



EALING CIVIC SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Working to preserve and improve our Borough



Founded in 1967

President: Sir Sherard Cowper-Coles

www.ealingcivicsociety.org



Autumn 2020

From the (still Acting but becoming a Fixture) Chairman

Welcome to our Autumn 2020 newsletter. Sadly late August has brought with it some decidedly more autumnal weather and as we move in to September it will not be long before we have forgotten the summer heatwave and are thinking about the need for central heating. Although fortunately there are fewer restrictions on our everyday activities than three months ago, we are still a long way from being able to take part in many of the activities we have enjoyed or to plan ahead with any degree of certainty, particularly if we wish to travel.

While others talk about having so much new spare time or being able to take up new hobbies and pastimes, those of us who are active in the Society have found ourselves busier than usual with no let-up in the numbers and magnitude of planning applications being submitted that demand our attention and no shortage of webinars and online forums to tune into covering all aspects of the Civic Movement.

As I reported in the summer, we had to put on hold our plans for the usual 'live' AGM and annual lecture, but we were able to run both of these events virtually. I am delighted to be able to report that both went very well, particularly the annual lecture which attracted an audience of both Society members and non-members. The AGM was less well attended (to the extent that it was not quorate and thus the formal decisions taken will be ratified by a future meeting) but still well received. Both events are reported elsewhere in this newsletter. Civic Day in June was not marked by many Societies nationally and we were unable to run a virtual event to mark the day – but hope to be back next year. Our next upcoming 'event' is Open House Weekend, to be held on the weekend of 19/20th September, when we will be more visible than usual. As

outlined on page 4 by Philippa Dolphin and Robert Gurd, we have been able to assemble a number of Ealing-based walks, some old and some new, that are available in self-guided form, so do take the opportunity to visit or revisit our Borough. Finally, in terms of event planning, we still hold the hope that our annual awards ceremony due to be held in October may be able to go ahead as usual. We have contingency plans in case this proves not to be the case.

The submission of planning applications has continued unabated during and since 'lockdown', without the usual respite over the summer break. Fortunately, the Council's extended consultation period of six rather than just three weeks for applications as a response to the Covid restrictions will allow more time for residents to review and, if they wish, object to applications.



Manor Road tower comparison with local terraces (artist's impression)

Since our last newsletter, two major residential development applications have been submitted - at Gurnell Leisure Centre and the Manor Road tower site in West Ealing. The Society has submitted objections to both these applications which, apart from the sheer massive

impact they would have, have a number of flaws which make them unacceptable. There have been very large numbers of objections, running into the hundreds, to both applications, but from past experience, we doubt this will influence the Council's planners and persuade them to recommend refusal. Any recommendation to approve should go to a planning committee for determination, and we now wait to hear when these will be considered.

Since last writing, the Society and other groups have also had further discussions with Vistry, the Council's partner for the development of the Perceval House site. These discussions did not result in any changes of significance and the planning application has now been submitted and is going through the validation process. More on this is elsewhere in the newsletter, as are updates on the Town Hall and Filmworks.

Planning Policy is also a major concern of government at present. A Planning White Paper has recently been released for consultation. The paper and details of how to respond to the consultation can be found at this link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/launch-of-planning-for-the-future-consultation-to-reform-the-planning-system>.

There is no shortage of reaction to this White Paper from various quarters, including from Civic Voice (to which the Society is affiliated). There is concern amongst many groups concerned about the built environment that the government's mantra of 'build, build, build' to meet new and increased but somewhat arbitrary housing targets, coupled with a relaxation of many planning controls, will have negative effects. Green belt and other open land may lose protection from development and the use of increased 'permitted development' rights will allow certain development without any planning oversight. These changes, together with relaxation in space standards are all contributing to fears of a proliferation of sub-standard homes, termed the 'slums of the future'. This is all deeply disturbing to groups such as the Society who have long campaigned for improvements to the built environment. We will be reviewing the paper in detail and responding to the consultation.

