young and daft to notice). All I knew was that he was a good chairman and a kind and generous man.

Gerald Crone was a very distinguished geographer, 6'5" tall and very imposing. He possessed of a huge wit and wisdom and had one of the deepest, richest voices I have ever heard and was apt to shake with laughter. He was most amusing and irreverent, beautifully and surprisingly so, and a great asset to any committee because he was also so far-seeing and knowledgeable.

John Foster White was a literary gentleman who seemed to know every church in the country and its history. He too was very witty.

Dr Toufar: the reference librarian – a clever man, he had doctorates from five different universities (although with a Hungarian background he was not very sure of the conditional tense and could occasionally give unintended offence).

Nancy Davis must take a large part of the credit for saving the lime trees of Longfield Avenue – they were too close to the recently built flats (how inconsiderate of them!). There was a council officer at the time who seemed to be dedicated to the eradication of Ealing's limes.

Mrs Rayer: a lady of distinction who hid her light but, luckily, not all of the time. She and Nancy wanted an Arts Centre and Gallery more than anything (something that we have still not achieved for Ealing).

Ray Woollit was the best secretary we had in my early days but he moved away, to our great loss.

Edward Dulay was an architect of note (he was associated with one of the many schemes for Piccadilly Circus, fortunately not put into effect) and was one of the creators of the Spine Route proposal.

Alan St George was also an architect. He was great fun and also highly talented.

Sybil McRobie: our last member to go out of reach. She was beautiful, clever, witty and knowledgeable. She, Corinne and I attended every day of the 6-week Public Inquiry in 1976, and we were once described by the opposing QC as “the three witches”, a description which seems to have gone down in history!

Margaret Bailey: But for her, none of this might have happened. She was one of those who really got the ball rolling to found the Society. She and *Neil Martin-Kaye* were part the group that organised the inaugural meeting, and was on our first Executive Committee. She was an experienced member of the local Liberal party and was very kind to me as I was completely new to all kinds of civic activity.

Michael Barnes served as chairman and was an absolutely key figure in the Public Inquiry. He was at the time chief surveyor to the Church Commissioners. He was always a fount of knowledge, but also kept a watchful eye on youthful exuberance.

The Society's love and thanks should go to them all.

* * *

Why were the 1960s so important for amenity societies?

As Ealing Civic Society celebrates its 40th anniversary, it is worth reflecting on the importance of the 1960s in mobilising public opinion on the subject of planning and conservation. Margaret Gold draws on her professional knowledge of these issues to put the Society's creation in a historic context:

It was not only in Ealing that the twin concerns of protecting amenity and opposing large and insensitive town centre redevelopments galvanised local opinion. What was it that was so special about the 1960s – a decade associated with radical social, cultural and economic change – that fostered such a concern for the past?

While the legislative framework that protects our buildings and historic landscape can be traced back almost a century to the *Housing and Town Planning Act* of 1909, the measures were permissive rather than mandatory. What is clear from the analysis of the history of conservation by John Delafons (our late vice-chairman) was that there was a distrust of what he called the “nostalgic tendency” in public taste. For example, in a public lecture in 1946, Sir John Summerson CBE (one of the leading architectural historians of the 20th century) equated public opinion with “sentimentality of the ugliest sort and downright obstructionism”.

Over the next 20 years, the policy and practice of protection evolved very little, as a preoccupation with reconstruction and redevelopment dominated local government thinking. This in itself was one of the reasons for the shift in thinking that occurred in the 1960s: public opinion was indeed affected by the dramatic changes being carried out in the townscape as comprehensive redevelopment resulted in high density housing, large-scale shopping centres and traffic schemes that favoured the motor car. The new townscapes tended not to engender universal approval or affection, while the loss of iconic buildings in this process – the Euston Arch, for example – concentrated the minds of those opposed to ruthless redevelopment.

