



## The Hammersmith Society

### Newsletter March 2011



Above, clockwise from top left: Franco-British Exhibition, White City, 1908 (now site of Westfield); Hammersmith Creek c.1925 (where Furnivall Gardens is now); daguerreotype of Jessie Mylne and her brother, 1861, grandchildren of George Scott, owner of Ravenscourt House and Park; laying tram tracks in Goldhawk Road, 1898; Gwynne's engineering works, Crisp Road, c.1920. *All images copyright of LBHF*

### **SALVAGING A FUTURE FOR THE BOROUGH ARCHIVES**

**B**y the time this Newsletter goes to print, Hammersmith & Fulham will have effectively lost its full-time Archives service. As of the end of February, with a notice period of a matter of weeks, the Archives closed its doors, to enable the Council to save £70,000 p.a. as part of its programme to make savings of £65m over 3 years. The intention is that that limited opening will resume in May, and investigations will be made for alternative long term provision for the Archives.

**A Rich Collection:** The Archives service is housed in the Lilla Huset, the small sister building to the Ark on Talgarth Road at Hammersmith Broadway. Its two excellent and experienced archivists took care of the Borough's collections of documents, records and maps, some of which go back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Records of birth, death and burials, census records, documents from charitable trusts, local newspapers, Council minutes and records, an extraordinary collection of old photographs of the area (*see previous page*), maps showing the development of Hammersmith from a rural district with a coaching stop at the Broadway to its rapid development at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, museum objects such as examples of Martinware, de Morgan and Fulham Pottery – all are kept in the Archives. The archivists have been adept at bringing all this material to life with talks in Borough libraries, producing books of photographs from the collections, and helping residents who come in to look for family history or to research the story of their house or street, and assisting those engaged in London-wide research. Many items are very fragile and need careful handling and specialist oversight, and air-conditioning and control of humidity are essential.

So questions immediately arise as to how this precious collection – effectively part of Hammersmith and Fulham's collective memory- will be preserved if it is no longer to be a fulltime service?

The Lilla Huset is rented by the Council at a peppercorn rent until 2015 (part of the “planning gain” negotiated when The Ark was built), so the contents can in theory stay there until then. But specialist personnel will be required to supervise the continued safekeeping of the collections and, one would hope, catalogue incoming material. And what of researchers and local residents wishing to use the Archives' Reading Room?

**Local Groups Take Action To Ensure Some Access:** The local amenity societies, including the Hammersmith Society, decided that complete closure of the Archives could not be contemplated, and have as a matter of urgency been investigating what arrangements could possibly be set up to allow for limited opening and essential archival services to be carried on. As a result, it looks likely that the Archives will open 20 hours a month and still be free to personal researchers. Postal and email enquiries will be charged for, but an improved website should direct internet users to locations where some of the material exists on-line, eg the National Census websites. Collecting of new material, however, may be suspended. A freelance archivist will be employed, assisted by volunteers, and the cost will be met by charging for some services and / or requesting donations, combined with a modest amount of grant funding. Inevitably the service provided under this limited arrangement will be very different to what could be done when two full time archivists, extremely familiar with the collections, were available to help and give suggestions to inquirers and researchers and to continue cataloguing and receiving new material.

**Volunteer Help:** Arrangements for organising a volunteer structure are still far from being finalised, but people interested in the possibility of volunteering – particularly if they have some experience of using or working in archives – are invited to contact Maya Donelan, Secretary of the Fulham Society, at [info@fulhamsociety.org](mailto:info@fulhamsociety.org) , with their name, address and phone number and a brief note of why they are interested and any experience they might have.

**And What Next?** The Council has said it hopes to assure the long-term future of the Archives when the present financial crisis is over. But the lease on the present premises will still expire and it may be that transfer to the London Metropolitan Archives in Farringdon, or to the Westminster Archives, will be seen as the most cost-effective option. It is a sorry moment when maintaining a locality's history in its own place is no longer regarded as part of the municipal commonwealth that we are all richer for. At a time when localism is much talked about, it is ironic that services seem to be moving further

away from the people they serve. Please let us look for a long term future for the Archives IN Hammersmith and Fulham.

## **HAMMERSMITH TOWN HALL REDEVELOPMENT**

**O**ur last Newsletter's leading article was on the Town Hall redevelopment. The detailed planning application was submitted in October 1, to demolish the 1970s Town Hall Extension while erecting a range of buildings from 6 to 15 storeys, demolishing the Quaker Meeting House, the cinema and Pocklington trust flats in Cromwell Avenue, and raising Nigel Playfair Avenue to first floor level next to the Town Hall, taking a footbridge over the A4 and subsuming a large section of Furnival Gardens with its descent ramps. Go to [www.saveourskyline.co.uk](http://www.saveourskyline.co.uk) to see images of the scheme. The Save our Skyline grouping has brought a mass of new and energetic residents to the discussion of the kind of borough we want to live in, and has been an extraordinary catalyst for opposition and publicity.

