

# EALING CIVIC SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

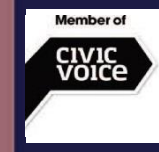
Working to preserve and improve our Borough



Founded in 1967

President: Sir Sherard Cowper-Coles

[www.ealingcivicsociety.org](http://www.ealingcivicsociety.org)



## Summer 2020

### From the (still Acting) Chairman

Welcome to our Summer 2020 newsletter. It is not three months since I last prepared copy for the spring newsletter, yet so much has changed and it seems much longer than three months ago. We are now in the third month of 'lockdown' in response to the coronavirus pandemic and our normal activities have been forced to radically alter.

But the Civic Society continues and I am glad to report that the Executive Committee remain well and we meet virtually via Zoom. Sadly, we have had to postpone the activities we would normally be holding over this period – our AGM, our non-virtual annual lecture and plans for Civic Day. We initially hoped that it would be possible to hold a postponed 'live' AGM on a date later in the summer, but this is looking increasingly unlikely. The Executive Committee will be considering options, but we know that many members welcome the opportunity to attend the meeting to catch up with other members in a social context. Let's be honest, most people do not attend an AGM to agree the new committee and see the accounts! A virtual meeting of any form may satisfy the necessary governance requirements but it's not the same. We will advise on our plans when they have been agreed. News of the annual John Lafonts lecture is more promising. As reported elsewhere in the newsletter, our speaker has agreed to deliver his lecture virtually.

Technical details are being determined, but we plan that the talk will be available to view live with the opportunity for questions, and can then be made available through our website for 'catch-up' viewing for anyone unable to watch live or preferring this type of viewing. Civic Day in June will come too soon for any type of event involving people getting together. Civic Voice, the umbrella organisation for Civic Societies, is considering whether some societies might broadcast short talks about some aspect of their work or neighbourhood. We may be contributing – see website for updates. And, again as mentioned elsewhere in the newsletter, we continue to

hope that our annual awards ceremony due to be held in October will then be able to go ahead as normal. We will be developing contingency plans in case this proves not to be the case. We also have plans in the pipeline to unveil another of our green plaques later this year, with another two being considered for 2021 (see article, p5).

Turning now to planning news. One thing that is continuing is the submission of plans by developers, with Ealing Council determined that the work of the planning team should continue as close to 'business as usual' as possible. The Council held their first virtual planning committee on 20th May, with a packed agenda. This was arguably foolhardy, as there were a number of technical issues; other authorities have taken the approach of a short and uncontentious agenda for their first forays into virtual reality. Hopefully, future meetings will run more smoothly.

One of the proposals up for determination at the meeting was the **Wiltren** development behind the Hoover building, with which readers will be very familiar as it has featured in several of our updates. The revised proposal, with a lower tower element, still attracted a large number of objections (including from the Society) on account of its scale compared to the low-rise surrounding residential area.

However, after lengthy discussion, the planning committee voted by a majority to approve the new application on the basis that the reduction in height of the tower addressed the main reason for refusal of the previous application.

Since our last newsletter, we have reported the decision by the Charity Commission on the Council's 'scheme' that would allow the disposal of the **Town Hall** including the Victoria Hall to a hotel developer on a lease. This has been a partial victory with, in a nutshell, the Council being given a year to provide further



reassurances and changes that would meet with the Commission's approval. The Friends of the Victoria Hall are currently taking further legal advice on how to raise their ongoing concerns about the decision and proposals.

Several other proposals that we have commented on at the consultation stage or registered objections to when planning applications have been submitted may appear to have gone quiet, but having contacted the developers, these are all still in the pipeline. There is no further news on **Perceval House**, where we await a response to a number of detailed points we have made to the developers following their latest exhibition of revised proposals. We have recently been advised that the proposals for land off **Stanley Road W3** reported in our last newsletter have been revised the changes, although we anticipate that it is likely that this will still be overdevelopment of a very constrained site. We understand that both tower blocks proposed for West Ealing, close to the station, are still actively being progressed and large development sites in Southall at **Southall Green** and **Southall Sidings** are also both progressing towards planning applications.

