



Issue 170

September 2010

Distributed to residents and friends of Brentham Garden Suburb

BRENTHAM NEWS

Chair's Notes

The fact that the months of June and July were the driest for some years helped ensure that our summer events were a great success. Luckily we managed to avoid August as this year there was more than twice the average monthly rainfall for the period, according to Brentham's weather records. I hope you all took early holidays!

This autumn looks like seeing the completion of the replacement street lighting programme now that work in Meadvale Road, the last street to be tackled, is under way.

It's also good news that the triangle of land bordered by St Barnabas Church, Holyoake Walk and Denison Road, formerly owned by AR & V Investments Limited, has been purchased by a consortium of residents and the church, so is now in safe local hands. The new owners will be arranging for the plot to be tidied up and hope to see the allotments flourishing next season.

We were pleased to discover Brentham featuring in two **new publications** (see page 2). Our own book, *Brentham, The Pioneer Garden Suburb* (still available at good bookshops!) was inspired by the wealth of **archive material**, relating to the buildings on the estate and the life of its founders and residents. Since the formation of the Brentham Society 40 years ago this year, the archive has grown considerably with plans, photographs, legal documents and other material.



Annual General Meeting



Thursday 14th October 2010, 7.30pm
Brentham Club, Meadvale Road

Refreshments will be served.

Nominations to serve on the Committee of the Brentham Society (seconded by two members of the society, with the agreement of the prospective candidate) should be submitted in writing by **7th October** to Eleanor Cowie.

We now need to look seriously at how we store all the material and make it more accessible and have started to consider digitisation. However, this is by no means straightforward and we are desperate for some help. If anyone on the estate has any experience of indexing collections and/or digitising plans and/or photographs we'd like you to contact archive@brentham.com

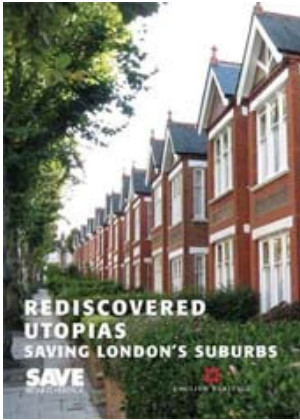
We are also looking to further develop material for the Brentham **website** and will be seeking your views at the AGM on how you currently use it and what further information you'd like to see.

The current committee look forward to seeing you at the AGM to give you further details of our activities and future plans and to take on board any of your issues.

Alan Henderson

Brentham = Utopia (Official)

Brentham has a chapter to itself in a new book, *London's Rediscovered Utopias*, which looks in detail at 14 London suburbs built between 1870 and 1939 - each different and with its own fascinating genesis.



The aim of the book, published by SAVE, a pressure group set up to conserve Britain's historic suburbs, is to spread the word about the value of our suburban heritage and halt the gradual loss of its character by the kinds of small-scale "improvements" and unsympathetic development that have marred much of suburban London (look at Brunswick Road for example). As such it is a good snapshot of the current state of these areas, pointing up both problems and possible solutions.

The chapter on Brentham ("a relatively unknown gem") gives a comprehensive summary of its origins, development and main architectural features. The "butterfly" houses on Neville/Brunswick Roads are particularly admired and the estate is described as "a highly desirable place to live". Locals are praised too: "the visitor to Brentham is struck by the extremely high standard of maintenance, with almost all properties kept in pristine decorative order". But before we get too smug, it also illustrates some damaging alterations, and notes "the overwhelming presence of cars" in our narrow streets, detracting from its otherwise unspoilt appearance.

This is a well-illustrated and accessible reference book (starring Woodfield Avenue on the cover) for anyone interested in our own and other London suburbs. It shows that, by comparison with some other areas, we are succeeding in conserving our valuable heritage; but also how this can be thoughtlessly destroyed. This book is both a celebration and a warning.

