



No. 25 Autumn 2011

Welcome to the latest edition of our newsletter. The highlight has to be the re-excitation of part of the moat at Fulham Palace, illustrated below in before and after pictures. We hope you enjoy the read and look forward to seeing you at our annual meeting on 20 October – full details on back page.

Chairman's Report

MAIN ISSUES

Major concerns during this last year have been the disproportionate developments being proposed, particularly along the riverside, the policy thrust for 'regeneration' without recognition of the importance of the historic context and the council's proposed closure of

our local archives service. A serious new concern is the thrust of the government's proposed changes to planning policy with the 'presumption for development' which is likely to have a very damaging effect on our historic environment. Good news has been the progress of the restoration of Fulham Palace and Bishops Park and the exciting excavation revealing the Fulham Palace moat.

The Moat Revealed

For many years the Group has been drawing attention to the importance of the Fulham Palace moat, part of the

Below: The moat and bridge looking south-west (towards the River Thames), with Gothic Lodge in scaffolding to the left and Bishops Park in the background. The 'tide mark' on the parapet indicates the extent to which the moat was filled with builders' debris in 1921-24. See next page for an 'after' picture.



scheduled ancient monument which includes the palace grounds and the allotments. Keith Whitehouse has conducted a number of very popular walks round the route of the moat. As an advisory member of the Fulham Palace management board I argued on behalf of the Group that the route of the Fulham Palace moat, still complete though filled in with builders' debris in the 1920s, should be marked on the ground and if possible excavated. We were therefore delighted when it was agreed that some excavation should be done as part of the restoration of the palace grounds so that the moat was once again 'a defining feature in the landscape', to quote Phil Emery, the archaeological consultant for Fulham Palace. The results have exceeded expectations and we urge members to go to the palace and look at the revealed moat themselves. We hope that in the future the restoration can be extended to include more of the moat circuit, especially the corners which visually demonstrate the enclosure of the site. For more detail see Phil Emery's detailed article in the summer 2011 issue of *London Archaeologist*.

The Fulham Palace grounds and Bishops Park restoration work is nearly completed and the Group would like to congratulate Dr Scott Cooper, director of Fulham Palace, on his contribution to this. See his article on page 4. Dr Cooper is leaving the palace in September. It has been a pleasure to work with him and we thank him for all his work on the restoration of the palace and the park. We wish him everything good for his future conservation work overseas.



In this view of Fulham Palace moat, taken from approximately the same position as the picture on page 1, the work on revealing the moat and the moat bridge has been completed and the banks of the moat are beginning to grass over.

Disproportionate Development Proposals

In the last newsletter we explained in some detail our concerns about the disproportionate developments being proposed, particularly along the riverside, and the policy thrust for 'regeneration', without recognition of the importance of the historic context. The Group has argued strongly for 'heritage led regeneration' where proposals recognise the significance and value of listed buildings, conservation areas, historic open spaces and views - what

are now called 'heritage assets' – and new developments preserve and enhance the quality and special character of their historic surroundings. The Riverside is under threat now – the current schemes for Hammersmith Town Hall, Queen's Wharf and Hammersmith Embankment are examples of this. We are continuing to challenge these schemes and work for better ones more sensitive to their historic riverside location.

The canalside may be the next area threatened by the proposals for Crossrail and HS2 unless the significance of the canal and railway heritage is recognised now and taken into account at the earliest planning stage.

Planning Policy

A serious new concern is the thrust of the government's proposed changes to the national planning regime in the national planning policy framework which contains a 'presumption in favour of development'. This could have a very damaging effect on the historic environment. We shall be working with other conservation groups to try and get a more balanced policy.

During the year the Group has been involved in considerable input into the council's various Local Development Framework documents, particularly the Core Strategy. We had submitted detailed written comments at every stage and these were followed up by arguing our case in person to the inspector at the examination in public (EIP) into the Core Strategy. The HBG 'team' for the EIP consisted of committee members Nick Fernley, John Goodier, Roger Warry, Roger Weston, Keith Whitehouse and myself. We gave detailed evidence on the need for the historic environment to have a higher profile in the Core Strategy, 'heritage led regeneration', the council's tall buildings policy, the regeneration areas, river and canal issues, open space and metropolitan open land. We made the case – yet again – for the council to complete and update its conservation area (CA) profiles (CAPs). A particular omission is a CAP for the canal conservation area (even though it is referred to in the Core Strategy as if it already exists!). During the EIP the Group presented the council with a canal CAP drafted by John Goodier and other HBG colleagues.