Following our update on 'Red Blocks over Ealing' in the last newsletter, you might be interested, or appalled, to see a new short film [Ealing – The Sky's the Limit](#), just released by the Red Block Rebels on Facebook, which gives a guided tour to the extraordinary number of towers already built, being built and planned to be built right across the borough – 181 in total so far. Members of Ealing Matters community group have been working under the Red Block Rebels brand to highlight the major developments which could bring up to 120,000 new residents in to the borough. These developments will change Ealing forever but many residents are unaware of the extent of this development. You can also visit the [Stop the Towers website](#) for more information on Red Block Rebels and their campaign.

Finally in this update, before you read on, can I make another plea for those members reading this in hard copy who have not advised us of an email address to please do so. If it is unavoidable that you have a hard copy 'for the record' or to read in the garden and cannot print one from our email, we can send a print copy even if we have an email address for you, although we would

prefer not to. We increasingly communicate through short e-newsletters to publicise urgent matters or updates between the main newsletters. Without an email address, these are not reaching you. So, to keep informed, please send your emails to me at [chair@ealingcivicsociety.org](mailto:chair@ealingcivicsociety.org).

**Pitzhanger Manor House and Gallery.** Another consequence of the lockdown has been the closure of Pitzhanger Manor House and Gallery just one year after its triumphant reopening and on the eve of its latest exhibition, which was to have been of Hogarth's Rake's Progress. Not only does this deprive visitors of access to this beautiful building, but in common with the experience of other historic buildings, it will have a significant impact on the financial position of the Pitzhanger Manor and Gallery Trust responsible for it. The Trust is encouraging existing and new Friends of Pitzhanger to renew their subscriptions in anticipation of opportunities to come. The Trust remains concerned that to many people, including long-term Ealing residents, the House remains a 'hidden gem'. They see it as imperative to raise its profile through all possible avenues and they have applied for, and been granted, planning permission for some large signage on the railings to the front of the house, and banners by the gallery entrance, advertising their presence. While we fully understand their dilemma, we find the signage overlarge and hope that it will not distract from the appearance and setting of the listed building.



**Timeline of Ealing Writers & Books.** Having researched the vast number of writers and books associated with Chiswick, the Chiswick Book Festival has now turned its attention to Ealing and is developing our own Ealing Timeline. I am pleased to say that I have contributed a few names that they did not have and I recommend this fascinating insight into literary Ealing, to be found on their [website](#). Civic Society members will recognise some of the names and titles in the banner below.

*Ann Chapman, Acting Chairman*





## The history of the Forum Cinema Ealing

The early Twentieth Century was very much the golden age of cinema building and Ealing had two good examples. The first was the Walpole Picture Theatre in Bond Street which was built in 1912 in an old skating hall to designs by John Stanley Beard and was demolished in 1981, although the facade arch still remains near to the site just off Mattock Lane. The former Empire cinema was built as the Forum, also designed by Beard with John Clare, in classical style as a reaction to the then very fashionable art deco style.



There is a [contemporary film](#) showing its construction that alludes to this point. The cinema was opened in 1934 by Gracie Fields whose film *Love, Life and Laughter* – made at Ealing Studios down the road – was the first to be shown. It was one of two near-identical cinemas built for the developer Herbert Yapp (the other was in Kentish Town and survives – now Grade II listed – to this day). Each cinema seated 2,175 on two levels and each had a large stage with fully equipped fly tower. Herbert Yapp assured its patrons on the opening night that great pains had been taken to ensure that their 'every desire and need would be more than adequately catered for in the new building: the Forum is the last word in Cinema Construction and is the result of the best combination of British capital, British material and British Labour!' The colour scheme of the theatre was restrained, carried out in green and gold with seating in 3 colours. Over the entrance was a tea lounge and dance hall (with a sprung dance floor) in which patrons could enjoy tea dances and be served with teas and light refreshments. Behind the tea lounge was a foyer giving access to the grand circle providing settees and comfortable chairs for the use of patrons. The owner chose the latest sound equipment produced by Western Electric, 'the pioneers of "talkie" equipment in this country'. The seating was upholstered with Dunlopillo cushioning "which repelled germs, moths and vermin". Over the years the cinema had various owners and changes of name and was tripled in 1975. The original "Forum Wonder Organ" was removed in the 1960s,

rebuilt by its original makers (John Compton of Acton) as a classical organ, and survives in regular use in the chapel of Wormwood Scrubs Prison! When it was briefly owned by Virgin (1996-2000) the cinema was refurbished and some original features reinstated. When subsequently owned by Cineworld it was part of a forced sale to Empire Cinemas, the new UK subsidiary of a successful Irish cinema operator, and there were great hopes that money would be invested in the site to improve the cinema. Instead, Empire decided to demolish the building to redevelop the site jointly with an Irish development partner. A revised planning application for a new cinema with 16 screens behind the existing retained locally listed facade, based on an earlier unexecuted scheme, was eventually approved in 2008. The cinema finally closed in September 2008, by which time it had become very run down, and was demolished shortly afterwards. Some plasterwork, light fittings and stained-glass windows were salvaged and placed in store and some original wooden doors were saved, to be installed in the Forum Kentish Town, replacing ones lost in that building over the years.