Organisations such as the Civic Trust (founded 1957) and the Victorian Society (founded 1958) were beginning to have an impact. The Civic Trust acted as an umbrella organisation for local

amenity societies and aimed to raise public interest in the quality of the local environment. The Victorian Society was pledged to raise the appreciation of the Victorian heritage and to campaign for the protection of threatened buildings. This was helped by a swing in 1960s fashion towards Victorian and Edwardian styles. The radical 1960s also saw an interesting alliance between those who opposed redevelopment on conservation grounds and those for whom property developers represented the worst expression of a growing commercialism and the power of capital.

Legislation finally responded to demands for greater participation in the planning process. The *Civic Amenities Act* of 1967 gave local authorities the power to designate conservation areas, and the *Town and Country Planning Act* of 1968 introduced county structure plans and more detailed local plans – giving local societies the opportunity to become involved in the planning process at the local level.

In Ealing, of course, the reforms that led to the formation of the Greater London Council in 1965 and created a new London borough incorporating Acton, Ealing and Southall, created a new setting for planning. The demands of a London structure plan and the local proposals came together to shape plans for redevelopment in the borough, starting with central Ealing.



The twin towers of Ealing Broadway Centre – the outcome of the campaign to reject the wholesale redevelopment proposals.

The creation of the Ealing Civic Society at that time represents a response to urban change and an upsurge in local feeling that was part of a wider movement to involve local communities in a meaningful dialogue with the planning process.

In the case of Ealing, as elsewhere, this was not a straightforward or quick process. It required tenacity and perseverance in the face of an intransigent council and developers. This is the point at which the ECS embarked on its mission to preserve the best of our urban environment while ensuring that new development improves the quality of our borough.

* * *

Planning matters

*We return again to the ongoing debate about planning. Our immediate concerns about the Arcadia centre are set out in the chairman's introduction. Here **Bob Gurd** and **Judy Harris** provide the latest on Dickens Yard, which is at a more advanced stage:*

Pre-application consultation is continuing for the development of Dickens Yard, following the signing of the legal agreement between St George and the Council. This took the form of a two-day planning event at the end of June, partly instigated by the Society following a similar successful event some years ago for the Taylor Woodrow development in Greenford. The event consisted of a number of presentations from the architects (John Thompson & Partners) and other consultants involved in the detailed planning of the Dickens Yard scheme. Because of short notice, not as many people attended as was hoped but most who did agreed that it was a well organised event with a fairly broad section of people from the neighbouring localities. One of the most interesting elements was a series of working groups to discuss a number of issues raised by the development, including retail, sustainability and transport, community provision (including cultural facilities) and design.

Discussion highlighted the concerns about a lack of community or leisure facilities envisaged on the site, a pedestrian shopping street in shadow for much of the day, and the proposed tower on the corner of New Broadway and the new Church Square which was labelled "an 8-storey helicopter landing pad". The 13-storey blocks of flats, with 50% affordable housing but with no usable private amenity space and inadequate access to Ealing Broadway Station, will have an impact over a wide area.

There was general agreement amongst those present that the Town Hall should be integrated into the site in some way so that its facilities could be improved in a once-in-a-lifetime

opportunity. The rear aspect of the Town Hall in particular is currently a mish-mash of building styles and later additions which could be much improved. We also feel that another bonus from this scheme could be installation in the Victoria Hall of the Wurlitzer organ from the Trocadero cinema at Elephant & Castle, which was until recently located at South Bank University but is currently in store.



The current rear aspect of Ealing Town Hall

To follow up the planning event, a guided visit to six major shopping locations in London was arranged by the St George architects. Lack of notice and a postal strike again reduced numbers to a disappointingly low level but it was an interesting and informative trip. (We will cover the lessons learnt from the six sites in more detail in the next issue of the newsletter.) Further discussions are planned prior to submission of a planning application for Dickens Yard, probably in the autumn. If you wish to become involved yourself, contact Charles Campion at John Thompson & Partners direct (020 7405 1211).

In parallel with these ongoing developments, as we have previously reported the Council has appointed Tibbalds & Grimley to draw up a master plan document for the centre of Ealing. Members of the executive committee attended an event in June where some initial conclusions on the consultants' work so far were presented, together with an indication of the future timetable. They are looking at the four main areas – urban design, retail and commercial, community facilities, and traffic and movement. The consultants noted from their preliminary work that Ealing lacked 'quality' retailing and the larger retail units which were now generally favoured by new retail developers. Ealing also

faces major threats from other retail centres, not least the White City development which is due to open next year.

