

Brentham Garden Estate, Ealing

*This version of Brentham News has been adapted for the Brentham website.
Private telephone numbers and addresses and commercial ads have been deleted.*

Anniversary Issue 150

Welcome to 2004 and Happy Birthday to Brentham News – we're 150 today and celebrating with another colour edition! Under a succession of dedicated Editors, the News has grown from humble Roneo-ed beginnings in 1970 to the professional, colour extravaganza you see today. He usually remains discreetly anonymous, but Editor Alan Henderson has worked wonders during his 5-year tenure, introducing new features like Brenthamites Revisited and From the Archives. Alan now wants to take more of a back seat, so Michael McCarthy has stepped up to the plate as Assistant Editor and we've recruited an informal editorial board to help out.

As we move hopefully towards spring and better weather, there's lots to look forward to and a full calendar of events is planned for the coming months (see insert). An innovation this year is the first-ever May Ball, a slap-up posh-frocks 'bit of a do' being organised jointly by the Brentham Club, the Brentham Society and the Pitshanger Community Association - put Saturday May 1st in your diary NOW. We are working closely with the Club to revitalise it as a real focus for Brentham and the surrounding area and this event is the first fruit of a promising collaboration.

Sue Elliott

A Former Chairman of the Brentham Society Reminisces...

Looking back over the 35 years since the formation of the Brentham Society, I feel great satisfaction at the way it has developed from its early days to the well-regarded organisation it is today. We have been fortunate in having highly-motivated, committed people willing to take over the reins, and provided that such people continue to come forward the Brentham Society will remain a force for good.

When we started, conservation was a new concept and we had to convince people that it was sound and did not equate to stagnation. The do-it-yourself boom was in full swing and commercial pressures and fashion encouraged people to do inappropriate things to their windows, doors, trees etc. "Maintenance-free" plastic framed, large-paned windows were the in-

The Brentham Club, The Brentham Society
& The Pitshanger Community Association
announce Brentham's first



MAY
BALL



A splendid evening of food, music,
dancing, entertainment and good company
Saturday May 1st

Grand Marquee, The Brentham Club
Details available shortly

Issue 150 gives us the opportunity to look back to earlier years of the Brentham Society. Three of my predecessors as Chair write in this edition, including Crispian Strachan, now Chief Constable of Northumbria Police.

thing and the salesmen were very persistent. We had many battles to fight.



There is still a need to be vigilant but I think it is safe to say that nobody living in Brentham today can fail to be aware that this is a special place and that alterations have to be done in an appropriate way.

I remember our early newsletters, a single page (typed by Barbara on an ancient typewriter with clogged-up letters and a dodgy ribbon). Now we have attractive, high-quality, multi-page newsletters - with photographs in colour! Clear lines of communication are vital and the present committee does this very well.

I do like the fact that the Committee continues to promote activities involving members. (Many years ago Tony Oliver and I organised a weekend cruise to Esbjerg in Denmark in a DFDS ferry from Harwich - but that's another story.)

In conclusion, Brentham remains an attractive place to live, thanks largely to the sympathetic application of the principles of Conservation. The Brentham Society is in good hands. Well done!

Brian Fallon

Some home thoughts on Brentham from the far north

In November 1976 a young police sergeant and his wife scraped together a £1,500 deposit to buy 28 Fowlers Walk for £15,000, which was just above what the building society wanted to lend us. We made it, and never regretted it, even when Brian Fallon came to call in response to a letter of some sort which I had written to him and "conned" me into what became about 15 years' involvement with the Brentham Society. We moved to 26 Holyoake Walk in 1982, where a family of four children certainly packed out the house - thank goodness for the secretly huge back garden!

We had a good chatting position on the route to the shops as we took out a front driveway, reglazed windows (including the WW2 damage

from the North View V2 rocket), and just enjoyed the sunshine, quality of life and quality of neighbours on the Brentham Estate.

