



EALING CIVIC SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Working to preserve and improve our Borough



Founded in 1967

President: Charles Mynors

www.ealingcivicsociety.org

Member of

**CIVIC
VOICE**

Autumn 2018

From our Chairman

Welcome to the Autumn 2018 newsletter. This issue contains updates on Central Ealing items including the Town Hall and Perceval House as well as the Ealing Cinema (Filmworks) site, other planning matters, the talk in July by Val Bott on Gunnersbury, and the loss of LBE's conservation officer.

The Council's preferred bidder for the redevelopment of Ealing Town Hall, Mastcraft (owned by the Indian multimillionaire Joginder Sanger) made public through a poorly advertised consultation event in June their proposals for the new hotel which would be incorporated into the building. The most controversial element would be the insertion at the central rear of the building (the least important heritage element) a modern 7-storey block



Town Hall
Carbuncle

which can only be described as a carbuncle (pictured). The architect insisted that this design was put forward with the encouragement of Historic England but there is no evidence of this. We have

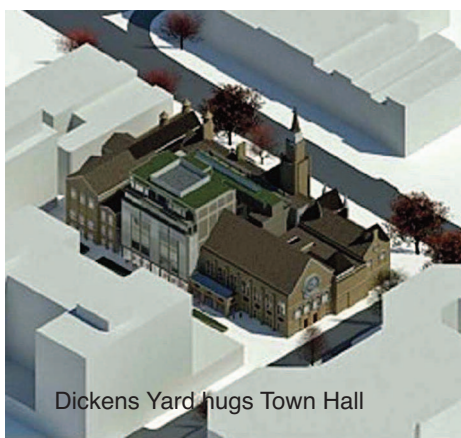
responded to the consultation roundly condemning the proposals as have many others. Separately, Ealing Voice, through its solicitors, has written to the Charity Commissioners asking them to stop Ealing Council from disposing to Mastcraft the Victoria Hall and Princes Room. These were originally built through public subscription in the 1880s and subsequently managed by a charitable trust independent of the Council which has since fallen into disuse (through neglect on the part of the Council). We agree with Ealing Voice that these parts of the Town Hall are not the Council's to dispose of as part of the deal with Mastcraft. The response of the Charity Commissioners is awaited.

Separate proposals for redevelopment of Perceval House by the Council's preferred bidders, Galliford Try, are also

awaited. One of the results of the redevelopment would have been provision of a new library to replace the existing Central Library in Ealing Broadway Centre. The existing library is due to close at the end of August pending the provision of a new smaller facility elsewhere within the Centre (funded by British Land, the owners of the centre) so that the unit can be used for retail purposes, no doubt at a more advantageous rent (the current rent paid by the Council is a peppercorn one but the annual service charges are very high). The Local History section of the library will be moved to much smaller premises in West Ealing Library and most of their archives will be held in store and therefore be much less accessible to the public.

Demolition of the former Walpole House and YMCA building, which form part of the Ealing Filmworks site, should have been completed by the time you receive this newsletter. The Eric Gill-carved foundation stones (pictured in the summer 2018 issue) should by then have been delivered to the Ditchling Museum in Sussex. We have been trying to open discussions with Picturehouse, who are due to run the 8 screen cinema complex from 2020, about their detailed plans for the cinemas but have so far been told that dialogue would be premature at this stage. This is disappointing since we were hoping that it would be possible to incorporate some of the artefacts which were retrieved from the old Forum Cinema during its demolition in 2008/9. In the meantime, a sales office for the residential

development has opened in one of the units in Dickens Yard with a model of the proposed completed development. Starting prices for flats are in the region of £600k.



Dickens Yard hugs Town Hall

Coming Events

London Open House: 22nd-23rd September: See page 2 for details

Tuesday 23 October, Annual Award Ceremony, Liz Cantell Room, Ealing Town Hall 7.30 p.m: Speaker Tim Dowling, Guardian columnist.

In Dickens Yard itself a controversial piece of public sculpture, pictured, containing words which are attributed to George Formby (who made films in Ealing Studios in the 1930s) has



been unveiled without any fanfare. The sculpture is difficult to describe but, judging from the responses in an Ealing Today public forum website discussion, is unlikely to turn out to be as well-loved as the horse and family sculptures in Ealing Broadway Centre. We were hoping that some public art could have been commissioned for the new square following a public competition but we were told by St George that this was not required under the original planning consent, although the

Society had certainly discussed the possibility with previous representatives of the developer. Nevertheless, we are pursuing with them whether this piece should have required planning consent.



Dickens Yard Ovoid: Artist's impression

Meanwhile, the controversial ovoid building facing New Broadway has emerged from its surroundings to reveal a very dominant and out-of-keeping feature in the townscape.

The owners of 9-40 The Broadway, British Land, have still not revealed their intentions for the site where they have been undertaking a strategic review on its future since last year. We have suspicions that the parlous state of the retail sector has forced them to rethink their plans for the site, possibly leading to its disposal to yet another developer (the third in over 10 years). Meanwhile, the site continues to be occupied by low-end retail units and increasingly shows signs of neglect.

