



MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETINGS OF BRENTHAM SOCIETY AND BRENTHAM HERITAGE SOCIETY

Thursday 16th October 2008, 7.30pm, Brentham Club

Residents in attendance: 44 including Committee

BHS Members in attendance: 17 including Committee

Committee Members present:

Brentham Society:

Tony Miller (Chair), Richard Costella (Treasurer), Dave Hobbs, Pippa Kelly (Secretary),
Tim Llewellyn, Heather Moore, Martin Mortimore

Brentham Heritage Society:

Sue Elliott (Chair), Richard Costella (Treasurer), Eleanor Cowie (Secretary), Heather Moore

I. Pre-AGM

Talk by Christine Eborall

Sue Elliott introduced Christine Eborall of Ealing LA21, to give an illustrated talk on **Why Front Gardens Matter**. In 2005, Sue had participated in LA 21's first ever survey of the extent of hard surfacing of front gardens in the borough, which Christine had organised, and had been shocked by the results.

Christine reported that a quarter of Ealing's gardens were completely hard surfaced and six out of ten had 70% or more of their area hard surfaced. Two main reasons accounted for this: (1) hard surfacing was seen as tidy, low-maintenance, even stylish; (2) parking, and the resultant 'domino effect', whereby a Council-approved cross-over prevented others from parking, hence more applied for cross-overs. She outlined the problems caused by hard surfacing under the headings of: impermeability – hence rainwater run-off; the artificial nature of the surface; use for parking and its consequences; loss of vegetation, e.g. street trees and gardens; aesthetic appearance, and loss of boundary structures (hedges etc.).

In answer to questions, Christine confirmed that a cross-over would in theory not be allowed if a tree was there. Local Forums might have some influence – if the Council were to opt in to the Sustainable Communities Act, they could exert leverage. Only the GLA could implement the suggestion that people who hard-surfaced their gardens should pay more Council Tax, but there had to be the will to do it.

Tony Miller thanked Christine for her talk – this was an issue that would not go away, but Brentham was lucky to have Article 4 Direction, which offered some protection.

II. AGM

1. Minutes of the 2007 AGM and Matters Arising:

The minutes had been distributed to those present. There were no matters arising, and their acceptance as a true record of the meeting was proposed by Alan Henderson and seconded by Sue Elliott.

2. Brentham Society (BS) Chair's Report – Tony Miller

Highlights:

Key concerns in 2008 had as usual revolved round planning and the struggle to preserve the character of the conservation area. The new Article 4 Direction, which strengthens the restrictions on changes to the character of the area, in particular the surfacing of front gardens, had helped to clarify the rules, though more remained to be done. It was also good to see completion of the work to refurbish the Brentham Club – one of our two Grade II listed buildings.

Membership:

This was down slightly on last year: 49% of Brentham households were now paid up (compared with 50% in 2007), representing 336 members (344 in 2007). In addition, there were nine Friends, living away from the estate.

Donations were up slightly – 113 gave extra contributions totalling £442. This represented 34% of members, compared with 107 (31%) in 2007. The Friends gave a further £34. Thanks were due to all who gave extra donations, keeping membership fees down to the bargain level of £2.

Tony expressed his thanks to the collectors, to Tim Llewellyn who took over as Membership Secretary, and to Steve Jenkins who took over co-ordination of the street reps from Katrin and Kim last year. Unfortunately, due to changes in his personal circumstances, Steve was unable to continue this year, so a replacement was urgently needed. An organising secretary was also needed to work alongside Pippa Kelly, who performs the role of minutes secretary.

Newsletter and Communications:

Newsletter: Michael McCarthy had continued to produce “Brentham News” in the full A4 colour format, with periodic ‘News Updates’. The BS was grateful to him and to Grimshaws for their sponsorship; ways of maintaining the quality of the colour document while controlling the cost were being sought. Contributions to Michael about news and events were still always welcome.

Noticeboards: Thanks were due to David Denscombe, who had looked after posting of notices advertising not only BS and BHS events but also local events of interest to residents, and to Tony Mackerzie, who had continued to check the condition of the boards and refurbish them where necessary.

Website: Wendy Sender had continued to oversee the website. Once we had made progress on a new planning guide, it was hoped to add this too.