**Criticism of the scheme has been remarkable:** Over 700 letters and emails received by the Council, all but a handful opposing the scheme; an unprecedented coalition of 26 local groups united against it; the major national amenity societies opposing it – the Georgian Group, the Victorian Society, the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Society and English Heritage. The scarring of the views of Upper and Lower Mall from the riverside by the 14 and 15 storey tower blocks, the impact on the setting of the listed Town Hall and Sussex House (on the corner of Furnivall Gardens, just metres away from the bridge), the damage to the setting of conservation areas which the Council is obliged by its own Unitary Development Plan to safeguard, the loss of the well-used cinema, the loss of 53 economic-rent Pocklington Trust homes (with no affordable housing planned in the new development), the mass of planning guidance and regulations would have to be ignored or contravened – all these have generated fierce opposition.

**There seems to be a pause while comments are being considered:** As well as the objections from the major national groups mentioned above, the GLA has also lodged a so-called “Stage 1 Report” noting aspects where the scheme is not compliant with the London Plan, taking particular exception to the height, damage to river views, loss of the cinema, and lack of affordable housing. (Indeed, not only will there be no affordable housing in the technical sense of social rented or intermediate part-rent/part buy: the housing is unlikely to be “affordable” in the normal sense of the word, to any but a tiny proportion of people looking to buy in London – many of whom will be overseas investors.)

**Public Inquiry:** It looks increasingly likely that if the Council and its development partners do not rethink their plans, the scheme will go to a public enquiry, involving both promoters and objectors in a lengthy process and considerable expense.

**Hammersmith Society Policy:** This is not something we would embark on lightly, but the Hammersmith Society feels that this is a decisive moment in formulating the Hammersmith of the future: do we affirm that we should look to heritage-based regeneration which keeps the unique qualities of Hammersmith's riverside setting, or do we open the way to bringing high rise riverside ribbon development through Hammersmith – both along the river and along King Street?

The Hammersmith Society will continue to oppose this scheme and hope that a more modest alternative will come forward. A working group of local architects is looking at alternative possibilities which pursue heritage-based regeneration, which can overcome the main objections and gain the support of the community.

**It is not too late for the Council and KSD to reconsider their proposals** and bring forward a smaller-scale, more modest scheme which is no higher than the present Town Hall extension, while still bringing regeneration and renewal to this end of King Street. If, at the end of the day, the Council had to pay some rent on its new civic offices because the reduced height of the residential development brought the developers less revenue, it would be a price worth paying: otherwise we all pay the cost of permanent scarring of Hammersmith's unique and beautiful riverside views by losing what makes Hammersmith a desirable place to be - and to build in. Alternatively, perhaps it needs to be admitted that now is not the moment for grandiose building projects, and so refurbishing the Town Hall extension (at a likely cost far less than the £18 million being mentioned by the Council) could be the solution, paid for by a more modest development on the Town Hall car park in Nigel Playfair Avenue.

*The Society's submission can be read in full on our website, [www.hammersmithsociety.org.uk](http://www.hammersmithsociety.org.uk).*

### AGM

The Society's AGM will be held on 22 June 2011, at the winner of last year's Environment Award, Burlington Danes School, Wood Lane. Further details will be circulated closer to the time, but do put it in your diary and plan to come and see this interesting new building next to its fine 1930s precursor.

## RIVERSIDE DEVELOPMENT

**M**eanwhile, the scramble for sites on which to build luxury riverside apartments continues elsewhere in Hammersmith. There are two key sites where major applications are about to be submitted: Queen's Wharf, immediately downstream from Hammersmith Bridge, and Hammersmith Embankment (now rechristened Fulham Reach) just downstream from Riverside Studios. At Queen's Wharf a development of 91 dwellings rising to 8 stories is proposed, in what is one of the most sensitive sites in the borough, as it provides the background to the view of Grade II\* Hammersmith Bridge. The height of the building means the familiar silhouette of the bridge tower on the Hammersmith side will be completely lost: any building on this key site should be limited to the height of Digby Mansions on the other side of the Bridge. Residents in the Queen Caroline estate, already beleaguered by traffic from the Apollo, are concerned that extra traffic from the planned restaurant will make parking even more difficult for them, and are distressed by loss of views.

Hammersmith Embankment/Fulham Reach proposes a vast development of 750 dwellings. Developers are St George, whose signature tower blocks with cut-away curves dominate Putney Bridge. They propose the same design for part of their scheme here, although the first building, rising to 9 stories onto the river, is in orthodox riverside wharf design (not an idiom local to Hammersmith, but no matter, it is becoming universally applicable wherever there is water). Set as it is among two and three storey terrace houses, the scheme is yet another big beast, out of scale with its neighbours, damaging to the conservation area in which it is set and it will have a severe impact on river views.