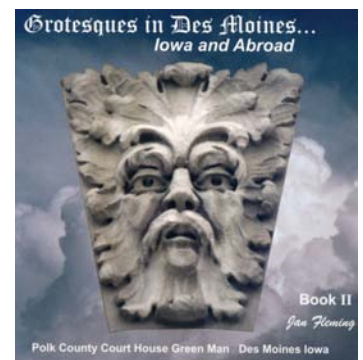
Sue Elliott

"Rediscovered Utopias: Saving London's Suburbs" is published by Save Britain's Heritage/English Heritage and available at £20 from Pitshanger Bookshop

The Meaning of the Green Man

When William Anderson and I gave illustrated lectures on medieval church architecture, questions were often raised about the Green Man, and this led us in 1989 to publishing a book on the subject: *Green Man, the Archetype of our Oneness with the Earth*. Fifty years previously it had been suggested that the Jack-in-the-Green and related cultural strands, including the idea of the "wild man of the woods", wood sprites such as Robin Goodfellow, the foliate heads so common in medieval churches and cathedrals, and the old inn name *The Green Man* all arose from a single source, the concept of living in harmony with our environment.

Green Man carvings in churches abound across Europe and were previously just regarded as grotesques. Their origin is not Celtic, as some suppose, but Roman and they were copied from Roman ruins by medieval French masons. Though most common during the middle ages the motif persisted through the Georgian period and flourished again in Victorian times, when it were used on buildings all over the world.



Our book was read by a retired opera singer, Jan Fleming, in Des Moines, Iowa, where she noticed fine green man carvings on its 19th century civic buildings, just as there are in other US cities, including New York. Jan decided to compile a book about them, and I and others sent her many photographs, along with information about folk customs and May celebrations in Hastings, Rochester, Castleton and Brentham.

These ancient May ceremonies, banned during the Puritan period, were revived later, especially in Victorian times. They were originally to sanctify the coming together of young men and young women in periods when, death-rates being high, many new births were essential to community survival. Babies conceived in May would be reasonably

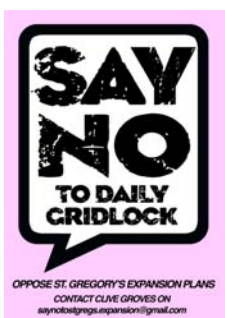
robust by the following spring. Our Brentham May Queen is elected at the age of 13, Shakespeare's Juliet is the same age, while Miranda in *The Tempest* is 15, and both the latter are presented as ready for marriage. However, the central meaning of the Mayday ceremonies was lost over time, and when revived they were viewed as a little of "Merrie England" recreated for a children's festival.

Jan Fleming's book *Grotesques in Des Moines Iowa and Abroad* included four illustrated pages on the Brentham Mayday, so its fame has now reached the USA. I do not know exactly when Brentham's Jack-in-the-Green first joined the Mayday (probably just before or after the First World War, when there were surviving Mayday customs in places like Rochester and Hastings). In the post-war world Mayday rites were progressively abandoned until, as far as anyone knows, only Brentham was left recreating Jack-in-the-Green each May. Ours never vanished, so he stands as both the oldest and the newest Jack.

Clive Hicks

St. Gregory's School

Expansion is proposed at St. Gregory's School on Woodfield Road. Although the site is not strictly within the Brentham boundary, any building works there would have an impact on Brentham residents living on the south side of Woodfield Crescent and the west side of Winscombe Crescent who overlook the school, and increase the intensity of road traffic in the vicinity twice daily.



The background to this proposal, as Clive Groves writes, is that Ealing Council have invited schools to expand, but pupil numbers at St. Gregory's have already reached the maximum that can be accommodated in the

existing buildings. There has already been expansion at North Ealing and Montpelier schools, and the proposals for St Gregory's, besides exacerbating road safety problems in the area, could bring in pupils from as far away as Sudbury Hill, and as a result

St.Gregory's would no longer be simply a local school.