We were there for some historic bits, too: the year that the May Day procession changed the law banning processions at a time of tension, and was uniquely allowed; and of course the great gale on the famous night of "no storm" from Michael Fish. I think every tree in Holyoake Walk came down, and the Brentham Society led in the replanting of trees, as it had done for less memorable jobs such as the founding of Neighbourhood Watch and the provision of rubbish skips around the estate from time to time.



We had to leave in 1993, but we still have friends on Brentham and it is still a good way to live, in a village community with town and city amenities to hand. Long may Brentham prosper and set an example to others!

Crispian Strachan



The Origins of the Brentham Society

In the mid-sixties, with a family starting to arrive, architect Clive Hicks needed a house but saw little chance of obtaining one he could respect until he saw an "Architectural Review" article on Brentham by Margaret Tims, who assisted Nikolaus Pevsner on his "Buildings of England" series. Houses on the estate were being advertised, and he bought one in Brentham Way.

Eventually Clive visited all the housing developments in Britain which were ancestors, or descendants, of Brentham, and accumulated hundreds of slides of the houses. With that background it was inevitable that he found himself on the committee of Ealing Civic Society, and when the Civic Amenities Act arrived he visited all the proposed Ealing Conservation Areas, and then found himself on the Advisory Panel for the Brentham Estate.

It emerged that the whole exercise for Ealing was more or less window dressing. The Panel had no power, and the Council neither heeded it nor intended to exert any control over changes in the Estate. What was needed was a Brentham Society,

to promote the qualities of the Estate, to stimulate local opinion, and to goad the Council into controlling changes. So a steering group was formed and Clive became Chairman of the new Brentham Society.

The drawings used on Brentham stationery, and the heading of the Newsletters over the years, bear the initials "CH", which means both Coleman Higgins and Clive Hicks. The former, also an architect, did the original drawings, which Clive then refreshed and augmented some years later.

Clive writes: "You have only to look elsewhere, all over Britain, to areas not so protected, to see good groups of houses wrecked with icing sugar façade treatments, spurious decoration, vile matchbox loft conversions, and, especially, a variety of replacement windows. There is scarcely a window on the Brentham Estate which cannot be repaired, and, come to that, probably not many in Ealing, either. British housing is being ruined by replacement windows. They are also likely to give problems in the future. People who put in "patio doors" some years ago find that when they need repair, the parts are not available, and that there is no alternative to replacement. This does not apply to timber windows, but it probably will to plastic windows.

"The Brentham Society was met with both enthusiasm and opposition, but one committee member who knew about town planning law proposed persuading the Council to take out an "Article 4 Direction" to make planning permission necessary for developments. The same letter was written every year, and eventually the climate of opinion changed, and Ealing did take the necessary powers. In the main though, the battle had been won because local residents had begun to appreciate the value of the character of Brentham.

"Conservation on Brentham has not worked entirely efficiently, and problems still occur, but compared with what might have been, it is wonderful. We had wanted to preserve the Estate for its character and appearance, without considering the effect on property values. Astonishingly, that local character has turned out to have a marketable value. People now consider replacing non-conforming elements of their house because it will enhance the market value. I do not mind their motivation, as long as they do it!"

Savage Brentham and its Great Survivors

I can report that the local wildlife has been abundant this last year. Amongst others, there have been plenty of squirrels, pigeons, tits and finches (whatever happened to sparrows?) many frogs, a rat, and a couple of mice.

How do I know all this? Because my cat, or one of the neighbours' cats, has been hunting them and dragging the poor things home. Some are unfortunately dead, but others like to cheat and are in fact just playing dead. You must admire an animal that has been hunted down, dragged along the road, up the stairs, down the balcony, and hauled through the cat-flap, all the while staying perfectly still! It is a cunning tactic that never fails to fool my daft cat.



Frogs have totally mastered this technique (despite the eye-watering combination of bare frog skin and needle sharp cat's teeth - ouch!) and the moment that puss looks away, the frog is frantically leaping around the living room in a desperate run for its life. The possessed cat is never far behind, and is so alarmingly ferocious in her chase that I have more trouble controlling the cat then catching the frog. It is always quite an experience. I have had to catch and evict at least a dozen frogs and although they came in different colours and markings, they were all of a similar size, huge!

