



EALING CIVIC SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Working to preserve and improve our Borough



Founded in 1967

President: Prof. Sir Peter Hall Vice president: Corinne Templer

www.ealingcivicsociety.org

Spring 2010

Ealing Civic Society Events 2010

Joint Meeting with U3A

Thursday 22 April, 10.30 am
Liz Cantell Room, Ealing Town Hall
Paul Fitzmaurice will talk about John Quincy Adams and his connections with Ealing

Annual General Meeting

Tuesday 27 April, 7.30 pm
Liz Cantell Room, Ealing Town Hall
Speaker: Vivienne Cane-Honeysett, Chair of Walpole Friends.

The ECS Annual Lecture

Details to be announced

Gunnersbury developments: walk and talk

Saturday 4 September, 10.00-11.30 am
Small Mansion, Gunnersbury
Speaker: James Wisdom

The ECS Annual Awards Ceremony

November: details to be announced

Check our website for details and updates.

Town centre redevelopments

The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (John Denham) agreed with his inspector (David Richards) that the **Arcadia redevelopment scheme** in central Ealing should be refused. This followed the public inquiry held in Ealing Town Hall in June and July 2009 and despite support for the scheme from CABE, the Mayor of London and the London Borough of Ealing. The inspector found the development to be out of keeping with the character of the town centre conservation area and its listed buildings and would have adversely affected and overshadowed Haven Green. This decision justified all the effort that the Society,

conservation panels and Save Ealing Centre (SEC) put into the inquiry. But, having said that, Glenkerrin (who have apparently spent £10 million on the aborted development) could take a fair degree of comfort from the inspector's report: he approved the principle of rafting over the railway, the size of the retail element and opening up of ways through the development at ground level.

He was more equivocal about the quantum of development which would be influenced by height and density. In the light of this, Glenkerrin need only scale down the height and make the design more in keeping with its surroundings to satisfy a future inspector or Secretary of State. But whether the development would remain economically viable remains to be seen. At the time of writing, Glenkerrin have not publicly taken a position on their next steps.

In the meantime, the **Dickens Yard** redevelopment has been given the green light by the Mayor of London. Preliminary demolition work has started on the former Council Annex behind the Town Hall (the loss of which will be mourned by few!). However, SEC is currently considering taking the case to judicial review which could delay the start of construction.

Work on the redevelopment of the former **Empire Cinema** site remains stalled. Empire Cinema said in response to increasing concerns from the Council and local residents at the end of last year over the lack of action that the 16 screens were being redesigned to cater for digital projection and the work should restart in 2010. But there is no sign of any revised plans let alone any action on the ground. Sadly, we could be left with an unsightly vacant site behind the crumbling facade for some time to come.

The 2009 ECS Annual Award

The Society's annual award ceremony took place in Ealing Town Hall last November. **Greg Birdseye** describes the event.

The Society's award scheme, founded in 1989, is intended to stimulate interest in development and conservation in Ealing, as well as to encourage a high standard of architecture and design. Entries are invited from recently completed developments in the borough, and are judged by a panel of experts. This year's panel consisted of local architects Franklyn Nevard and Jan Bienkowski, together with landscape planner Tom Venables and Gavin Leonard, LBE's Chief Architect.

There were more entries this year than for several years, so much so that we had difficulty in whittling down to a shortlist. In the end, we selected a rather long list of nine, which meant a busy day for the judging panel. The list covered a wide range of buildings and facilities, including residential schemes, school buildings, a sports pavilion and a children's playground:

- **Devonshire House**, Ealing W13 – a residential/ retail development on Northfield Avenue
- **46 Egerton Gardens**, Ealing W13 – construction of a private dwelling to blend in with the existing street
- **Greenfields Children's Centre**, Southall – a purpose built centre providing day care for young children
- **King George's Field 'Playscape'**, Hanwell – an innovative and interesting playspace, designed by local school pupils
- **Mandeville Special School**, Northolt – a state of the art school catering for children with special needs
- **Morris House** in Acton – conversion of a former Morris Minor parts distribution warehouse for Shepherds Bush Housing Group (SBHG) to provide 'shared ownership' housing
- **46 Park View Road**, Ealing W5 – a Polish palace recreated in suburban Ealing
- **St Benedict's School**, Ealing W5 – infill to provide new classrooms and a multipurpose hall
- **Trailfinders Sports Club**, Ealing W13 – a new pavilion to replace one lost to fire in 2005

The judging panel spent a long day visiting the sites, assessing them against four criteria: design; fitness for purpose; flexibility to meet changing needs; and other factors such as energy efficiency and re-use of materials.