There are grounds for real concern that there is a wish to link these two developments under a single ownership and to include development of the Queen Caroline estate and the Riverside Studios site. The Council's new draft Core Strategy includes an aspiration that the area should be redeveloped as a single project. Queen Caroline residents are nonplussed by the suggestion that their estate needs

redevelopment – but are only too well aware of the enormous market value that can be attached to sites with riverside views. Surely it is time for the Council, in its role as local planning authority, to concede that Hammersmith’s riverside setting is an asset in every way as valuable as money in the bank (and a great deal more permanent, if properly protected), and to protect it accordingly from unsuitable development?

## **LOCALISM BILL**

**T**he Localism Bill seems to promise much to redress the balance of power away from central government, towards local people. However, at a seminar given recently by the London Forum of Civic and Local Amenity Societies ([www.londonforum.co.uk](http://www.londonforum.co.uk)), there was a strong sense that its provisions were less adapted to London than to the rest of the country. It was also evident that it is intended to be a vehicle for development (eg by offering incentives to local communities to endorse house-building on greenfield sites) rather than to focus development in the right places or constructively restrain inappropriate development which is the concern in London. Much of the detail has yet to be worked out. It contains a wide range of provisions, of which these are only a selection of the ones most relevant to London:

- Rules on predetermination are clarified so that councillors can discuss controversial issues with constituents ahead of voting on them, without risk of being accused of bias or facing legal challenge.
- Housing: greater powers over housing and regeneration go to the Mayor of London.
- Community groups get a right to bid to take over the running of a local service.
- Community groups get a right to bid for local community assets (eg meeting spaces, village shops) and will be given time to raise money when an asset comes on the open market. Local authorities will have to keep a list of assets of community value.
- Local referendums: the right to suggest votes on important local issues.
- Neighbourhood Planning: communities can set up a neighbourhood forum which can draw up a “neighbourhood development plan” (which must however be consistent with the local development framework).
- Communities to be consulted before very large planning applications: this would be a requirement on developers rather than discretionary as at present
- Community Infrastructure levy on new development as an alternative to Section 106 monies.
- Local Plans: Inspectors’ reports will no longer be binding on the local authority.
- Duty to co-operate: local authorities and public bodies to be required to work together on planning issues.
- There is no “community right of appeal” despite earlier undertakings that there would be: ie residents still cannot appeal against planning permission given to an inappropriate or unpopular development.

The Bill is going through the committee stage and an amendment to give a limited community right of appeal has been tabled.. There are also concerns that a presumption in favour of development may be introduced. The Bill could offer real opportunities and shift power to local communities in some significant ways. But it is not enough to establish forms of collaborative working and participation unless the public has the possibility of engaging at the earliest stages of local planning, before decision-makers’ minds are made up. And that will require a major cultural change in councils and developers.

## **LOSS OF COMMUNITY SPACE**

**T**he Council has voted to sell a number of buildings it owns, including Fulham Town Hall, Sands End Community Centre, Shepherds Bush Village Hall in Bulwer Street, the Irish Cultural Centre, and Palingswick House. At the meeting at which the decision was made, a very eloquent case was made for the Village Hall, used every week for activities which benefit local people, and which are unlikely to be able to afford space at commercial rates elsewhere: the Shepherd's Bush Community Association, the West London Vietnamese Association, a dance school, a young people's sports' group, three faith groups, and various alternative therapy practitioners. Once upon a time it was possible for scouts and guides, advice sessions, ballet, yoga, blood donor sessions, etc, to find a weekly slot in a local hall without difficulty – and their existence was taken for granted as a part of community life. Now church halls are most likely to be rented by Montessori schools during weekdays, and finding out of hours slots is a challenge – and can be expensive. Community space is essential to society – big or small - and perhaps the Community Right to Bid in the Localism Bill (*see above*) is coming just too late for our community resources. But these small groups are unlikely to be able to raise the sort of money the Council would be asking, in any event. Once gone, these community resources will not be replaced (*see next item*). They are resources which are necessary for the “Big Society” to happen.

## **NCP CAR PARK BEADON ROAD**

**T**he latest in a succession of applications for this site will shortly be heard by the Planning Applications Committee: the site is to the north of Lyric Square where advertising hoardings have stood for many years with a carpark behind, accessible from the south end of Hammersmith Grove. The notorious “Armadillo” building was proposed for the site, followed by the glass-fronted slab which is likely to go forward. Over and above criticism of its height, scale and generic design, we are intrigued and saddened by the absence of any community contribution. The “Armadillo” offered a cinema as part of the development. Its successor proposal offered community space. Then the community space was commuted to a new library at the time the Council planned to move Hammersmith Library to this site. Finally, (after it was decided not to move the Library) the latest incarnation offers no community space at all – and this at a time when the area is losing space for community functions and classes as premises are sold by the Council. Puzzlingly, the developers tell us that the Council said to them community space was not necessary, and a funding contribution to the running costs of Hammersmith Library should be made instead.