So what is my justification for keeping this menace to nature, a cat? Well my old apartment, not far from Brentham, had no local cat. I sometimes left nuts out on the balcony or windowsill for the army of squirrels that were very friendly. Until one day from my window I watched a gang of maybe six very large rats climb the tree outside, then leap 2-3 feet from the branch onto my balcony looking for the food. They were huge, filthy and oily, and terrifying! There is little chance of that happening in Brentham with our trusty cats to protect us. However I do have one last worry - do frogs have teeth? **Gus**



	<p>Charity Plant Sale To benefit Alzheimers Concern 21st March, 1-4 p.m. 2 Ruskin Gardens Sally Kelly</p>	
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Pen and wash watercolours by Brentham artist David Webster

Local artist David Webster, a born and bred Londoner, has lived on the Brentham Estate for 27 years. Largely self-taught, he works exclusively with pen and wash watercolours, spending as much time as he can producing paintings of houses, cafes, pubs, churches, shops and street scenes. He prefers to work on location whenever possible - that way he can capture the detail and atmosphere of a composition that so characterises his work.



"Knock on Wood" Pitshanger Lane

His previous career in the construction industry gave him a love of the design and structure of buildings, together with an appreciation of perspective - all of which he brings into his pen and wash paintings. Visit his website www.david-webster.co.uk to see examples of his recent work. You can also see small-scale reproductions of typical A4 pen sketches on page 14 of Aileen Reid's *Brentham - a History of the Pioneer Garden Suburb 1901 to 2001*.

Much of David's work is on a commission basis and he has completed a number of paintings of houses for clients on the Brentham Estate and in the West London area.



House on Brentham Way

Clients returning to other countries have taken his house portraits and scenes with them to America, Canada, France and Malta. Also, he sells his work throughout the year at local exhibitions. Finished paintings are normally sized between 50cm x 30cm down to 30cm x 20cm.

David has recently been commissioned by the National Trust to work on paintings of Osterley House and its Tudor stableblock. He has also worked closely with the National Trust to research for and produce an artist's impression of the original 16th century Tudor Osterley House which was demolished to make way for the present 18th century building. The Royal Brompton and Harefield NHS Trust have also commissioned him for paintings of Harefield village, for display in the heart unit of Harefield Hospital.

For David, drawing and painting outdoors means sitting in the same position for two to three hours in our variable English climate. This means that at times he can be too hot, cold, wet or stiff. He's had the dubious pleasure of being moved on by the Met police for working too near the American Embassy; has been asked to do a schoolgirl's art homework for her; been told plenty of interesting (and sometimes rather dubious) local history by passers-by, and been served

cups of coffee by apron-wearing waiters from the cafe across the road.



Denison Road

His work takes him from busy London streets (“Sorry sir, would you mind moving on? – you are loitering in a high security area”) to the peace and tranquillity of churchyards. He is quietly amused that you can sit alone on a bench and nobody will come near you – but work with a pad of paper and a pen and somebody will soon come over to talk. He finds on the whole that people are pleased to see an artist at work and are quite happy to ask for (or give!) advice.



North View

As well as visiting David’s website, you can also contact him at

dwebster.art@bopenworld.com

Corsets and Shredded Wheat: a visit to Letchworth and Welwyn

Did you know that Marilyn Monroe and Mae West wore corsets purchased from the Spirella factory in Letchworth, and that workers at the Welgar factory in Welwyn packed 134,000 shredded wheat each day? These were two of the many intriguing facts gathered during our trip to the world’s first garden cities in September, a sequel to our visits to Bournville and Bedford Park earlier last year.

Letchworth Garden City was set up one hundred years to the day of our visit, on the principles established by Ebenezer Howard in his book *Tomorrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform* published in 1898. The vehicle for change was to be the garden city, ‘the town in the country’. This would be built on communally owned land, with ground rents used to benefit the whole community.

Brentham architects Parker and Unwin devised Letchworth’s Master Plan, ‘combining the health of the country with the comforts of the town.’ It was approved in 1904, and regulations were published which set out suitable building materials, densities of houses per acre, and minimum room sizes with detailed construction, ventilation and drainage standards.