After much deliberation, the Society's 'Highly Commended' award was given to Morris House. The panel scored the development highly against the criteria and was particularly impressed with the way new and existing elements have been combined and natural light used to illuminate internal corridors. They praised the design for the generous size of the flats and for the way the external private and semi-private areas gave a spacious feel to the development.



*Morris House, Acton
(photo Greg Birdseye)*

The judges also gave a 'Commended' award to the new building at St Benedict's School. They particularly liked the way it enabled wheelchair access across the school site (previously not possible given the mix of buildings of different ages and layout). The new hall has already been used for concerts, receptions and weddings, as well as the more traditional school functions of assemblies and examinations.

The certificates were presented by guest of honour Stephen Sackur, current affairs presenter on BBC World News and BBC News Channel, who has lived in Ealing for several years. He then gave the audience an interesting and amusing perspective of Ealing, contrasting life here with other places in the world where he and his family have lived – Washington, Brussels and Cairo.



*Stephen Sackur presents the award to Paul Doe, Chief Executive, SBHG and Stephen Davy, architect responsible for the design work on Morris House
(photo: Robert Gurd)*

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Pitzhanger Manor

A new advisory panel has now been appointed to oversee the restoration and renewal of Pitzhanger Manor and Walpole Park and held its first meeting in January. Your chairman sits on the panel (in a personal capacity); other members include Ann Chapman (Walpole Ward councillor and former member of our executive committee), an architect and experts on the arts and finance. The nascent Friends of Pitzhanger Manor and Walpole Park is represented by Vivienne Cane-Honeysett, chairman of Walpole Friends which initially will be part of Walpole Residents' Association. The first meeting of the advisory panel was largely exploratory, considering the preliminary work so far carried out by the consultants engaged by the council on possible future options for the Manor and Gallery. So far, no decisions have been taken. If you want to join the Friends contact John Sears at 18 Mattock Lane, London W5 5BG.

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Planning matters

The most important planning news is the consultation by the Mayor on the **Replacement London Plan**. This is a large document with many policies that apply to Ealing as one of the Outer London boroughs. Ealing Civic Society submitted an objection to 45 different points, some of which were for support with objection to associated detail.

Central to our concerns are housing targets, conservation areas, tall buildings, architecture and the definition of metropolitan centres which is linked closely to retail floorspace rather than the full range of services needed in a town centre. A major problem is lack of

finance and sites for social infrastructure, especially for schools needed for the expanded population proposed in the plan. Transport objections included very limited provision for West London other than CrossRail. There is a lack of any proposal for a bus interchange at Ealing Broadway station and the effect of CrossRail on rail links with Greenford is not acceptable.

We objected to the planning application for Southall Gas works site which was refused by the Council. The Mayor has called the application in, and we will be making representations about the poor access to South Road, lack of open space, and inappropriate location of tall buildings. Public transport access is inadequate and there is a lack of leisure facilities and non-retail employment. It is a difficult site and the development will have to fund expensive remediation as well as cope with environmental difficulties such as the impact of the railway on the south end of the site and the central gasholders on adjoining uses.

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Twyford Abbey proposals

An exhibition on new proposals for the Twyford Abbey site was held in January by the current owners Twyford Abbey Properties Ltd. The Grade II listed Abbey has been empty since the Alexian Fathers vacated the site 20 years ago and is on the English Heritage at risk register.

The proposals envisage building a new residential development around the walled garden with the garden itself restored for use by the local community. The development would be intended to pay for the restoration and conversion of the Abbey itself into residential apartments for sale. The views of the public have been invited on the outline proposals presented at the exhibition. More details can be found at cgms.co.uk/twyfordabbey/dev/.

The Society's initial view is one of concern that any building has to be carried out on metropolitan open land but appreciates that this might be a price that has to be paid for saving the Abbey itself. However, we would wish to be reassured that the absolute minimum of land itself is lost to development in order to achieve the restoration of the Abbey.

Spencer Perceval - our third plaque

Last October saw the unveiling of the third Civic Society plaque in the borough at All Saints Church, Ealing Common. The plaque was in memory of Spencer Perceval, the only prime minister to have been assassinated. Perceval had been living at Elm Grove House on the site of All Saints when he was murdered in the House of Commons in 1812.

The unveiling formed part of a programme of events to commemorate the 200th anniversary of Perceval becoming prime minister on 4 October 1809, which included talks at Pitzhanger Manor and the Central Library, a guided heritage walk and an exhibition at Gunnersbury Park Museum.