Planning and Environment:

Planning applications continued to be handled by Heather Moore in conjunction with the Conservation Panel. A conservation area assessment had been approved by the Council during the year, but unfortunately we had still not been able to get work going again on the new Policy and Design Guide. It was hoped to get some movement quickly in the coming year. This was particularly important in the light of new government rules on planning; Brentham's special position as an area with an Article 4 direction needs to be better explained to residents.

The Council's enforcement section had taken action on various breaches of regulations, though it remained difficult to get every case dealt with promptly. It had been possible to avoid potential problems in several, though not all cases through better pre-application discussions with householders and their builders or advisors.

Events and Activities:

The May Day procession had successfully managed to get round the course in better weather than last year, but just as the maypole dancing began the heavens opened and everyone had to make a rapid retreat to the Club. Luckily the new facilities – and sterling efforts by the staff – proved equal to the task of coping with the unexpected early influx of wet and disappointed children and spectators. The future of the whole event, however, still depended on the few volunteers who constitute the *ad hoc* committee, and they still needed more support to ensure future survival.

There had been the usual full range of events, from Carol Singing to the annual Family Cycle. The Strawberry Tea continued to be a high point in the local calendar, with a full attendance, including Steve Pound MP, the Mayor and local councillors. Thanks were due once again to Barbara Murray.

Brentham Open Garden Day was its usual success, thanks to careful organisation by the garden group. In ideal weather, there was a good number of visitors to the gardens, several of them open for the first time. Over £535 was donated to Ealing Samaritans from the proceeds. He expressed thanks to all those who ran the day – too numerous to mention – and especially to those who opened their gardens and provided teas.

Thanks were also due to Jackie Moss and Clive Hicks for their contribution to the tours round the estate for Open House Day.

Relations with local organisations:

The BS continued to work for closer co-operation with the Pitshanger Community Association and the Brentham Club. There was now a liaison group, which Tony chaired, concerned with furthering our mutual interests. A wine tasting evening had successfully raised over £570 for a fund to replace the Club front door – pictures of the design were on display.

Projects:

Progress had been made on things noted last year – in particular:

Street signs: More had been refurbished, thanks to Graham Fox and Tony Mackersie, and some of the missing ones would be replaced.

New merchandise: This had proved very popular and continued to sell well.

Street lighting renewal had been the subject of protracted discussions with the Council; a final resolution was still awaited.

“Streets for people” and 20 mph zone: The Pitshanger Lane scheme had at last moved to the final design stage, and implementation was expected to begin in the spring.

Arcadia centre: Last year, the AGM agreed that the BS should affiliate to Save Ealing Centre action group, aimed at getting improvements in the planned town centre developments. SEC now had a formal constitution (on display) and the Committee felt it right that we should vote again to confirm our membership and authorise a further contribution if required. A formal resolution would be moved.

Future work:

The Committee remained open to suggestions. As before, all work depends on members’ help, and keeping the BS going required full participation from residents.

3. Brentham Heritage Society (BHS) Chair’s Report – Sue Elliott

Sue introduced the current BHS committee and explained that the BHS was the charitable arm of the BS, whose main object was to inform and educate the public about the unique architectural and social heritage of Brentham. This was done in a variety of ways, including Publications (the Brentham book, DVD, facsimile), Education (visits, contacts with other Garden Suburbs, Schools Pack, Open House) and Special projects (Blue Plaque, architecture guide). She was pleased to report that photos from the Brentham book featured in a large framed panel in the Wetherspoons pub in the Mall, headed ‘An Experiment in Urban Living’.

The main priority for the year had been to produce a reference guide for residents about the architectural features of Brentham houses. The BHS had commissioned James Russiello, a post-graduate conservation architecture student, who had worked under the supervision of conservation architect and Brentham resident Ian Brocklebank over six months, based in the Tower Room of the Club. He had now taken up a job in Belfast but had left us a wealth of material, including over 2000 computer files of every kind of plan in the Brentham Archive: houses, road layouts, houses never built, small buildings, and features like larders and coal holes. These were supplemented with his own photos that will add to the Virtual Tour on the website. Importantly, he had also produced an analysis of every house by architect, building year, and character type, with a commentary about its particular architectural features, and then a breakdown of those features – windows, dormers, chimneys, rainwater goods, and of course doors.

While the material was valuable reference information in its own right, it now had to be edited into a user-friendly form, which could be available on disc, online or in hard copy, so that residents could use it for easy reference when having work done on their houses or if they just wanted to know more about its architecture. This should be ready during next year.