We met for our tour of the town at The Settlement, formerly the Skittles Inn, which was originally set up to recreate the social life and atmosphere of the old fashioned Inn, but without alcohol. First we saw the ‘cheap cottages’ which were built in 1905 to various designs using innovative building methods to control costs. To qualify, a cottage had to have a scullery, living room and three bedrooms for £150.

Parker and Unwin were responsible for many of the houses, public buildings, shops and factories in Letchworth. The mostly female workforce of the amazing Spirella factory were provided for on a lavish scale with a canteen, library, ballroom, free medical care, showers and baths. As in Brentham, most

houses are now privately owned, with many people opting as their needs change to move house within and between attractive streets, as large and small houses exist in the same area.



We were delighted to discover that Letchworth had its own David Webster in the shape of William Ratcliffe (1870-1955), whose paintings are exhibited in Letchworth Museum and Art Gallery. He painted domestic scenes of Letchworth such as a cottage bedroom and a view from a conservatory window.

Our hosts from the Letchworth Society made us very welcome, providing us with many cups of tea and biscuits at the Friends Meeting House, which is used for public meetings and concerts as well as by the Quakers, who had an early presence in the town. We passed by the Howard Memorial Hall, currently being renovated for use by the community. We were pleased to learn that the Art Deco Broadway cinema was recently saved and is run by the Letchworth Foundation which reinvests all surpluses back into the Garden City.



Then to Welwyn, the world's second garden city, developed after the First World War to provide 'homes fit for heroes'. Ebenezer Howard chose an area of flat agricultural land in mid-Herts and much of the practical work was done by architects and planners like Louis de Soissons and Frederic Osborn, who favoured the cul-de-sac pattern with small

blocks of houses mainly in the neo-Georgian style. Unlike Brentham, there are distinct commercial, civic and industrial zones, surrounded by a mixture of house types and sizes. There is also an east-west division between tenants and owner-occupiers, which the town planners are still trying to address.

Jacky Pack



Garden Awards for 2003 as announced at the AGM

Spring award: 50 Meadvale Road

A small, well-kept garden, full of colour. It has a narrow path, and full use is made of space for a wide range of plants.

Runners up were 46 Woodfield Crescent, 20 Meadvale Road and 113 Fowlers Walk.

Summer award: 10 Ludlow Road,

two urns of trailing pink geraniums placed on top of pillars either side of the gates, framing the entrance to this very tidy garden. A bed of well-maintained tea roses borders the main path to this corner plot.

Runners up were 115 Fowlers Walk, 16 Woodfield Crescent and 7 North View.

Autumn award: 28 Holyoake Walk.

This garden has come on leaps and bounds since the spring, reaching an amazing autumn climax with cannas in full flower, dahlias, grasses and many more plants creating a rich tapestry of leaf form and colour.

Runners up were 1 Neville Road, 21 Ludlow Road, and 91 Fowlers Walk.

Rose Bowl Award: 2 Woodfield Avenue

A very small garden which has been given a strong structure. It has a font as its central focus, surrounded by a small path edged by well-clipped box. Tastefully arranged borders with variegated holly, purple heuchera, white county roses, lavender and rosemary and the front wall edged with a dwarf rhododendron, reinforce a strong design.

My thanks to Gill Sylvester and Maureen Monaghan for their help in selecting gardens for awards this year.

Brian Vaughan

Brentham Photo Audit - a Snapshot in Time

What's it all about?

Brentham Heritage Society's major project for 2004 is a comprehensive digital photo audit of the whole estate, its houses, buildings, special architectural and planning features and its common areas. Wendy Sender, who masterminded the Brentham Book, will carry out the audit over the next six months, to create a digital database for the Brentham Archive and for the Brentham website.

Why have an audit?

- It captures the look of the estate at one point in its history for future generations.
- It provides vital reference material for planning advice and for bona fide researchers.
- It is an excellent way of fulfilling the Brentham Heritage Society's charitable remit to educate and inform the general public about Brentham and its unique social and architectural history.