The highlight of the programme was an evening concert at All Saints Church on 3rd October which was very ably masterminded by the vicar, Nicholas Henderson. The evening started with the plaque being unveiled by the special guest, Liz Perceval, the great-great-great-great grand daughter of Spencer Perceval. This was followed by Ealing Symphony Orchestra who gave an accomplished and at times quite moving recital of music. Midway through Steve Pound MP provided an entertaining but thoughtful talk on Perceval the parliamentarian.

The Society's thanks go to all concerned in arranging such a memorable evening and in particular to the John and Ruth Howard Charitable Trust for providing the major part of the funds for the plaque. We continue to explore ideas for further plaques and are always pleased to hear suggestions from members.



*Plaque to Spencer Perceval at All Saints
(photo: Tom Doran)*

During researches for the programme one rather unappreciated piece of information arose. Like that other eminent Ealing resident John Soane of Pitzhanger Manor, Perceval also lived in Lincolns Inn Fields, which begged the

question did they know each other? Apparently yes: Perceval had instructed Soane to convert his home at 59 and 60 Lincolns Inn Fields into one house in 1802.

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Future of the Civic Trust

The Civic Trust closed in April 2009. It had supported civic societies for over 50 years and its sudden loss caused great concern amongst the movement, including to ourselves. We and many other societies contributed towards funding the Civic Society Initiative which was formed in June 2009 to help find a way forward. The Initiative has held a number of public meetings and conducted an extensive survey to consider the way forward. It has concluded that a new national body to champion the civic movement and support civic societies in England should be set up from April. It is designed to be a small body, responsive to civic societies and be independently funded (unlike the Civic Trust which ended up deriving a large amount of its funding from external sources which could - and did - dry up at short notice). This would cost in total around £0.3 - 0.4 million per annum. It would require considerably more support from civic societies than its predecessor body which never received the full cost of the services from them. The Initiative has proposed that the fairest way to fund the new body would be by a per capita fee based on each society's membership. This fee would be between £1 and £3 per individual member depending upon the range of services provided. Individual societies are expected to decide how to raise the money but most are likely to consider raising subscriptions by a corresponding amount. Your executive committee has discussed the issue and has concluded that a new national body to succeed the Civic Trust would bring many benefits, in particular it would enable the movement to have a stronger lobbying and campaigning presence at a national level. There would be other benefits such as access to what other societies are doing and information on fundraising and legal issues as well as members' free day membership to National Trust properties. However, we think that it would be unrealistic to expect the Society to underwrite the full cost of membership without passing at least some of this on to our members. This would obviously have an effect upon our subscription levels (currently £7 pa for those paying by standing order). We intend to discuss the matter more fully at the AGM in April.

Message from your Chairman

There is of course very good news about our victory at the Arcadia inquiry but uncertainties remain over Glenkerrin's future intentions. The Council have remained tight-lipped, presumably awaiting Glenkerrin's response, but we know that they are likely to be encouraging Glenkerrin to submit a revised application. I hope that the Council will in the meantime reflect on how they totally underestimated public opinion against Glenkerrin's proposals and on the very poor level of debate at the planning committee meeting in 2008 which determined the application. The fact that central Ealing councillors -- those most affected by the development -- were banned from sitting on the committee meant that the decision was taken by councillors who had no direct knowledge of or interest in the site itself. The same applied to the Dickens Yard site decision. It must not happen again. Meanwhile, if Glenkerrin decide to go ahead with a revised development I hope the Council will learn from the recent debacle and encourage Glenkerrin to undertake a more meaningful public consultation process than they did on the previous plans.

I would like to thank those of you who took the trouble to send us congratulations over the victory which were much appreciated. In turn, may I thank those of you who contributed towards the fighting fund and took the trouble to give support during the public inquiry itself.

Although other ECS Committee members are standing for another year, Mary Sergeant has regrettably decided to stand down. We are very grateful for her help over the years and wish her well for the future.

Robert Gurd, ECS Chair

News in brief

Walter Bor media awards

These awards are presented by the London Forum of Amenity and Civic Societies, an umbrella organisation for 120 societies which work to save buildings and protect London's heritage. Awards are given for newsletters, websites, publications and media impact. We submitted our website for an award this year. Apparently we were a serious contender but the 2009 award, which was presented on 25 November went to the Hackney Society. Check out their lively website: hackneysociety.org.

Gunnersbury update

We are still waiting to hear how Ealing and Hounslow Councils plan to move forward to fund the renovation of the buildings and landscape of Gunnersbury Park. Ealing have pledged that they will find funding without the need to sell off part of the park for housing. It is still not clear where this funding will come from, nor how Hounslow plans to respond.