Homes are being leafleted by opponents of the expansion plan who fear that a five-year plan to upgrade existing buildings and build new ones would cause an extended period of disruption. Local residents will be asked to sign a petition to be put to Ealing Council at the next Planning Committee meeting.

For more information and to pass on any comments on the planned expansion, contact saynotostgregs.expansion@gmail.com

The accompanying illustration shows one of the posters produced for the campaign.

Brentham's Masonic Lodge

I became a freemason ten years ago, and by chance discovered that there used to be a Brentham Masonic Lodge. Enquiries revealed that it is now based in Beaconsfield, and still has two members who recalls its Brentham days.

Founders of the Brentham Lodge, No. 4080
CONSTITUTED - 18th FEBRUARY 1928



One of the lodge members had moved to Brentham as a boy in 1943, and recalled seeing an anti-aircraft gun emplaced on the far side of the Brent near the Brentham Club.

It turns out also the Brentham archives have a photograph of the founding of the Brentham Lodge in 1928. The photograph includes three members of the Perry family (not however including Fred Perry or his father). It seems that the lodge used to meet in Ealing Town Hall but held its committee meetings at the Brentham Club until moving to Beaconsfield in 1948.

Clive Hicks

Brentham Open Gardens Day

In another successful year ten gardens were opened, five being first-timers. The weather was magnificent and we had a fantastic variety of planting with cottage style herbaceous borders, contrasting forms and textures, a wildlife pond and even a rusting bicycle. Two gardens were newly planted so it will be fascinating to see how these develop.

£1055.90 was raised from the event and the proceeds this year went to the Help for Heroes charity. Emma and Tim kindly hosted the tea and the donated homemade cakes were delicious. Sally's ever-popular plant sale generated a record breaking **£391** contribution.

A very big thank-you to everyone who visited and to all those who opened their gardens, baked cakes and made this day happen. The Open Garden Day is a great opportunity for the community to socialise and meet the neighbours. If you are interested in being involved or opening your garden next year then please contact.

Gina Jenkins

Brentham Christmas Card – New Design



We hope to get Christmas cards printed and ready for sale at the Brentham AGM. This year's design "Through a Brentham Window" is from a stitched textile by Brentham resident and artist Sally Kelly.

I Love Pitshanger - Update

Walter Wyeth writes that while Ealing Council's decision on the proposal by Explore Learning to occupy the former Robert Dyas premises is still awaited, on the opposite side of the Lane the new Harrison Wine & Cheese shop is now open, and the entries to the photographic competition are still on display at Stems, the flower gallery.

Meanwhile the Council is about to embark on a public consultation about "stop & shop" proposals for Pitshanger Lane, and *My Pitshanger* is organising an international

Food and Drink Festival to take place in the Lane on **Saturday 25th September**.

Brentham Strawberry Tea

Despite clashing with the ill-fated England/Germany match, there was a good turnout for the 30th Strawberry Tea, which also celebrated the 100th anniversary of Barbara Murray's house which hosts the tea.



Barbara was presented with a Gertrude Jekyll rose and a celebration cake was cut.

Brentham Family Cycle

A small but enthusiastic group set out on the annual Brentham Family Cycle on 25th July. Cycling through parkland, along the river and canal and off-road tracks we headed to Osterley Park where we all enjoyed a well-earned afternoon tea. Coming home we went along the Thames and through Syon Park. New cyclists are always pleased to discover off-road routes, so why don't you join us next year and discover hidden parts of Ealing?

Rosanna Henderson

An Invitation from Brentham Gardeners

Do you suffer from damp patches, windy corners, wilting wisteria, boggy spots and the like? Come and join the Brentham Gardeners' mutual support group to share success stories and sympathy over a glass of wine. A friendly mix of gardening professionals and hackers, we meet on the first Tuesday of the month to swap plants and seeds, organise the Brentham open garden day and help one another fight the weeds. We don't talk Latin, some of us have never been to Chelsea, and we're not judgemental - unless of course your sunflowers are bigger than ours.