To end on the more positive note where I started this piece, despite the obstacles in our path, the Society has been able to continue with activities albeit in modified form and carries on our work 'to preserve and improve our Borough'

Ann Chapman.

News

You can see the most up-to-date news about Ealing and beyond by going to our [website](#).

Pay a visit to see the latest on planning applications and upcoming events

Civic Society AGM

Twenty-nine of us managed to turn up to our virtual AGM on 9 July. We had an update on the highs and lows of the Society's work over the last year, a plea for new blood, and used Zoom's voting system to approve the membership of the Executive and changes to our constitution, all orchestrated by our Acting Chairman, Ann Chapman and Secretary, Jo Winters. The highlights of the year included plaques for the mathematician Ada Lovelace and session musician Nicky Hopkins. The lows included the continued destruction of many attractive residential buildings and their gradual replacement by high rise blocks. Sadly many more blocks are planned, although we and other local groups (including the new Red Block Rebels) have had some success in reducing their height. There were updates on Filmworks, the Town Hall, Perceval House, 10-40 The Broadway, Ealing Broadway station and other projects. Ann passed on our grateful thanks to Paul Fitzmaurice, our local history expert, who is sadly leaving the Committee after over 20 years. Our Treasurer, Josette Bishop, presented the annual accounts which were then approved. Finally, Robert Gurd, our former Chairman, gave a short and beautifully illustrated talk about the many listed buildings in the Borough. There are 6 Grade I listed buildings including Pitzhanger Manor, the Wharncliffe Viaduct and 3 historic churches. There are 15 Grade II* buildings, but the majority are Grade II. The oldest of these is the Iron Age settlement on Horsenden Hill, and the newest the IBM distribution centre in Greenford, designed by Richard Rogers. One of the oddest, according to Bob, is the signal box on Bollo Lane which we usually have plenty of time to inspect as we wait at the level crossing.

Most of Ealing's listed buildings are in Bedford Park which was fortunately saved from wholesale destruction in the 1960s when the Borough of Acton wanted to replace them with municipal flats. There were several questions at the end of his talk and

Bob admitted when pressed that his favourite buildings were built in the 1930s and that he is particularly fond of the former Avenue, subsequently the Odeon cinema, in Northfields which is now owned and beautifully preserved by the Pentecostal Church (see picture above).

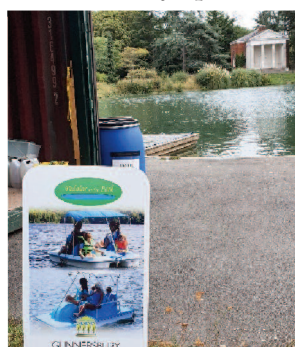
Philippa Dolphin, Robert Gurd



Gunnersbury update

In early March 2020 I submitted a fairly positive update on Gunnersbury Park and Museum. The car park had just been extended, lots of events were planned including Lovebox and Secret Cinema which bring in much needed income, the Sports Hub was about to be completed and opened, and a welcome grant had been received from Highways England. By the end of March the museum and then the café closed, events were cancelled, the car park then closed. Finally, on 29 May the popular new café was burnt down in the middle of the night. All the main sources of income for the park had been shut down.

In the meantime the Park became even more popular as people took their daily exercise there during the lockdown, walking, running and cycling. The flowers looked stunning during spring and summer, thanks to the hard work of the gardening team. But there was no income. A few glimmers of hope have now appeared. Following the café fire the Community Interest Company which runs the Park immediately launched a fairly successful appeal to raise money. The car park reopened and the Museum has reopened with restricted hours. Brentford Football Club Community Sports Trust



is now running small group and 1-2-1 football sessions for boys and girls. A new "Duck Pond local ethical sustainable Saturday market" is taking place on the 2nd and 4th Saturdays of August and September between 10 a.m and 4 p.m. A popular coffee truck and a mobile bar now operate on the terrace behind the large mansion which houses the museum, overlooking the lawns. Boating (Pedalos in the Park) has restarted on the round pond.