How does it work?

Hampstead Garden Suburb has already undertaken a very successful photo audit.

See it on the website www.hgs.org.uk

Can I get a photo of my house?

Yes, we hope to make high quality photos of individual houses available to residents for a small charge.

Any questions?

Contact photosurvey@brentham.com Sue Elliott

CPZ (Controlled Parking Zone)

Ealing Council want to include Brentham Way and Fowlers Walk as part of a large proposed CPZ. This means residents have to pay an annual fee for their own and visitors' cars and parking for everyone else is restricted to certain times. The Brentham Society and a majority of residents have objected to the proposal on the grounds that commuter parking is not an issue in these roads so it would be an unwarranted imposition on residents to make them pay to park their cars

in the street. In addition, the Brentham Society believes the associated road markings and street signs are inappropriate for a Conservation Area with Article 4 direction. At



the time of writing, we had not heard the outcome of the consultation or Ealing Council's decision on what roads would be included in the CPZ. Watch this space! (While you can still park in it, Ed.)

Busted

Our 'alarmingly amusing' MP Steve Pound was at the forefront of the Today programme's 'Listeners' Law' campaign at the turn of the year and was dismayed at the result ("the people have spoken – the bastards!") which returned the so-called 'Tony Martin Law' as the public's choice for a Private Members' Bill. We know Steve is both talented and popular, but is he really famous enough to justify a bronze bust in a public place? This striking likeness of our Honourable Member was snapped by a News reader recently – but not in Ealing. It was taken in Funchal, Madeira, and turned out to be a past Madeiran President and not Steve at all. But give it time...



Graffiti spreads...like a contagious disease. But we don't have to live with it. Remove it quickly if it appears on your property or street furniture near you and it's less likely to attract others to leave their 'tag'. A pan scourer and white spirit usually does it. Or cover it with same-colour spray paint.

Get rid of me!

Brentham Society Membership Subscriptions for 2004

An envelope for your 2004 subscription is enclosed with this edition of the Brentham News. Please keep this in a safe place, as membership collectors will be calling over the course of the next few weeks.

The annual subscription is still only £2.

Donations are greatly appreciated and always put to good use. Either include it in your subscription envelope, or pay a donation direct into the Society's account

Thank you for your continued support.

GARDENING GROUP

NEW FOR 2004, EVENING MEETINGS

On Thursday 1st April at 8pm at 28 Holyoake Walk, the first monthly meeting of a new evening gardening group will be held. Over a glass of wine we will discuss what we want to do. Do come along and get inspiration and support from neighbours in a friendly, relaxed group. No gardening knowledge is required.

The first meeting of 2004 of the existing garden group will be at 2 pm on Wednesday, 17th March at 28 Holyoake Walk, with monthly meetings thereafter. New members are always very welcome.

Maureen McCarthy



The spate of break-ins and damage to cars on the estate recently makes a strong and active Neighbourhood Watch even more important. If you see anything suspicious please report it to the police.

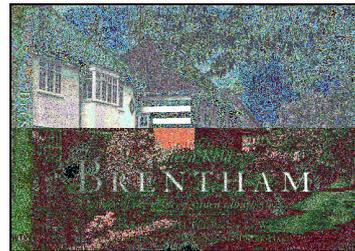
Planning Applications

We continue to receive notification from the Council's Planning Department of planning applications in Brentham and to comment on the more controversial ones. Sadly there are still some residents undertaking work without planning permission. This leads to the involvement of Planning Enforcement and the possible trouble and expense of reinstatement of original features.

Planning and Conservation Question Time

In March we are arranging an evening event on the lines of Gardeners' Question Time, dealing with planning and conservation issues relating to Brentham (but not individual applications). Watch for a poster on the noticeboards and be preparing your questions.

"an inspiring combination of architectural guide and social history, this is a substantial contribution to our understanding of the garden suburb movement ... superbly produced and illustrated" (Country Life)



**Copies available from
The Pitshanger Bookshop or direct
from the Brentham Heritage Society
(£30+£4-50 p&p – cheques to BHS)**