Visit to the William Morris Gallery, Walthamstow

The William Morris Gallery, devoted to the designer, craftsman, writer, socialist and conservationist, displays an internationally important collection illustrating his life, achievements and influence. Morris was born in Walthamstow in 1834, and the Gallery is delightfully housed in the 18th-century Water House, the Morris family home from 1848 to 1856, in Lloyd Park, Walthamstow.



We plan to visit the Gallery on **Saturday 2nd October**, arriving in time to start the tour at 11 a.m. The Gallery is a 15-minute walk from Walthamstow Central rail/tube station. As the Central and Victoria Lines will be partly closed that day, the best route may be on the main line to Paddington, then take the Hammersmith & City or Circle Line to Liverpool Street and catch a train from there to Walthamstow Central, allowing at least an hour for the journey

For those travelling by car the Gallery is located on Forest Road in Walthamstow, post code E17 4PP, and there is a car park next to the Forest Road entrance to Lloyd Park. Entrance is free. We will have an initial guided tour, and will then be free to look round the gallery at our leisure.

Blue Plaques and Commemorative Tablets

Mike Tiley, **Ealing Civic Society's** Plaques Officer, will be speaking about the variety of plaques put up by English Heritage, Ealing Civic Society, the Dead Comics' Society and other organisations to commemorate the borough's most eminent residents, who range from Sir Michael Balcon, responsible for the glory days of Ealing Studios, to William Willett, the inventor of Daylight Saving Time. Behind each plaque lies a fascinating story which will be retold

Wednesday 29th September
6-15 at Ealing Central Library.

Pitshanger Pictures

Forthcoming screenings at St Barnabas Millennium Hall continue the established pattern of family shows in the early afternoon and more adult fare later in the day. The season will include:

Saturday 25th September:

3-00 - *Alice in Wonderland* (PG)

7-30 - *Sherlock Holmes* (12A)

Saturday 23rd October

3-00 - *Coraline* (PG)

7-00 - *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (15)

Saturday 27th November

3-00 - *Ponyo* (U)

6-30 - *It's a Wonderful Life* (U)

9-15 - *Bride of Frankenstein* (PG)

Brentham Reading Group

September 27 *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, Stieg Larsson

October 25 *The Catcher in the Rye*, J D Salinger

November 29 *Restless*, William Boyd
[No meeting in December]

January 31 *Blackwater Lightship*, Colm Toibin

February 28 *The Pilot's Wife*, Anita Shreve
The group meets at 8 pm in the Coffee Shop, Brentham Club, on the last Monday of each month.

Beware of Doorstep Scams!

Doorstep sellers of cleaning products who claim to be working for an Organisation for Homeless and Unemployed People have been identified as fraudsters on Neighbourhood Watch websites.

Similarly the PCA is currently warning of rogue builders who claim to have spotted roofing problems. They distract the householder's attention while they climb their ladder to make a closer inspection, deliberately create some damage, and then kindly offer to remedy it.

The Brentham Club

☎ 020-8997-2624

secretary@brenthamclub.co.uk

The Club's first **Film Night** was a great success, with a showing of *Amelie*. The next one will be held on October 29th.

The Club's next **Bistro Night** will be on 17th September.

Firework Supper Night will be on Friday 5th November, in the coffee shop. Booking is recommended.
Firework Night display: Saturday 6th November

Fred Perry Coffee Shop
Everyone is welcome to use the coffee shop.

Wedding Fayre Sunday 14th November 11-4pm.
Christmas Market Friday 19th November 6-10pm.
Christmas Carvery Party Night Sat 11th December.

Published by the Brentham Society

Printed by Colormax West, Ealing W13 OSR

You can contribute to *Brentham News* by emailing news@brentham.com

The next edition is due out in February 2011.

