



40th year 1967 - 2007

Summer 2007 Newsletter

Ealing Civic Society Events 2007

The ECS Annual Lecture

Tuesday 26th June, 7.30 pm
Liz Cantell Room, Ealing Town Hall
Speaker: Judith Hann: *Climate change – an ‘inconvenient truth’ for Ealing?*

40th birthday exhibition and lecture

Week beginning 10th September
Pitzhanger Manor and Gallery

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 again welcomes readers to the newsletter:

Those of you who attended the AGM in April will have seen the presentation from Glenkerrin about their proposals for the *Arcadia centre redevelopment* to include bridging the railway line and linking up to Haven Green and Ealing Broadway station. We comment on these very significant plans in more detail below.

Other *major developments* in Ealing include the Dickens Yard site. The legal agreement between St George and the Council is expected to be signed shortly, which should enable the planning event which I referred to in the last newsletter to take place in late June. Other schemes in the pipeline are redevelopment of Westel House just along from the Town Hall on the Uxbridge Road, and 79-89 Uxbridge Road on the other side of the road. There are rumours that English Heritage have taken an interest in listing Westel House given that it is one of the early works by Richard Seifert (see Paul Fitzmaurice's 40th

anniversary article last time). This could lead to delay in determination of the planning application.



Westel House, Uxbridge Road

The Society has argued for a while that all applications like these need to be considered in a coherent way to ensure that they fit into an overall strategy for development of Ealing town centre. We are pleased to say that the Council has now committed resources to carry out a strategic study to achieve this. The results of the study are expected in the autumn – in our view rather late given that a number of the applications are already live, but hopefully it will provide a framework for the future.

On *street lighting*, discussions with the Council have continued over trying to find a solution to the problem of preserving the cast-iron lamp-posts which have been a feature of the Ealing scene for over a hundred years. We attended a

meeting in March with the leader of the Council, arranged by Save Ealing's Antique Lamp-posts (SEAL). I'm pleased to say that he agreed to put on hold the replacement programme for these lamp-posts pending further discussions on possible preservation.

However, he made clear that no funds could be made available before 2008/09 for dealing with this or any other related street lighting issues under the private finance initiative (PFI) replacement programme. This includes our other main concerns over the replacement programme in sensitive conservation areas such as Bedford Park and the Brentham Garden Suburb. We still hope that it will be possible to introduce lower height columns in these areas which will be more sympathetic to the architecture than the standard 6m column envisaged under the PFI programme.

We are also concerned about the columns to be used in wide roads in these areas. These are currently envisaged to be 8m columns with a simple post-top lantern, which are out of character with the areas. These have already been installed in Bedford Park and in part of Brentham. However, we have discussed possible alternative designs with the council (at a cost of around £600 per column) which involve "embellishment" of the columns. The picture shows an example of this (located in Twyford Avenue, Acton) which has been provided by EDF Energy (the PFI contractor) for assessment. Please let us know your views on this.



Lighting column (detail)

Finally, please keep your eye out for *award scheme* entries. Because of our 40th anniversary events, the scheme will be running later this year, giving more time for new and restored buildings and other schemes to be

entered. Full details are elsewhere in the newsletter.

I look forward to seeing you at the *public lecture* on Tuesday 26 June. Our speaker will be Judith Hann, of *Tomorrow's World* fame, who is a former resident of Ealing. She will be speaking about the effects of global warming, with particular reference to Ealing.

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Ealing in 1967: part 2 – the early days of the Society

In the last issue, in preparation for the 40th anniversary programme, Paul Fitzmaurice looked back to what Ealing was like when our Society began. This time, he talks about the build up to formation of the Society itself:

Our request for information on the early history of the Society has yielded some interesting responses. I am grateful to Joy Anthony and Peter Viggers for their memories, and to Colin Bradbury and John Templeton for the documents they supplied.

Exactly how and why the Society came to be formed seems to be rather lost in the mists of time. In June 1967 the Civic Trust gave a talk to Ealing Arts Club which seems to have been the impetus for all the interested parties to form a Steering Committee which met the following month at St Benedict's School. Prominent in these early discussions was the Ealing Federation of Residents' Associations – itself a fairly new creation as a representative body for all residents' associations in the recently merged boroughs. The inaugural meeting of the Society was finally held at the Town Hall on 2 October 1967. Several hundred people attended the meeting.

Over the early years, the first chairmen were rather diverse: Father Bernard Orchard, headmaster of St Benedict's School; then Brian Sear, a member of the Communist party; followed by Sir Eric Richardson, a leading figure in the academic world. There were over 350 members initially (compared with our present day 200+) and they certainly appeared to be very enthusiastic. What is striking is the number of people who wanted to serve on the Executive Committee – 25 as opposed to our present day 11. There were two treasurers (one for 'accounts' and one for 'funds') and five sub-committees (compared with our present day

three). Indeed the Redevelopment sub-committee had a total of 12 members

After much debate a motto of '*Space, Grace and a Sense of Place*' was adopted for the membership application form, despite some committee members feeling it was too pretentious. And even in those days there was disappointment that the Society was unable to attract people from other parts of the borough outside of Ealing itself.