At the time of writing the inspector's report has just been received. As a result of the Group's evidence a number of detailed amendments to wording, particularly in relation to the historic environment, were agreed with the council during the EIP and have now been endorsed by the inspector. We are delighted that he has struck out the council's proposals to remove the designation of 'open space' from part of South Park (Clancarty Lodge and the depot), so that it could be sold for housing. He has also refused to remove the designation of 'metropolitan open land' from Linford Christie stadium at Wormwood Scrubs, thus continuing its protection from development. The Group worked closely with the Friends of South Park and the Friends of Wormwood Scrubs in opposing both these proposals. The inspector has also noted that 'during the examination hearings the council undertook to

complete the series of conservation area appraisals or profiles covering the borough as soon as possible, with first priority to the Grand Union Canal’.

The council has designated White City, South Fulham Riverside, Earl’s Court and West Kensington and Hammersmith Town Centre as ‘**regeneration areas**’. So far they have published draft planning briefs for all except Hammersmith Town Centre. The Group has responded in detail to each draft. All the regeneration areas involve conservation areas and listed buildings and our main criticism is that the historic environment is not given a higher enough profile in these planning briefs to ensure that the special quality of each area will be preserved and enhanced in any development. As a result of the inspector’s comments, we are looking for improvements in the final documents.

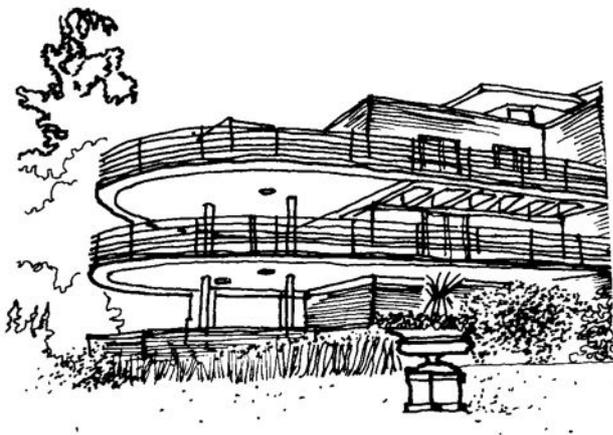
Archives

The threatened closure of our local Hammersmith & Fulham archives service has been a great concern this year and, as we reported in our last newsletter, we are working with the Hammersmith Society, the Fulham Society and the Fulham & Hammersmith Historical Society in an archives consultation group with the council and the London Metropolitan Archives (LMA) to try and find a long term solution to retaining an active, local and easily accessible archives service for borough residents.

Currently a limited access service to the reading room in its established home at the Lilla Huset, next to the Ark in Talgarth Road, has now been agreed with the council on two days a month, administered by an archivist from the LMA and assisted by local volunteers. This arrangement is in place until March 2012. Details can be found on the council’s website. We suggest that when arranging your visit you state the subject of your research and ask for the relevant files/documents to be put out ready for you to save time on your visit.

Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas

A new listing this year was the upgrading of the former Royal Masonic Hospital to Grade II*, a very welcome recognition of the quality of this 1930s building by Sir John Burnet, Tait and Lorne.



Balconies extending out into the garden at the Royal Masonic Hospital, Ravenscourt Park.

We await the publication of the 2011 **Heritage at Risk** register. Work is ongoing on the following buildings previously listed in the register: Fulham Palace, the former Wormholt Library and the former county court at 43 North End Road. The listed building consent application on 34 Black Lion Lane has been approved, and the council has just received the application to discharge the conditions on it. We look forward to restoration starting soon.

We have been told by the council that work on the **conservation area character profiles** is about to restart. This is very welcome news. **Fulham town hall**, a listed building dating from 1888-90, 1905 and 1934, with outstanding civic interiors, is now being actively marketed by the council. We hope to have more information at the annual meeting. The Group is concerned that the building should not be allowed to deteriorate, should be fully restored where necessary by any new owner and as a former civic building should retain some public access and use.