And finally, Luna Drive-In Cinema ran a varied programme of films from Grease to Parasite to La Boheme between 29 August and 6 September, in the south west corner of the Park. The target date for opening the Sports Hub is now sometime in September 2020.

For regular updates on the situation at Gunnersbury please see the Friends of Gunnersbury Park and Museum website or become a member of the Friends <https://gunnersburyfriends.org/> and also check the Visit Gunnersbury website <https://www.visitgunnersbury.org/> (you can also donate to the appeal this way).

Philippa Dolphin

Zooming in on the AGM 2020

July 9th was a first for us, a virtual AGM, using Zoom, seamlessly managed by Jo Winters. There were no technical holdups and the only tiny issues were around participants muting their mikes at the wrong time. Ann, Robert and Josette fleshed out their pieces with slides and graphics which were perfectly legible on my screen. We do not know if any of the twenty or so participants were using smartphones, but they would have had a problem making out the figures in Josette's Treasurer's Report. On my desktop they were perfectly clear. One very impressive feature was the online voting procedure - which was used three times this evening to approve amendments and the reappointment of the Exec Committee members. The two dozen or so participants did not constitute a quorum so the decisions taken will have to be confirmed at a later non-virtual occasion.

The invited speaker was Robert Gurd who entertainingly talked us through his selection of architectural and historical gems in Ealing with a slide show which proceeded without glitches.

There were some drawbacks: no mingling with other members glass in hand, no gazing deeply into each others' eyes. The restriction to members with online devices meant that "attendance" was less than usual. It is undoubtedly more comfortable sitting by your sofa than hiking off to some hall, but the benefit from getting up and about after the lockdown was lost. Acting Chairman Ann Chapman built in a five-minute break for participants to talk among ourselves using the "chat" feature but it was not much taken up so was cut short.

The general tone was amiable and polite and the abusive notes often heard in social media were mercifully but not unexpectedly absent.

If, heaven forbid, there should be another lockdown, this evening's experience suggests that a repeat performance is a viable option. Fortunately there will be a non-virtual location for the Awards ceremony this year: in Dickens Yards, Open Ealing October 22.

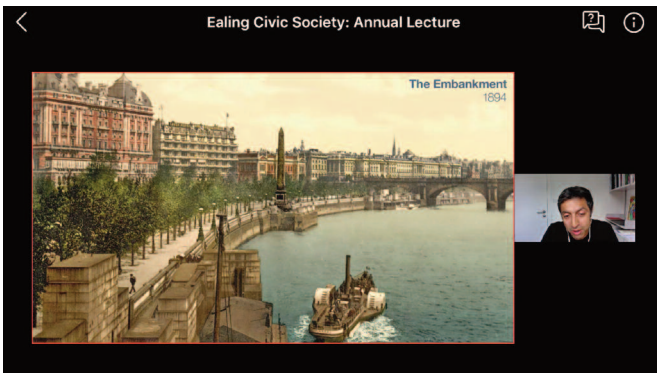
Tony Williams, Editor

Sorting out the Sewers: The John Delafons Lecture 2020

The Thames Tideway Project has been almost as complex and challenging as Crossrail, according to Harbinder Birdi. He has worked on both. Harbinder is the Head of Infrastructure at Hawkins Brown, and we are grateful to him for his fascinating introduction to this enormous project.

The Thames Tideway takes surface water and sewage from Acton to Beckton, connecting up to the old Victorian sewers designed by Bazalgette which were made for a city of 2 million people. When it is completed in about 3 years time the new sewer will be able to serve a population of 8 million, resulting in far fewer discharges of sewage into the Thames and less flooding.

The Tideway will create large public spaces along the Thames which are being planned by multi-disciplinary teams of architects, engineers, designers and artists. Each will be different and will reflect the local area. The new public realm at the Chelsea embankment, for example, will feature a variety of different planting on tidal terraces. Other spaces have sculptures, a waterfall, seating, performance space and design work referencing links to the Victorian past of the original sewers.