Robert Gurd

ECS Annual Awards 2018

There is still time to submit entries for our Annual Award scheme for building and environmental projects that make a noteworthy contribution to the community in Ealing. The application form is on our website and the deadline for entries is 17 September.

London Open House: 22/23 September

This year over 800 buildings, walks, talks and tours are in the Open House programme. Order the guide to view the full building listings and find out important info about the event by going to: openhouselondon.org.uk.

This year's new offerings in or near Ealing include:

The Tower House

CFA Voysey (1891)

14 South Parade, Bedford Park, W4 1JU

One of Voysey's first houses, this studio house is different in style to the red-brick dominance of the Bedford Park suburb.

Woodland Classrooms, Belvue School

Studio Weave (2017)

Rowdell Road, Northolt, Middx, UB5 6AG

Two cosy woodland rooms made from cedar, with expansive concave roof, a wood-burning stove, large windows, skylights for natural light and ventilation and a barn with sliding doors acting as a gatehouse to a woodland area

Pitzhanger Manor

Mattock Lane, Ealing, W5 5EQ

This is a chance to tour the manor built by architect Sir John Soane in 1800. It will be open to the public in spring 2019 for the first time since restoration began.

Pre-booking required.

Ealing's Conservation Officer

As part of their proposed budget cuts for the coming year, LBE's Cabinet agreed at its meeting in July to axe the post of Principal Conservation Officer (in practice only 2 days a week) from November. We immediately mounted a campaign to seek support from a wide variety of local and national conservation bodies to protest against the decision. Historic England, the Victorian Society, Save Britain's Heritage and Civic Voice, as well as the eminent conservation architect Sir Donald Insall (Patron of the Bedford Park Society) and members of local conservation area panels, wrote to protest but their pleas have gone unheeded. Ealing joins many other councils in the country who will no longer have any conservation expertise – using government funding cuts as an excuse – which we consider a disgrace, particularly since there are so many development pressures upon the Borough from the coming of Crossrail (Elizabeth Line) next year and the Mayor of London's demands for more housing.

John Delafons Lecture: Gunnersbury Park

Despite fierce competition from the England v Colombia game, about 50 people turned up to hear Val Bott give the



Val Bott

John Delafons lecture on 3 July. Val is the co-author (with James Wisdom) of a new book entitled *Gunnersbury Park: the Place and the People* (Scala, 2018). She described the development of Gunnersbury from a mediaeval manor house, to Maynard's fashionable 17th Century Palladian mansion, its subsequent demolition, the construction of the two Regency Mansions, the arrival of the Rothschilds in 1835, and the purchase of the park by Ealing and Acton in 1925. We saw some beautiful paintings, drawings and maps from the book, and Val brought along two props from the 17th Century houses: some Westmoreland slate and a local brick. It was news to me that the building made much use of local clay, mined from where Lake Potomac now is. Since 2015 there has been considerable investment in Gunnersbury. The park has been renovated and a

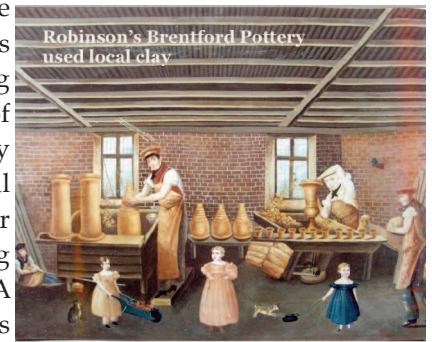


Nathan Meyer & Hannah Rothschild buy Gunnersbury, 1835

number of buildings refurbished. The museum has now reopened in the large mansion and contains material illustrating the development of the Gunnersbury estate, plus historical objects from all over the Boroughs of Ealing and Hounslow. A programme of events has been developed, and volunteers are needed to help with the museum. See the Visit Gunnersbury website for more information and join the Friends of Gunnersbury to support this valuable local asset. Val and James' beautiful book is available in the Museum shop, the Gunnersbury cafe, local bookshops and online.

Tony Williams

Not all is rosy with Gunnersbury: the weekend of July 14/15 saw crowds streaming to the controversial Lovebox festival, one of the events mentioned above, a large part of the park cordoned off by an intimidating exclusion fence. The Guardian review of Tuesday July 17th name dropped so many rap and R&B artistes that this writer was relieved to have been excluded. The planned sports hub is also not uniformly welcome and it has been criticised for its size and the bite it will take out of Gunnersbury open access land. – Ed



Robinson's Brentford Pottery used local clay

Annual Lecture

Crossrail - the Latest

Your Editor Tony Williams, Web Manager Philippa Dolphin and Mike Jordan, can testify that this talk on May 29, 2018 brought the people in, because they were running back and forth trundling extra chairs from the storeroom in the Liz Cantell Room, Town Hall, Ealing, to seat the overflow, reaching 100 attendees. Philippa and Robert Gurd (who helped man the back table this time) were signing up new members.