OPEN SPACE AND LANDSCAPING

The improvements to **Bishops Park**, including the restoration of the ornamental pond and wooden bridge, the café building and the terracotta balustrade together with a reconstruction of the Edwardian ‘Margate Beach’, are nearly complete – see Scott Cooper’s article on page 4. The Group has been delighted to support the Friends of Bishops Park in their publication of a new history of the park – further details under Scott Cooper’s article.

Committee member Nick Fernley gave evidence for the Group to the inquiry into the council’s plan for **Shepherd’s Bush Common** with Keith Whitehouse representing the Fulham & Hammersmith Historical Society. Although the Group supported much of the plan we were concerned that overall it would change the historic character of the common from a village green to an urban park. We argued against unnecessary felling of mature and healthy trees, particularly at the south-west corner to enable a mound to be created. The inspector refused permission for the felling of mature trees at the south-west corner and for a café. We are awaiting discussion on a revised plan. We continue to hope that the design philosophy of ‘less is more’ will prevail.

The **landscaping at Westfield** has been very disappointing and, as reported previously, not as originally envisaged in the planning permission. We are pleased that we, along with the Hammersmith Society, have been invited to meet Westfield’s landscape consultants to discuss what can be achieved in future to ‘green’ the area. I hope to have more details at the annual meeting.

BRIEF UPDATES

NCP car park, Beadon Road A new application has been approved for two tower blocks, probably to be built in two phases. It is higher than we would wish, but more appropriate than the previous approval for the ‘Armadillo’.

Fulham Wharf/Sainsbury's has been approved. We are pleased that the classical façade is to be retained and incorporated in the new scheme for a superstore and housing with an extension of the Riverside Walk. We regret the inclusion of two tall towers.

Imperial Wharf Phase 3/Chelsea Creek In this new scheme we very much welcome the intention to restore and enlarge the old gas works dock as suggested by the Chelsea Creek Project 2002, revised March 2008. We consider the canal layout now proposed is an appropriate way to achieve this. We believe a series of restored and new waterfronts with craft of different types, well maintained and cared for, would bring life and activity to the development, and a sense of place. However, we oppose the tall tower.

Territorial Army site, Fulham High Street Tesco have submitted a new planning application for the former Territorial Army site running between Parkview Court and the listed Temperance pub on the west side of Fulham High Street and in the Bishops Park conservation area. Built in 1912, the centre includes the drill hall and riding schools as well as two 'pavilions' fronting on to the High Street. These pavilions run back into the site with an entrance way between them and are locally listed buildings. The application involves the demolition of virtually all the buildings on the site apart from the fronts of these two pavilions. The Group is very concerned for the future of the pavilions and looks for a sympathetic setting for them and for the listed Temperance pub. The present proposals do not respect the historic context, do not preserve or enhance the conservation area and dominate the historic buildings (*see picture right*).

Events

In 2011 we held very successful visits to Holy Trinity church, Brook Green and to Ashlar Court, the former nurses' home at the Royal Masonic Hospital. Suggestions for future visits, talks or other events are welcomed. Please contact the Hon. Sec. via details on back page.

Annual Meeting

Our annual meeting this year takes place on Thursday 20 October at St Paul's church, Queen Caroline Street, Hammersmith's parish church. Consecrated in 1887, this is a listed Grade II* church by J P Seddon and H R Gough. The meeting will be preceded by a tour of the church and the new extension. The theme for this year's meeting is 'The Graveyard Archaeology of St Paul's Church'. Oxford Archaeology, who carried out the recent exhumation of burials in the western part of the churchyard prior to the construction of the new extension, will be making a presentation about the excavation and what has been learnt from it (see article in last newsletter). We hope to see you there.

Our Work

As you can see, our work is varied and considerable – but very interesting. I am deeply grateful to the officers and the committee members who do so much work and all the members who help on individual projects. We are always

delighted to hear from anyone who wants to join us and help with any aspect of our work. Offers of help to research the history of individual buildings would be most welcome.



Only the fronts of these former Territorial Army buildings in Fulham High Street will be retained if a current planning application by Tesco is approved (see article left).