The picture shows the first shaft which is in Acton, five minutes from the Uxbridge Road.

Harbinder's talk on June 18 was our first virtual annual John Delafons Lecture. He certainly made it a success. If you missed it the lecture is now available on our [YouTube](#) channel. We are very grateful to Harbinder Birdi for delivering the lecture and to him and Hawkins Brown for making it available to us, and for their technical support with the process.

Philippa Dolphin

Walks in Ealing

During the lockdown you may have spent time exploring the local area as part of your daily exercise, but you may be looking for some different walks. As a contribution to Open House Festival from 19-27 September we are assembling a number of self guided walks in the Borough. They are being made available on our new Walks website page. Some can be downloaded and others, such as the Ealing Common walk, are available via links to other organisations' websites. The walks which are currently listed include:

Brentham Garden Suburb
Ealing Town Centre
Ealing Common
Ealing Green
Ealing Plaques Walk
Hanger Hill (Haymills & Garden Estates)

All the walks include maps and information about notable buildings and their architects, local history and, in many cases, people who have lived in the area.



Other events will be available across London as part of the Open House weekend: details may be found [here](#).

We hope to add more walks when we hear of them. Please get in touch via info@ealingcivicsociety.org if you know of other interesting Ealing walks we might include.

You may also be interested that Ealing Council has put together some excellent routes for "health walks" (maps are available for download [here](#)) to promote healthy exercise.

Philippa Dolphin

Ealing Town Hall

In our last newsletter we briefly reported that the Charity Commission had produced a report from an internal assessor on the proposals from the Council to dispose of Ealing Town Hall to a developer in order to transform it into an upmarket hotel. This report also considered the effect of such a disposal on the charitable trust set up when the building was erected which funded the Victoria & Princes Halls. Although the independent assessor took the view that the Council could in principle make the disposal the conditions it proposed would be very onerous and difficult, if not impossible, to achieve in practice. Before the summer break the trustees responsible for the charity (in practice the Council's General Purposes Committee) agreed a response to the Commission's proposals based on advice from Council officers. In our view, this immediately demonstrated that the Council was conflicted because officers were advising councillors acting as trustees when they should have been doing this themselves in a personal capacity. Not surprisingly, this process resulted in proposals which would be advantageous to the Council and certainly not be in the interests of the people the Trust was meant to represent, namely the residents of Ealing. The Friends of Victoria Hall, of which the Society is a founding member, has challenged this approach and pointed out to the Charity Commission what they believe to be deficiencies of the Council's scheme. We await the Commission's reaction to the Council's response to their proposals when this is eventually submitted (it had not been submitted at the time of writing). In the meantime, the Town Hall remains closed and unused.

Perceval House

The planning application for the redevelopment of the Perceval House site has now been submitted by the developers Vistry with whom the Council have partnered to deliver the scheme. This is proposed as a mixed commercial and residential development with Council offices at the rear part of the current Perceval House site with a customer reception centre and public library fronting Uxbridge Road. The residential proposals include a controversial 26-storey tower on the current substation site with several smaller blocks to the west stepping down to meet Craven Avenue with pedestrian access to Craven Avenue across the site from Longfield Avenue.



Perceval House: Uxbridge Road
(artist's impression)

Filmworks

There is little to report here except that Julian Bell (Leader of the Council) published pictures of his visit to the development site during the holiday period and confirmed that the cinema complex would not now open until late 2021 at the earliest, mainly because of delays caused by Covid-19. This timescale has been confirmed by the architects with whom we have been in contact who reported that the "shell" of the cinema will not be handed over to Picturehouse for internal fit-out until the end of the year at least. We have yet to discuss any substantive designs for the interior with them.