The consultants are expected to come up with initial conclusions, including outline proposals for individual development sites, in September. The Society has offered to co-host an event, in conjunction with Ealing Community Network, on **Wednesday 5 September** at 7 p.m. in the Liz Cantell Room, Ealing Town Hall at which these proposals are due to be discussed. Society members are invited to attend.

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The Society's annual public lecture

*The end of June saw one of the highlights of the Society's year – the annual public lecture. Each year we invite an eminent speaker to talk to an open audience about important topics of the day, particularly as they affect Ealing and its residents. Last year we addressed the controversy over the tram. This year's topic, though less immediately focused on Ealing itself, is at least as important, if not more so, for the people who live in our borough – the problems of climate change and its future impact. **Greg Birdseye** gives the highlights from a very interesting talk:*

Judith Hann is probably known best for her long standing television role, but in fact was also for many years a resident of Ealing, and she therefore tried to bring her message about climate change home to a local audience. Judith gave a very informative and entertaining talk referring back to her time as a presenter of BBC's *Tomorrow's World* for 20 years in the 1970s and 1980s, which at its peak attracted over 12m viewers. The programme even then – perhaps ahead of its time – covered topics such as wind and wave power, the continuing growth in car ownership and use, and the importance of locally sourced food, as well as the research already going on at the time into the effects of climate change. She made the point that nothing of the current situation was unknown or not forecast then. The problem is that the research has not been acted on in the intervening years.

Drawing on her extensive knowledge, Judith expanded on the problems we now face: the evidence that the seasons are getting earlier and warmer; the concern that even with significant cutbacks in carbon emissions there are likely to be problems of coastal flooding and species

extinction; the link between pollution and increasing global affluence powered by industrialisation, particular in the developing world; the importance of introducing low carbon technologies; and the potential for reducing road congestion by transferring traffic from road to rail. She felt that government intervention and international agreement are the only ways to make progress. She also challenged the views held by some (e.g. as aired in a recent Channel 4 television programme) that action to counter global warming was either a waste of time or that there wasn't a problem anyway. She pointed out that 90% of world scientists are in agreement on the issue.

Bringing her message closer to home, Judith gave an account of her move from Ealing to the Cotswolds in the early 1990s. The family set out to put into practice her philosophy from the *Tomorrow's World* experience – growing as much as possible of their own fruit and vegetables, setting out to install solar panels and additional roof insulation, maximising composting, investigating production of electricity from water power and willow burning.

She conceded that not all of these measures are feasible in suburban Ealing. Nevertheless, there are many practical things that are worth pursuing, such as planting gardens with plants that are resistant to drought (!); reducing food wastage and 'food miles' by local sourcing as much as possible (which she thinks is more important than trying always to buy organic food, some of which incurs significant transport costs); home composting and recycling; reducing domestic energy consumption.

There then followed a well informed question and answer session covering topics as diverse as how carbon offset schemes worked to provision of cycle tracks to encourage greater usage (she pointed out that in this country only 1% of children cycle to school whereas surveys suggest that 30% would like to). Finally the chairman, Bob Gurd, drew the session to a close. He thanked Judith for a very entertaining presentation and encouraged the audience to buy a low energy light bulb on the way out.

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Membership

*We mentioned last time that Paul Fitzmaurice was hoping to stand down as membership secretary after a long stint at the job. We can now announce that the role has been taken on by **Christine Gratus** and **Deirdre McLellan** as a job share. They are getting to grips with the task, and as a first initiative make an impassioned plea to members about the benefits of standing order payments:*

Ever had that feeling that you should have paid your Civic Society subscription, but aren't sure that you have? You never need be in this embarrassing situation again if you pay by standing order – and it has benefits for the Society, too. Standing orders make it easier for us to keep track of membership subscriptions. There are cost savings, too, because we don't have to write and remind people to renew their membership, so more money is freed up for our real activities. So please, if you're not already paying by standing order, would you think about doing so? We'd appreciate it!

2007/08 Executive Committee

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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