This is my last chairman's report as I am standing down as chairman at the annual meeting. I wish the Group every success in the future in its work of promoting, preserving and enhancing Hammersmith & Fulham's historic heritage.

Angela Dixon

Stop Press

I am delighted to report that the **Queen's Wharf** scheme has been refused.

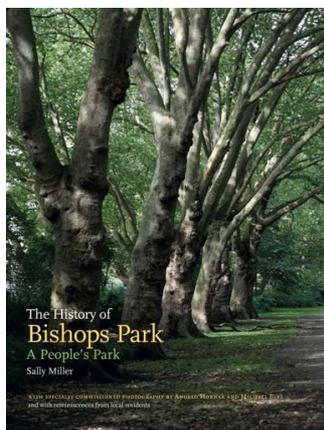
PARK AND PALACE

Works continue apace at Fulham Palace and Bishops Park. With reference to the palace first, the excavation and turfing of a section of the ancient moat is close to completion, as is the repair of the moat bridge (*see pictures on pages 1 and 2*). As some of you may have seen from recent coverage on BBC London news, it was during the course of these works that the timber footings of a much earlier – probably late 13th century – crossing were uncovered just a few feet to the north. The repair of the external fabric of Gothic Lodge is now also close to completion with the reinstatement of its original colouring (a rather striking salmon pink that will, I am assured, ease with age) and the restoration of the missing pinnacles on its pretty armorial panel. The Lodge is, by any measure, a delight to behold, and with an additional phase of works to make good the interior this winter, it will soon be returned to the use for which it was originally designed – residential accommodation with the money raised in rent being used to maintain the palace, outbuildings and grounds. Elsewhere on site, the old stable block is now being fitted out as the education facility (to be named the Jessie Mylne Education Centre in celebration of the lady whose original bequest set up the old Fulham Palace Trust and its museum); the glasshouse has begun to be constructed and the potting

sheds re-roofed. Plans are afoot to appoint the new head gardener at the end of September: the productive reuse of the kitchen garden will then begin in earnest.

The new trust board is bedding in well and the transfer has been a smooth and effective one. The trust has set about drafting a three-year strategic plan (which will be posted on a new palace website when it is completed in the autumn) and is also establishing a new community forum so that it can regularly liaise with local amenity bodies, benefit fully from the array of expertise and experience they have, and ensure that the palace is managed in a way that is properly informed and widely understood.

Turning to Bishops Park, with every week that goes by I become ever more settled in my view that come October it will be one the finest municipal parks in London – perhaps even *the* finest. Views are being opened up and the original pond reinstated. The water pools along the great urban beach are taking shape and the enormous array of children’s play equipment installed. The café is



being refurbished and its operation tendered to ensure we get the best possible service. The new community building is being roofed and the interpretation drafted (including the markers for the moat trail). At long last the benches are now being reinstalled (a source of understandable annoyance to many park users frustrated by the fact that the benches

were removed by the ‘demolition’ sub-contractors many months before the new benches were due to be fabricated). For more details see the Friends of Bishops Park website and note that the Friends are publishing a new history of the park to coincide with its reopening in September (*see book cover above and box below for details of how to buy*).

The History of Bishops Park – A People's Park by Sally Miller is published on 29 September 2011, price £14.95. To get your copy, send a cheque/postal order with your address to: The Friends of Bishops Park, 54 Langthorne Street, SW6 6JY. Delivery is free within the boroughs of Hammersmith & Fulham, Wandsworth and Richmond upon Thames. Outside this area, please add £3.95 to cover p & p.

Bishops Park will be formally reopened by the mayor, the leader of the council and the bishop of London on 29 September. The transformation will be extraordinary. Sadly I shall not be there to share in the council’s achievement – I shall have left the previous week to take up my new role as director of heritage properties in Qatar. Though not an easy place to leave, after eight

years working for the council and the trust to restore this wonderful corner of the borough it is probably time to move on. I shall miss the borough of course, but I shall miss more the huge array of remarkable people who have supported me throughout my time here and who continue to campaign passionately and tirelessly to protect and preserve the historic environment they love so much. My best wishes to all of them – and thanks.