Filmworks: Mattock Lane
(artist's impression)

178 Church Road, Hanwell

Since our last report on the proposal to demolish this unique Arts & Crafts house, the developers have come up with revised proposals purporting to take account of the many objections to the loss of the building. They now seem to (reluctantly) acknowledge that the house has some quality but instead of applauding this and attempting to retain and restore it they go to absurd lengths to undermine its significance and to justify even more than before why it should be demolished! Although minor changes are proposed to the design of the replacement building and the proposed units in the rear garden would be re-modelled, the entire development remains excessive and would result in an unacceptable loss to the conservation area. Needless to say, we have sent a trenchant objection to the Council and insisted that in the absence of a conservation officer, they engage an unbiased heritage consultant to give an independent view.



Robert Gurd

Crossrail Update

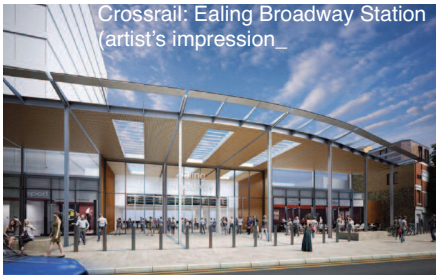
As you will have no doubt seen in the press, introduction of Crossrail has been delayed further until the middle of 2022 mainly, but not entirely, due to the impact of Covid-19. However, the delays have meant that construction work on various stations in the Borough, which was already well behind schedule, might now be completed in advance of the introduction of Crossrail itself! An update on the stations in the Borough is as follows

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Acton Main line: the steel frame of the main station building has been completed and contractors are now installing internal walls and services;



Ealing Broadway: internal walls and emergency staircases are being constructed as well as the redundant retail units at the surface level removed. The main framework of the proposed lifts has now been installed and blockwork is being constructed around them;



Crossrail: Ealing Broadway Station (artist's impression)

West Ealing: curtain walling for the new station has been completed and cladding is now being fitted together with glazing for the new overbridge;



Hanwell: lifts on the south and north sides of the track as well as a new lift tower to accommodate the latter have been completed;



Southall: various infrastructure works required to construct new lifts have now been completed and foundations for a walkway from the street to the station itself are underway. A new street level station will eventually be built and the old (historic) building will be decommissioned. Its future use remains unknown.

Source: Crossrail [website](#) which also produces monthly updates on the Western section stations

Robert Gurd

London's Open House

During the Open House Festival as in previous years you can visit people's houses, public buildings, offices, places normally not accessible to the public. But it is a lot more, that is why it is called a "festival". It is more varied than ever, and longer: it starts on the 19th and runs to the 27th of September. As the promo blurb puts it: it features *models to make, films to watch, buildings to visit, podcasts to listen to, an amazing book to read and events to attend. It's a chance to carefully and creatively reconnect with the city we have been locked out of for months*

And there's more, it's not too late to go to their [Open City](#) website to check out the full programme. Look on page 4 in this newsletter to check on Open City Walks - in Ealing.

2020/21 Executive Committee

Ann Chapman (Acting Chairman) chair@ealingcivicsociety.org

Corinne Templer (Hon. Vice President)

Tony Miller

Philippa Dolphin (Web Manager)

Robert Gurd

Jenny Gadsby (Membership)

Jo Winters (Secretary)

Josette Bishop (Treasurer)

Margaret Gold

William Hardman

Coming Events

19-27 September Open House Festival

22 October Annual Award Ceremony 7.30 pm (details to be confirmed)

Tony Williams (Newsletter Editor) 2 Nicholas Gardens W5 5HY (tonywida@gmail.com)

Contributors: Ann Chapman, Robert Gurd, Philippa Dolphin, Tony Williams,

Photos: *Perceval House*, Vistry; *Filmworks*, St George plc; *Open House*, Open House London; *Ealing Broadway Station*, Crossrail; 178 Church Road, p-ad; *Harbinder Screen*, Hawkins Brown; *Odeon Cinema*, Pentecostal Church; *Gunnersbury*, PD

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