Meanwhile, the listed buildings continue to decay and remain on the English Heritage at risk register. The Friends of Gunnersbury have now written to English Heritage to request that repairs notices be served. They want a full Repairs Notice on the East Stable Block (listed Grade II*) and an Urgent Works notice for the repair of five more buildings at Gunnersbury. This would ensure repairs are carried out, if necessary under English Heritage's auspices, and LB Ealing and Hounslow, the local authorities which own the buildings, would then be charged for the costs involved. More details are available from the Friends' website at gunnersburyfriends.org.

New Arts Centre for Ealing

Ealing Arts and Leisure have been having discussions with the Council for some time over establishing a new arts centre in Ealing. The Leader, Jason Stacey, is very supportive of the concept. There may be rooms in the Town Hall that could be used for music and other activities. However, art studios and multi-purpose performance facilities may need to be adapted, so that they can attract a wide range of events and be able to fund themselves. If you wish to find out more information about the progress of this exciting project go to ealingarts.co.uk where you can also sign up to lend your support.

Subscription increase

As reported elsewhere, the Civic Trust has closed. We used to pay an annual subscription of around £100 per annum. Under the new arrangements proposed for its successor the subscription could rise to up to £3 per household. We may not be able to maintain our own subscriptions at the current level whilst paying the higher subscription. Your Executive Committee has agreed that there should be a discussion at the AGM about this issue. If there is general agreement to increase subscriptions a resolution to achieve this would be put to a future meeting which would lead to an increased subscription rate from 2011. Currently the household rates are £7 per annum (£8 if not paid by standing order); they may need to be raised to £10/£11 pa depending upon the finally agreed

subscription for the Civic Trust's successor body.

Keep yourself in the picture

This has been a very demanding year for the Civic Society. Our involvement in the Dickens Yard and Arcadia appeals has made heavy demands on both our time and our resources. Preparing and printing substantial documents and attending meetings eat up money as well as time. So if you're behind with your subscription you'll be receiving a reminder with this newsletter – please do bring yourself up to date. Our membership year runs from January to December, so you could pay this year's subscription at the same time – it's one less thing to remember. Or if you really want to save your memory, why not pay by standing order? You can download a form from the *Join us* section of our website or call 020 8579 0902 and we'll send you one.

There's a full programme of events planned for members from talks to walks, as you can see elsewhere in the newsletter. If you want to receive reminders about them, just send an e-mail to ealing.civic@btinternet.com and we'll add you to the email list.

Thanks for the publicity

We are very grateful to those shops that put our posters where their customers can see them in particular to Raj Newsagents and Munson's in St Mary's Road and Ealing Green Local, Farm W5 and Energize gym, all on Ealing Green. Shops which sell our postcards of Ealing include the Co-op and Present Company in Pitshanger Lane and Waterstones in Ealing Broadway Centre. Please give all these shops your support.

Are you hearing from us?

To help keep members abreast of issues with which the Civic Society is involved and to remind you of meetings, we occasionally send emails to people who've given us their addresses. We usually find that several are bounced back as non-existent. This may be because you've changed your email address since giving it to us, or because we transcribed it incorrectly from your form. So if you never hear from us, and you'd like to, please send an email to ealing.civic@btinternet.com or info@ealingcivicsociety.org and keep up to date.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**The 2010 AGM will be held in the Liz Cantell Room, Ealing Town Hall
7.30 pm, Tuesday 27th April 2010**

Agenda

1. Apologies for absence
2. Chairman's Report for 2009
3. Adoption of the Chairman's Report
4. Treasurer's Report for 2009
5. Adoption of the Treasurer's Report
6. Subscription level
7. Appointment of Auditors
8. Election of Officers:

Currently:

Chairman – Robert Gurd

Vice-Chairman – vacant

Secretary – Judy Harris

Treasurer – Huw Foxall

Membership – Deirdre McClellan/Christine Gratus

Newsletter Editor – Greg Birdseye

9. Election of other committee members:

Currently - Tony Miller, Corinne Templer (President), Mike Tiley (Publicity Officer), Paul Fitzmaurice, Margaret Gold, Philippa Dolphin (Web manager).

All current members of the Executive Committee have indicated a willingness to stand for a further year. In accordance with the constitution, further nominations for election to the committee may be made by members of the Society. They must be submitted in writing to the Secretary [Judy Harris, 72 The Knoll, Ealing W13 8HY] at least 14 days before the Annual General Meeting, supported by a seconder who is also a member of the Society. The consent of the nominee must first have been obtained. If the nominations exceed the number of vacancies, a ballot shall take place.

10. Motions and any other business submitted to the Chairman in writing prior to the meeting.
11. **Talk by Vivienne Cane-Honeysett, Chair of Walpole Friends.**