Issues in the very early years included the (unsuccessful) attempt to preserve the old trees on the site of the recently demolished Castlebar House in Castlebar Road, which led to the Society's 'Plant a Tree' scheme. North and South Roads in South Ealing - the town's first social housing - were demolished despite the Society's protests (rightly) that this would destroy the community. On a more successful note, the decision of the Conservation sub-committee to divide itself up according to the newly created conservation areas can be seen as the forerunner of our present day Conservation Advisory Panels. The Society also devised a *Policy on Residential Density* which was a considered response to what is now seen as the often unnecessary demolition of many of the large houses in North Ealing.

Overshadowing everything however was the new town centre plan, first issued in draft in 1968. The evolution of Ealing Broadway Centre is a history in itself but it is sometimes forgotten that this initial proposal centred around a relief road to ease traffic congestion on the Uxbridge Road. This involved a partly elevated roadway known as the 'Southern Route Scheme' leaving the Mall at Windsor Road and following the course of the Grove, then across Ealing Green and along Mattock Lane, and finally rejoining the Uxbridge Road at Dean Gardens. Needless to say, much of Ealing was aghast. The Society, through committee member and local architect Alan St George, at least came up with a constructive alternative – what was called the 'Spine Road' to run adjacent to the main railway line. Followers of the current tram debate will no doubt experience a considerable sense of *déjà vu* in reading this. And traffic congestion on the Uxbridge Road is worse than ever!

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The proposed Arcadia centre redevelopment

The Glenkerrin plans are to demolish the existing Arcadia centre and all the shops on the north side of the Broadway as far as Sainsbury's, deck over the railway lines to link to Haven Green, and build a new shopping centre together with 4 high blocks of flats ranging from 9-26 storeys overshadowing Haven Green. The highest tower, opposite Ealing Broadway station, would be twice the height of Villiers House, the existing tall building above the station. There would be 700 new apartments (of which 15% would be affordable housing) together with 400 or more parking spaces and underground servicing.



Villiers House from Springbridge Road car park, showing railway lines to be decked over in the Glenkerrin proposals. The trees of Haven Green are on the left.

Representatives of the Civic Society and the Central Ealing Residents Associations met the leader of the Council, Jason Stacey, and councillors for the central wards on May 16 to discuss various planning issues including the Arcadia scheme.

The Society feels that there are some good aspects to these plans: for example introducing a new way through to the station from the Broadway incorporating a public square, and a new 'piazza' in front of the station (subject to a

solution about what to do with the traffic and buses on Haven Green and the urgently needed re-development of Ealing Broadway station!). But the meeting with the Council Leader expressed a number of concerns including the large number of flats proposed, the height and design of buildings, and their impact on Haven Green. We are concerned that this will create an unfortunate precedent for Ealing: the scheme could be the first of a number of high rise developments in the central conservation area, completely changing its character.

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Other news

At the AGM, some changes to the *Executive Committee* were approved. First, John Templeton is standing down as he is 'retiring' to live in Chichester. Bob Gurd thanked John for his major contribution over the last seven years, and particularly for his experience on planning matters. The AGM also approved a motion to appoint Corinne Templer to a new position of Honorary Vice President in recognition of her many years involvement with the Society (starting indeed in the heady days of the late 1960s described by Paul Fitzmaurice above). Corinne was very pleased to accept - although only on condition she would be allowed to continue taking an active role in the Society's efforts to fight for the best for Ealing!

The remainder of the committee was re-elected unopposed (see below) although Paul would still like to stand down as membership secretary as soon as a successor can be found. And of course if any member would like to be considered for the committee, then please do contact Bob Gurd on 020 8998 4417. In particular, if you know of anyone who would like to get involved in developing and administering our new website, expertise in website software (such as Dreamweaver) would be very welcome.

In his chairman's introduction Bob made reference to the Society's *Annual Design 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 purpose is to stimulate interest among the people of Ealing in development and conservation projects, and to enable them to recognise and reward new buildings,

refurbishments or restorations which make a positive contribution to the amenity of Ealing and its townscape. The Society aims to encourage a high standard of architecture, design and fitness for purpose in buildings and other projects throughout the borough.

Some eligibility conditions apply, for example a building must have been completed during the two years previous to the year of the award, and in use for its intended purpose for at least six months. Nominations must be made with the consent of the owners of the project. 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 look carefully around your area in Ealing to see if there are any developments which you think should be entered for the award.

2007/08 Executive Committee

The following members were elected to the Executive Committee at the AGM in April:

Bob Gurd (Chairman) 60 Beaufort Rd W5 3EA (8998 4417)

Corinne Templer (Hon. Vice President) 20 Mattock Lane W5 5BH (8567 5353)

Judy Harris (Secretary) 72 The Knoll W13 8HY (8997 8824)

Huw Foxall (Treasurer) 27 Regal Close W5 2SB (8998 6354)

Paul Fitzmaurice (Membership Secretary) 18 Elers Road, W13 9QD (8567 3024)

Mike Tiley (Publicity Officer) 30 Devonshire Road W5 4TP (8840 7447)

Greg Birdseye (Newsletter Editor) 9 Dell Way, W13 8JH (8248 3973)

Jim McLaughlin, 3 Florence Road W5 3TU (8567 1721)

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 3024, or see our website
www.ealingcivicsociety.org