Unfortunately, the ambitious redevelopment plans became the casualty of the 2007/8 financial crisis when Empire's developer went bust, leaving the site in limbo for many years despite various attempts, including by Ealing Council, local people and the Society, to get building work to start. Empire gave many assurances that "work would start shortly" but successive deadlines set by the Council for work to start expired. Eventually, the Council lost patience with Empire and, together with a development partner (Land Securities) instituted compulsory purchase order (CPO) proceedings against them. In the meantime, the Council forced Empire to erect a temporary scaffolding structure to safeguard the stability of the retained facade. This turned out to be a prudent measure since the facade would remain standing in isolation for over 10 years. The CPO hearing took place in April/May 2015 by which time Land Securities had received consent to revised plans for redevelopment of the wider site, which included acquisition of buildings in Bond Street (YMCA and Walpole House – site of the former Walpole Picture Theatre). The revised plans – incorporating around 150 flats above commercial ground floor uses – envisaged a new eight-screen cinema block behind Bond Street rather than behind the restored facade which would instead be incorporated into residential flats with retail on the ground floor. The Council was granted the CPO later in the year and the land passed to Land Securities, together with the stored artefacts. Land Securities announced that the cinema would be operated by Picturehouse but sold the site to St George in 2017.

Further delays ensued whilst St George sought permission to revise the plans resulting in less commercial floor space and even more residential units, including affordable homes. These changes resulted in further increases in the height of the development which would now soar up to 9 storeys behind the retained facade. A regrettable loss brought by the scheme was demolition of the YMCA building (dating from around 1900) but the important foundation stones which included early inscriptions by the famous artist and sculptor Eric Gill were salvaged and placed on permanent loan to the Ditchling Museum of Arts & Crafts in Sussex. St George was granted consent for the revised scheme in 2018 and preparatory demolition (including of the YMCA building) was started later that year. Construction of the residential elements continued in 2019 and 2020 although the Covid-19 crisis has delayed work. The original cinema façade has recently been uncovered, as its incorporation into the new build behind progressed. Picturehouse indicated at the end of 2019 that they would not gain possession of the shell of the new building on Bond Street housing the new cinema until the middle of 2020 and that fit-out was unlikely to be completed until 2021 – 12 years after the original cinema was demolished ...



*Robert Gurd*

## 178 Church Road Hanwell

An Arts & Crafts house dating from 1912 in Hanwell on a large site (pictured) has been threatened with demolition following its purchase by a developer. The



house, which lies in Hanwell Village Green Conservation area, is classified as a 'key unlisted building' in the Conservation Area's character appraisal which means that it is a heritage asset and is worthy of protection. We consider that its status should be upgraded to local listing as a minimum and have asked the Council to take immediate steps to protect the house from demolition. The Victorian Society have also objected to the proposed demolition and, like local residents, are very concerned that its replacement could set a very undesirable precedent for the conservation area. If the proposal is given the go-ahead the house would be replaced by flats and two detached houses situated in the rear garden accessed from the front by a new driveway. The date for determination of the application by the Council is unclear given the current Covid-19 crisis.

*Robert Gurd*

## Ealing Civic Society Annual Award 2020

It is part of our mission to support good architectural and environmental design in the London Borough of Ealing. So in 2020, despite Covid-19, we aim to run our Annual Award. As always we need to have a good field of entries from which to choose our shortlist for the judges to review. Do you know of a project that could be nominated for an Award? The Award covers new buildings, renovated or remodelled buildings and open space schemes (such as parks, gardens, playgrounds,

landscaping). Projects must have been completed during the past two years, and have been in use since at least since April 2020 (ie 6 months prior to the date of judging). The deadline for entries is Monday 14<sup>th</sup> September, and judging takes place on Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> October. The [nomination form](#) can be found on our website. Please pass the nomination form to anyone who has a project that would qualify for 2020.