Vice Chair Ann Chapman took the chair and introduced the speaker who was to give us an update on Crossrail developments and expectations. John Goldsmith (Crossrail Community Relations Manager) is an old hand at this game, and has addressed our society on previous occasions.

The full service is still scheduled for completion by December 2019. The new rolling stock is already coming out to Ealing. The trains are light, cheaper to run and have a capacity of 1500 seated and standing passengers. He talked about the five Crossrail stations in the Borough, and the major engineering projects in the area: the Acton Dive Under and the Stockley flyover. The planned frequency of trains to Heathrow has already been increased.



John Goldsmith was geared up for the anticipated question "Why no escalators in Ealing Broadway?" He replied that escalators are all right in new-build stations, but in existing stations such as ours the platform width is too small for safety, and the traffic numbers do not justify escalators (*sharp intakes of breath*). The four lifts would take 16 passengers per (rapid) movement (fewer if a wheelchair is included).

Asked about provision for station forecourt pedestrian traffic he had to pass it to the station and forecourt management companies, not Crossrail. He also had to field thorny questions about trains stopping in Hanwell (not so good this year but more will stop from December 2019). There will be new lifts at Hanwell.

When asked about continuing delays over work starting at Ealing Broadway station John indicated that it was expected that everything would be ready in time for December 2019. However, it has subsequently emerged that the delays have in part been caused by complications involving negotiations with the various parties involved which have proved more complex than anticipated. This has had knock-on effects on the works which the Council is committed to carry out on the approaches to the station itself. Julian Bell has written to Network Rail expressing his concerns about the continuing delays.

Tony Williams

Planning Issues

There are many planning applications for buildings on main roads in the borough. Here is a sample from recent months.

Gala Bingo Club, High Street, Acton

An application to restore and refurbish the front elevation of this building and to install climbing wall facilities was granted with conditions. We responded neutrally to the application. While the proposed use is not the most sympathetic of a listed building, we welcomed its refurbishment. Providing that any alterations to create climbing wall facilities are reversible, we were satisfied for the work to proceed, subject to the oversight of the Borough Conservation Officer.

24-37 High Street (above the Draper's Arms), Ealing

We objected to this application to change the use of the building from offices to residential on the grounds that we



do not believe that it has ever been used for office purposes. Instead, the upper rooms have been effectively abandoned for decades. In addition, it is clear to us that the proposed properties will offer extremely poor living

conditions for future occupiers, especially with respect to acoustic separation and fire regulation. To our relief, this application was withdrawn.

35-37 New Broadway (opposite the Town Hall), Ealing

This is an application for construction of rear extensions to the first to seventh floors and for change of use from

language school to apart hotel. We objected because we consider there is already adequate hotel accommodation in this area.

We also considered that the proposed metal cladding for the northern façade opposite the Grade II listed Ealing Town Hall, and within the Ealing Town Centre Conservation Area, is out of keeping. The application is still 'pending consideration'.

96-102 Broadway (former 'Woolworths' building), West Ealing

The application is to redevelop the site to provide 120 flats within a part eleven- and part fifteen-storey building. We objected because it would involve demolishing the existing landmark building of over 80 years and its art deco façade. We also objected to the proposed height which would significantly exceed any existing or consented development in this part of the Uxbridge Road. In addition, the application presents a very aggressive proposal for the frontage, which would be an overwhelming 'cliff edge' on this busy high street. The application is still 'pending consideration'.

42-44 Boston Road, Hanwell

Nine two-storey residential houses are planned following the demolition of existing garages. We objected on the grounds of overdevelopment. The entrance to the development would be too narrow to allow emergency vehicles through. In addition, we consider that there would be inadequate parking facilities which would lead to congestion within the site. We also disliked the planned utilitarian building design which would be out of keeping with the existing Victorian and Edwardian streetscape. The application is still 'pending consideration'.

Jo Winters

Annual Civic Day

The Civic Day event this year took us on a visit to a 27-acre nature reserve in Perivale. Perivale Wood is run by volunteer members of the Selborne Society. It's not generally open to the public, apart from an open day in spring when the bluebells are out. The Society runs a wide variety of educational programmes for children and holds talks and events for Selborne Society members. You can join the Selborne Society for £10. The centre of activities is the delightful Bluebell Centre, a low carbon building which was constructed by volunteers, using recycled materials and straw bales. John Sears talked to

us about the construction work which was completed in December 2016. We then plunged into a meadow full of wild flowers and on into a woodland, led by Andy Pedley. To the sounds of birdsong and the woodpecker drilling, Andy told us about the many measures Society members have taken to help protect wildlife and habitats: nest boxes, bee hotels, encouraging wildflowers, coppicing, pond maintenance. The visit ended with tea and biscuits in the Bluebell Centre. Thanks to John Sears, Vivienne Cane-Honeysett and Andy Pedley for a very rewarding afternoon.

Philippa Dolphin

**For up-to-date information about our activities and events go to our website:
ealingcivicsociety.org**

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