Scott Cooper, Fulham Palace Trust

THE ARTISTIC BOROUGH

The borough has a long tradition of artistic enterprise, from individual artists working in local studios to potteries, stained glass workshops and printing presses. This tradition expanded from the late 18th century onwards, when a number of foreign artists came to Britain because they could find a lucrative market for their work here. They included the Italian engraver Francesco Bartolozzi, who lived at Cambridge Lodge, North End Road, between 1780 and 1802, and Philippe de Loutherbourg, the landscape painter and stage designer from Alsace, who lived at 7 Hammersmith Terrace between 1785 and 1812. For a time (c1806-1811) the great J W M Turner occupied a house on Upper Mall, Hammersmith, where he painted in his summerhouse.

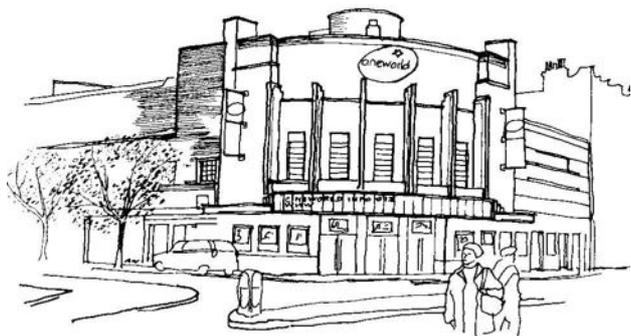
From the mid 19th century artists were increasingly attracted to the area, particularly the Hammersmith riverside, perhaps because it was still relatively rural and the rents were lower than in central London. The cartoonist and illustrator Hablot Knight Browne, better known as ‘Phiz’, lived for two years (1844-46) at 404 Fulham Road. *Punch* cartoonist John Leech lived at Brook Green and drew a series of cartoons called *The Brook Green Volunteer*. Another *Punch* staffer, Charles Samuel Keene, lived at 112 Hammersmith Road between 1865 and 1891.

One of the original members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, William Holman Hunt, lived near the borough boundary at Draycott Lodge, New King’s Road, between 1879 and 1902. The painter Sir Edward Burne-Jones lived at The Grange, 40 North End Crescent, Fulham (formerly 49 North End Road), between 1867 and his death in 1898. The house had been let in the mid 18th century to the novelist Samuel Richardson, and had a large garden in which Burne-Jones built a separate room for use as a studio. The Grange was still surrounded by fields and market gardens, but while Burne-Jones was living there suburban development gradually altered the area. By the 1950s the Grange was in very poor condition, and despite protests it was demolished in 1957.

Burne-Jones’ last painting, a large canvas called *Arthur in Avalon*, was stored at Colet House, 151 Talgarth Road, at the time of his death. Colet House was built in 1885 by Sir Coutts Lindsay, founder of the Grosvenor Gallery where many contemporaries of Burne-Jones exhibited. It had a large studio upstairs, which was used by Sir Frank Brangwyn among others. Brangwyn said: ‘It was a wonderful place...the finest studio in London – a place fit for Michelangelo himself’. The adjacent St. Paul’s

Studios, 135-149 Talgarth Road, were built in 1891 by Frederick Wheeler, and formerly looked on to the St. Paul's school playing fields. They have large north-facing upper rooms that were used as studios by artists such as William Logsdail. Beside each main studio window is a slit window for inserting or extracting large canvases.

Burne-Jones's greatest friend was the designer, writer and socialist William Morris, who lived on the river at Hammersmith in Kelmscott House, Upper Mall, between 1878 and his death in 1896. Encouraged by his friend the typographer Emery Walker, who lived at 7 Hammersmith Terrace for thirty years, Morris established a private press called the Kelmscott Press in Upper Mall in 1891. Books designed by William Morris, some of them illustrated by Edward Burne-Jones, were printed on Albion hand presses and sold in limited editions to subscribers. This successful venture was wound up in 1898. Two years later another private press, the Doves Press, was founded at 1 Hammersmith Terrace by Emery Walker and Thomas James Cobden-Sanderson, who also lived locally in Upper Mall. Doves Press productions are notable for their plain appearance and for their beautiful Emery Walker-designed typeface. The last books were printed in 1916, and in 1917 Cobden-Sanderson threw the press types into the Thames from Hammersmith Bridge so that no-one else could use them.