*Margaret Gold*

## Caption Contest

In our recent email newsletters we invited members to send us ideas for expanding the information we provide on our website in the picture gallery section. Currently, the caption for each image is generally very basic and we would welcome any more information that you can provide us for possible future inclusion. We have not been deluged with responses – is everyone too busy?

To whet your appetite, we have examples of pictures where the captions have already been updated: the former Empire (ex-Forum) Cinema and Walpole Picture Theatre, Bond Street (images 15 and 31 respectively). A more detailed article about the Forum cinema appears elsewhere in this issue.

The Walpole Picture Theatre, Bond Street, started off as a roller skating rink and ended its life as an auction room until it was sadly demolished to make way for very undistinguished office block (Walpole House) – itself now demolished ironically to make way for the new Picturehouse cinemas. Happily, the old facade was saved and rebuilt as a freestanding structure next to 2 Mattock Lane. It is due to be given a new lease of life in the Filmworks development when it will be restored and hopefully become more well-known.

Clicking any image in our [Gallery](#) pages will open a slideshow that displays each image and its caption. Captions should have no more than 125 characters and may be sent to [info@ealingcivicsociety.org](mailto:info@ealingcivicsociety.org).

*Robert Gurd*



## Plaques in the pipeline

The Society has now erected 13 plaques for distinguished 'residents', including a shop (Waitrose) and a bear (Winnie the Pooh). Our plaques are all green, apart from the brown pavement plaque marking the site of the first branch of Waitrose then known as Messrs Waite, Rose and Taylor, which opened in Acton over 100 years ago.



Moira Hopkins unveiling the plaque for her husband Nicky in October 2019

Our latest plaque was for Nicky Hopkins (1944-1994). Born in Perivale, he was a pianist and organist who recorded and performed on many pop and rock music releases from the 1960s to the 1990s including songs by the Rolling Stones, Beatles, Kinks and The Who. This plaque was unveiled on 19 October 2019 at 38 Jordan Road Perivale.

Our next plaque will be for the singer, Dusty Springfield (1939-1999) who went to school in Ealing. We also have several plaques which are currently under consideration. The first is for Ercole James Parlanti (1871-1955) who was born in Rome but travelled to London and lived at 2 Fielding Road W4 for much of his life. He worked as an artistic bronze maker, casting for all the top sculptors of the time. His foundry produced the Peter Pan statue in Kensington Gardens and the RAF memorial on the Embankment. The other plaque currently in the pipeline is for Sir John Soane (1753-1837) the famous architect who rebuilt and lived in Pitzhanger Manor, which has now been wonderfully refurbished.



Reflections of an Artist:  
Madeline Green, 1884-1947

We are also interested in Madeline Green (1884-1947) a figurative artist who exhibited widely in the UK and abroad. She was born in Ealing, lived at 40 The Mall W5 for much of her life and was the subject of a recent beautiful exhibition at Gunnersbury Park Museum.

Finally, we are considering producing a walking trail map of plaques around Ealing – '10 notable people we have celebrated', in order to raise awareness of our work in this area.

You can see all our plaques listed on the plaques page of the website, together with the English Heritage blue plaques and assorted others erected by different societies and groups in the Borough. If you have any suggestions for future plaques please let us know via [info@ealingcivicsociety.org](mailto:info@ealingcivicsociety.org). To qualify for a plaque the person must have been dead for 20 years and to have been born, lived or died in the Borough.

Unfortunately we do not have funds for the erection of plaques so any proposer would need to seek sponsorship for the cost of the plaque which is currently about £1,000-£1,100 for manufacture and installation inclusive of VAT.

*Philippa Dolphin*

## London Open House appeal

Many of you will have attended London Open House events over the years - indeed the Society was involved in the earliest years of the scheme to bring to their attention interesting buildings in the Borough and we have regularly participated in other events such as walks. All this has been done by volunteers based in their central office in London.

The Covid-19 crisis has hit the organisation hard and they have sent out a [London Open House appeal](#) to supporters for money and in particular are inviting those who have taken advantage of the free entry to properties over the years to make a modest contribution to help them through the current difficult times. The Society is considering making a donation to the appeal and we invite you to follow suit at the link above.

In the meantime, Foster + Partners have confirmed their sponsorship for Open House 2020. They will be working together to devise new ways of engaging with the public for the upcoming weekend this year which is due to be held on 19-20 September.