As time was short, Sue limited her report on other activities to a mention of the application for a Blue Plaque for Fred Perry to be installed on the front of 223 Pitshanger Lane. We were not eligible till 2009 (his 100th anniversary) but were reasonably confident of getting approval. Although the actual installation might be delayed, we wanted to make most of the anniversary year. A major biography by Jon Henderson, tennis correspondent of *The Observer*, was coming out and joint events would be held with the Brentham Club. There was already a photograph of Fred Perry on the wall of the new Club coffee lounge and it was planned to approach Andy Murray to unveil the plaque! She looked forward to making most of the opportunities offered by 2009.

4. Treasurer's Report (Richard Costella)

Copies of the Accounts had been distributed to those present.

(a) Brentham Society

Income from subscriptions was marginally down on the previous year, but overall the finances remained strong. The surplus of £1,373 included £538 from the grass-cutting of Ludlow-Denison Green; without this the surplus was marginally down on last year. Richard pointed out that income from two events (the Garden Day and Carol Singing) was ring-fenced as donations.

(b) Brentham Heritage Society

Sales of the Brentham book had continued to trickle through, but DVD sales had reduced. The main cost had been for the Brentham architecture guide, the majority of which was paid during the year. Although the BHS accounts showed a net deficit for the year, this had been planned and the reserves remained adequate.

Richard thanked Andy Akerman of Meadvale Road for auditing both sets of accounts. Their adoption was proposed by Bevan Jones, seconded by Martin Mortimore and agreed nem con.

5. Special Resolution – Save Ealing Centre

Tony Miller proposed the resolution that:

This meeting of the Brentham Society agrees with the aims and constitution of Save Ealing's Centre (SEC) and confirms that the Society should continue to be an associated member of SEC. It authorises the BS Committee to take such action as it considers appropriate to further the work of SEC, including the donation of a reasonable sum towards SEC's expenses, such donation however not to exceed £100 in the next 12 months.

This was agreed by those present.

6. Election of Committees 2008-09:

(a) Brentham Society

The Constitution allows for eight members and up to two co-opted members. Steve Jenkins had been co-opted onto the Committee as Street Rep. Co-ordinator during the year, but had since resigned. The following members were willing to stand again: Dave Hobbs, Pippa Kelly (Secretary), Tim Llewellyn, Tony Miller, Heather Moore and Martin Mortimore.

David Ballard of 10 Brentham Way had been nominated by Tony Miller, seconded by Tim Llewellyn. Alan Henderson of 47 Meadvale Road had been nominated by Heather Moore, seconded by Tony Miller. No other nominations for new members had been received.

Separate votes were taken for each nominee and they were duly elected. Election en bloc of the remaining members of the committee was proposed by Bevan Jones and unanimously agreed.

(b) Brentham Heritage Society

The Constitution allows for between four and nine members. The following members were willing to stand again: Sue Elliott (Chair), Eleanor Cowie (Secretary), Richard Costella and Heather Moore.

David Ballard of 10 Brentham Way had been nominated by Sue Elliott, seconded by Richard Costella. Martin Mortimore of 54 Fowlers Walk, currently a co-opted member of the committee, had been nominated by Heather Moore, seconded by Bevan Jones.

BHS Members were asked to vote separately in respect of these nominations and en bloc for those Committee members standing again and all were duly elected.

7. Garden Awards

Krys Mackersie announced the winners of the three awards, for the Spring, Summer and Autumn seasons:

Spring Award: 119 Fowlers Walk

Runners-up: 32 Brunner Rd, 17 Woodfield Avenue and 20 Winscombe Crescent

Summer Award: 46 Meadvale Road

Runners-up: 18 Brentham Way, 22 Denison Road and 43 Woodfield Road.

Autumn Award: 47 Meadvale Road

Runners-up: 29 Denison Road, 9 Denison Road and 123 Fowlers Walk

Rose Bowl for overall excellence: 2 Ruskin Gardens.

Tony Miller thanked Brian Vaughan for judging the gardens for the last time, assisted by Pam Webster, Mike Gaunt and Maureen Monahan. Next year Sally Kelly would assist, with others in a team.

8. Members' Questions

In answer to a question about Neighbourhood Watch, Tony confirmed that the police Safer Neighbourhood Team was setting up schemes across the whole of the area.

As there was no other business, the meeting closed at 10pm.