Hammersmith's 1930s' Cineworld cinema, threatened with demolition under the King Street regeneration scheme (see article on page 8).

Pottery had been made in Fulham since John Dwight set up his stoneware manufactory in New Kings Road/Burlington Road in 1673. In 1888 the potter William de Morgan moved his factory to a site in Sands End now marked by De Morgan Road, where it operated until 1907. De Morgan, who knew both William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones, specialised in tiles, tile panels, vases and bowls painted in deep colours and lustre. The Martin Brothers were a team of highly original potters who moved into Pomona House, on the site of 111 New Kings Road, Fulham in 1873. To begin with they used the kiln at Fulham Pottery to fire their distinctive salt-glazed stoneware, but when that was no longer available they leased a kiln in Goldhawk Road before moving to a permanent location in Southall.

Two great artists of the late 19th century Aesthetic movement lived locally. J M Whistler, American-born

painter and etcher who pioneered a new style of painting influenced by Japanese art, lived at 454 Fulham Road from 1885-87. Walter Crane, a socialist like William Morris, was a painter and designer whose forte was designing decorative patterns and ornament, used for a range of purposes from wallpapers and pottery to whole decorative schemes for rooms. He lived at Beaumont Lodge, Wood Lane, 1876 – 1892. A more conventional Victorian artist, who is represented by a sculpture called *The Greek Runner* in St. Peter's Square gardens, was Sir William Blake Richmond. Primarily a painter, he lived at Beavor Lodge, Beavor Lane, c1880-1919, and eventually became a leading establishment figure with a knighthood.

Edward Johnston was a noted calligrapher and designer of lettering, who lived at 3, Hammersmith Terrace, 1905-1912. During the First World War he designed the alphabet for the London Underground. One of Edward Johnston's pupils was Eric Gill who lived at 20 Black Lion Lane between 1905 and 1907. Eric Gill was a stone-carver, letter-cutter, engraver and typographer. He designed ten printing types including Perpetua and the still widely used Gill Sans. W A S Benson and Co's art metal works were situated nearby in Eyot Gardens between about 1880 and 1920. 'Brass' Benson was an associate of William Morris who designed household objects, furniture and light fittings.

An interesting early 20th century venture was the Glass House, in Lettice Street, Fulham, a purpose-built studio where independent stained glass artists could work and supervise production of their designs by trained craftsmen. It was founded by the firm of Lowndes and Drury, which was established by Mary Lowndes and A J Drury in 1897 and moved from Chelsea to Fulham in 1906. Mary designed stained glass herself and other women artists worked at the Glass House too. In the late 1970s windows for the Anglican Cathedral in Liverpool were designed there, including the great west window. This is 120' high and 1,600 feet square. It contains more than 200,000 pieces of glass and took five years to make. The Glass House closed in 1993. Some of the designers there had been trained by Christopher Whall, the stained glass artist and pioneer advocate of Arts and Crafts principles in stained glass. He lived at 19 Shaftesbury Road, Ravenscourt Road, between 1899 and 1921, and also had a studio-workshop at 1 Ravenscourt Park.

Temple Lodge in Queen Caroline Street, close to Hammersmith Bridge, was the home for many years (1898-1934) of one of the most significant early 20th century British artists, Sir Frank Brangwyn. Brangwyn is best known for his painting, etching and lithography; he was elected to the Royal Academy in 1919 and knighted in 1941. His work is represented in virtually every art gallery in the world, and there is a Brangwyn museum in Bruges. Henri Gaudier-Brzeska, the French sculptor and draughtsman who moved to London in 1911, lived at 454a Fulham Road, 1912-1914. Gaudier-Brzeska allied himself with the Vorticists, writing for their magazine *Blast*. He joined the French army and was killed in action during the First World War. A war death was also the fate

of Eric Ravilious, the painter, designer and printmaker, who lived at 48 Upper Mall, 1931-35. Ravilious was an official war artist during the Second World War and died when the air sea rescue plane in which he was travelling as an observer disappeared off Iceland.