*Robert Gurd*

## John Delafons Lecture 2020

The John Delafons lecture by Harbinder Birdi on the Thames Tideway Tunnel will take place on **Thursday 18th June at 7.30 pm** as a live online event. Harbinder is a Senior Partner and Head of the Infrastructure and Transport Sector at Hawkins Brown. One of his major projects currently is the Tideway project. This is not only designed to handle London's waste water and improve the water quality of the Thames, but also involves the creation of new public spaces along the Thames. There will be an opportunity for questions and discussion after the lecture. Please go to the [Events](#) page of our website to check how to join this live online event.

*Margaret Gold*

## Ealing Filmworks

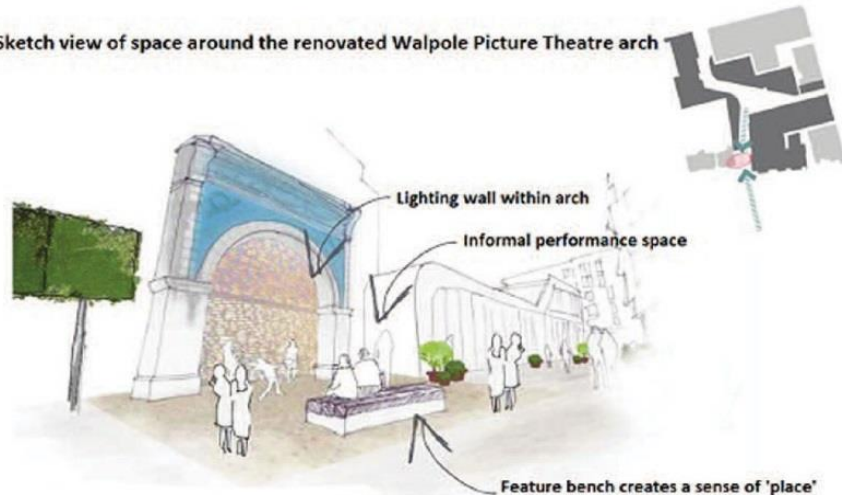
In our last newsletter we mentioned that we had been trying to make contact with the architects of the new cinema in the Filmworks Development, as well as a director of Picturehouse, in order to follow up our discussions late last year about the plans for the 8-screen cinema in Bond Street. We made contact with the architects earlier this year, at the start of the Covid-19 lockdown, to be told that they were concentrating on finishing another cinema in their portfolio which had to take priority over the Ealing project. However, given the delays caused by the crisis it was now unlikely that Picturehouse would be able to get possession of the new building until much later this year which means that the opening date will not now be until 2021 rather than this year as originally foreseen when the development first started. We have yet to progress these discussions but we are still hopeful that it may be possible to incorporate some of the artefacts from the old cinema (including light fittings and stained-glass windows) into the new building.

We have also been trying over some months to have a dialogue with the developers of Filmworks, St George, about the treatment of the Walpole Picture Theatre arch (see also the article on the images on our web Gallery page). They have come up with what we consider to be unimaginative proposals to overlay a perforated metal screen on to the central portion of the arch (currently rendered) with a seat in front and surrounded by a limited amount of planting (see image).

We suggested that they should consider alternative options, such as inserting a video screen into the arch on which pictures by local artists and other images could be shown, and additional landscaping, but these were not favourably received. So the original proposals will go ahead which will at least improve the visibility of the arch which has been stranded largely out of public view ever since the original cinema in Bond Street was demolished in 1981.

*Robert Gurd*

Sketch view of space around the renovated Walpole Picture Theatre arch



## 2019/20 Executive Committee

**Ann Chapman** (Acting Chairman)  
**Corinne Templer** (Hon. Vice President)  
**Josephine Barry-Hicks** (Minutes)  
**Josette Bishop** (Treasurer)  
**Paul Fitzmaurice**  
**Margaret Gold**  
**William Hardman**

[chair@ealingcivicsociety.org](mailto:chair@ealingcivicsociety.org)

**Jo Winters** (Secretary)  
**Tony Miller**  
**Philippa Dolphin** (Web Manager)  
**Jenny Gadsby** (Membership)  
**Robert Gurd**

## Coming Events

18 June John Delafons Virtual Lecture: 7.30 pm. Speaker: Harbinder Birdi The Thames Tideway Tunnel  
20 June Civic Day (details to be confirmed)  
22 October Annual Award Ceremony (to be confirmed)

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