Two other 20th century artists in Hammersmith were Ruskin Spear, who lived at 60 British Grove, 1978-1990, and Victor Pasmore, at 18 Dewhurst Road in the 1930s. Leon Underwood was a prolific artist who travelled extensively and worked in a variety of styles and media, but was primarily known as a sculptor. He was born in Askew Road, and in 1919 he bought 12 Girdlers Road, where he both lived and had his studio. In 1921 he opened a school there called the Brook Green School, where he taught a number of young sculptors including Henry Moore. While attending the school and during his time at the Royal College of Art, Moore lived and worked in a studio nearby in Adie Road from 1924-28. An HBG plaque installed in 2009 commemorates his residence. Mary Fedden RA (born 1915) is still alive and working as a painter, particularly of still lifes. Her late husband, the painter and printmaker Julian Trevelyan bought their house/studio at Durham Wharf in 1935. Another artist associated with Durham Wharf is Ben Johnson. He paints meticulously mapped-out panoramic cityscapes and gave an interesting talk about his work at the 2010 Historic Buildings Group annual meeting.

Jane Kimber, former archivist to LBHF

ORGANISED DISORDER

The Albion Gardens flats, originally built for pensioners, are now included in the Flora Gardens estate on the west side of Dalling Road. Dating from 1955, they were designed by Henry Cadbury-Brown (1913-2009), one of a group of modernists who combined a concern for social needs with a passion for elegant design. Cadbury-Brown described them as ‘very brutal’ for their time. Cadbury-Brown believed in self-expression to balance ‘the frightening regularity of life’. His vision was organised disorder and he was acutely aware of the differences in materials. His buildings have considerable theatricality, but, as Alan Powers puts it, that theatricality is ‘somehow more controlled and less reliant on gesture’ than similar displays in the work of other modernists.

The flats bear all the marks of Cadbury-Brown. The thin string courses are cleverly aligned with the architectural features of the pre-war front of Ravenscourt House. The windows occur in strongly defined bands. Those in the main rooms are very large with low sills making it easy for residents to look out. The entrance of one block has an elegant porte-cochère on slender columns. This is a little joke as very few of the original occupants would have had cars. The stairwells are illuminated during the day by the use of cut brick leaving a pattern of gaps. Originally there were decorative tiles and a large plaque by Stephen Sykes (both now seem to have gone). Although the block further from the road is a storey higher than the block on the road, an optical illusion makes them appear the same height when viewed from across the road. One critic (Elaine Harwood) has

commented: ‘here appears the severe but meticulous disposition of elements and attention to every detail that informed his [ie Cadbury-Brown’s] best work’.



The Albion Gardens flats in the Flora Gardens estate on Dalling Road, built by Modernist architect Henry Cadbury-Brown in 1955. This view is from the east.

The buildings are not listed and now that the windows have been replaced and the artwork removed, probably never will be. They should, however, be on the local list of buildings of merit. Any replacement of Ravenscourt House should respect the quality of the flats and every effort should be made to connect the detailing of the Ravenscourt House frontage with that of the flats, as Cadbury-Brown did himself half a century ago when he built next to the older building.

John Goodier, Historic Buildings Group

SILVER SCREENS – PART II (contd. from No. 24)

At the last moment the Davis family sold the cinema to the newly created Gaumont British Picture Corporation who were establishing a national chain of entertainment palaces. On opening night a full cine-variety programme was presented: a major feature film supported by ‘extras’ – live acts and an orchestra, the organ, and a newsreel (imported American films, which everybody wanted to see in preference to the home grown product, were expensive to put on so a few inexpensive extras were added to make cinema-goers feel they were getting more for their money than ‘just’ a movie). Thereafter the cinema settled into presenting mass entertainment for the locality together with another huge cinema, the Commodore, which stood almost opposite where Goldhawk Road joins King Street. (This happened to be the point where two tramlines met so audiences could travel to and from deep in the western suburbs.)

The last large cinema to built in the area was the Regal in King Street. This opened in 1938 and was built for Associated British Cinemas, a national circuit started by Scottish solicitor John Maxwell. Designed in streamlined Art Deco both inside and out, the Regal was less elaborate than the Gaumont Palace and the Commodore, but nevertheless boasted stylish plasterwork either side of the proscenium depicting Elizabethan galleons. Today,

much altered inside (fortunately the plasterwork survives behind later partitioning), the old Regal, now Cineworld, still shows films, though possibly not for long as the site is scheduled for redevelopment (*see below – Ed*).

Since the building of the first multiplex (another American import), cinemas are now in out-of-town retail parks on in shopping centres, like the one in Westfield where you can take in a movie as part of buying a new pair of shoes. There is much less sense of occasion in entering these black boxes – no swishing curtains or theatrical excitement as can still be experienced in the West End theatre, if not quite in the remaining picture palaces surrounding Leicester Square. Still, some years back, what with competition from bingo, TV, video, computer games, the internet and umpteen other diversions, it looked as though film would simply end up in a plastic box on a supermarket shelf. But somehow it won't quite go away. There is still glamour and cinema continues to provide one of the most uncomplicated and cheapest nights out to be had. Keep going to the flicks!

Richard Gray, Cinema Theatre Association

LIGHTS, CAMERA ... CLOSURE

The Cineworld site in King Street, Hammersmith, has been in cinema use for a hundred years. It was originally the Blue Hall Cinematograph, opened in 1912 and one of our earliest cinemas. The present cinema was built as the Regal in 1936 by Associated British Cinemas.

By today's standards the Regal was a large cinema with seating for 1,283 in the stalls and 974 in the balcony. In 1975 the then owners, EMI, made some changes to the foyer and subdivided the auditorium horizontally to provide three screens. Having been renamed the Cannon in 1986, the cinema's lower auditorium was divided in two in 1994, so creating today's four-screen Cineworld. The original building, designed by ABC's own in-house architect, the prolific William R Glen (1885-1950), was intended for live performances as well as cinema and the stage, fly tower and dressing rooms still exist.

The building was damaged in the Second World War. It was probably at this time that the original curved canopy of multicoloured metal and glass was lost. The Compton theatre organ was removed in 1982. Much of the original detail has been lost, but the moulded proscenium arch is partly intact together with its fibrous plaster galleons and ventilation grilles. These details can now only be seen from the stage area. The detail of the foyer to the balcony, now screens 3 and 4, appears to be intact. The double height main foyer is impressive and some detail survives, including the Egyptian pilasters, which stand sentinel to the balcony stairs.

Externally the curved frontage with its giant fins, despite its obvious neglect, still contributes much to the Hammersmith street scene. The building is one of many in King Street from the 1930s period. Cineworld is on the council's local list of buildings of merit. A neighbouring 1930s' building – Hammersmith town hall – is statutorily listed.

The cinema is scheduled for demolition in the King Street regeneration scheme, along with another building of merit, Cromwell Mansions. Sadly, despite a 100-year history of cinema on the site, a new cinema is not included in the new proposals.

With periodic weekly peaks of over 5,000 admissions for its most popular films and a projected total of over 170,000 admissions for the current year, the cinema is profitable. It would be lucrative even if Cineworld had to pay market rent for use of the site. The cinema clearly continues to provide King Street with major footfall and its demolition – publicly regretted by such well known local actors as Colin Firth, Sheila Hancock, Ralph Fiennes, Vanessa Redgrave, Alan Rickman and Timothy Dalton – will rob King Street of a vital and historic local amenity.

Roger Warry, Historic Buildings Group

In this issue:

- 1 Chairman's Report
- 4 Park And Palace
- 5 The Artistic Borough
- 7 Organised Disorder
- 7 Silver Screens – Part II
- 8 Lights, Camera ... Closure

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Thu 20 Oct: HBG annual meeting in the new extension to Hammersmith parish church: St Paul's, Queen Caroline Street, London W6. Doors open for refreshments 7pm; tours of the church 7.15pm; meeting starts 8pm.

10-11 Sep: The Mayor's Thames Festival

17-18 Sep: Open House London

Sat 12 Nov: The Lord Mayor's Show

HBG PUBLICATIONS

Local List £17 members, £20 non-members. *Bradmore House* illustrated booklet, £5. Tel: 020 8748 7416.

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ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS

£5.00 for individuals and £15 for groups. New members are always welcome. Please contact the hon. secretary.

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