## **LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK**

**T**he Core Strategy Document will be subject to an Examination in Public from 12 April for 2 weeks. The document will set the parameters for development in the Borough for the next 20 years, and the Hammersmith Society and the H&F Historic Buildings Group, which have both made extensive written submissions, will be participating: so will the big developers who have major interests in the Borough. There will be discussion including the Built Environment, Housing, Tall Buildings, Community Facilities and Open Spaces, Hammersmith Town Centre, and the River Thames and Canal, in which it will be important to assert the importance of the quality of our built environment, and of keeping what is valuable and unique in our Borough while looking forward to regeneration which responds to the needs and wishes of residents as well as developers.

## SHEPHERDS BUSH MARKET

The Regeneration plan was agreed in the autumn but is still controversial. It envisaged improvements to the market area and facilities, financed by development of some of the adjacent property, including 30-52 Goldhawk Road (which includes the landmark Cooke's Eel Pie and Mash behind that terrace. unveiled for a 7 development of 250 the site with shops clear whether the and the other shops wish to be evident is that there a generic and out-of the site. The market years of rebuilding, indoor affair, losing and therefore its unique selling point. (Photo: C. Underwood/Shepherd's Bush Blog)



## FRIENDS OF RAVENSCOURT PARK

According to the Council, Ravenscourt has now become the most heavily used park in the borough, and a 'dramatic increase' in usage has brought demand to what they call a 'challenging level'. While people are happy about park use by local nurseries and primary schools, many feel that routine use by secondary schools is a different matter. The new Hammersmith Academy in Cathnor Road will soon be using the artificial football pitches and the adjacent tennis courts in Ravenscourt Square for four mornings a week. Its use will build up gradually from this autumn, but when fully open the Academy will have nearly 800 pupils aged 11-18. There are also plans for other secondary schools in the immediate vicinity, also seeking to use the park as their playing fields. When bookings are outsourced – due to happen shortly – will those who can pay more be given priority, displacing local primary schools? The Friends are concerned that a conflict of interest could be emerging between some Council policies and wider public access and enjoyment.

On a more optimistic note, the Friends and three local primary schools have launched a partnership project that aims to involve parents, families, local businesses and the wider community as well as schoolchildren. A Year in the Life of Ravenscourt Park in Photographs is starting this month and will run until March 2012. Month by month, year 4 pupils in Flora Gardens, John Betts' and the Ravenscourt Park Preparatory School will be documenting aspects of the Park in photographs, focusing on a range of different themes. In March 2012, the project team will be seeking 12 winning photographs and a selection of those judged the most evocative and original will be shown locally in a public exhibition. Judging by the children's enthusiastic response to the photography workshop held at the launch, the results should be worth seeing. *For more information about the Friends, please contact the Chair Annabelle May [annabellemay@lineone.net](mailto:annabellemay@lineone.net) or the Secretary Janis Cammell OBE [janiscammell@btinternet.com](mailto:janiscammell@btinternet.com)*

## **OTHER NEWS**

**ASKEW BUSINESS NETWORK (ABN):** This is a recent initiative to draw together and offer networking opportunities to the many business people who work around the Askew Road area, including the large number of self-employed and sole traders in the area. **The next meeting is on Wednesday 9 March in the Greyhound Pub, 49 Becklow Road W12 9ER, from 6 - 8.30pm:** attendance is free, and local residents are also warmly invited. The focus will be on hearing about the Council's plans to improve Askew Road (removing guardrails and bollards, decluttering, planting trees, moving cycle stands, resurfacing and more...). See [www.askewbusiness.co.uk](http://www.askewbusiness.co.uk)

**EMERY WALKER HOUSE:** 7 Hammersmith Terrace W6: The Trustees have announced this unique arts and crafts interior will be open on Saturdays from 2 April. To book a visit go to [www.emerywalker.org.uk](http://www.emerywalker.org.uk) or 0208 741 4104. Group visits may be arranged at other times.

**HAMMERSMITH PALAIS SITE:** After being rejected at appeal last summer, a revised scheme for the Palais site has been given approval, as a 418-bed student hostel. The design of the frontage on Shepherd's Bush Road is somewhat improved, though the overall height at 10 storeys is still in excess of what should have been considered acceptable.

**HAMMERSMITH LIBRARY:** We are glad that the main Library will now stay in its original Carnegie Library building, rather than moving to prospective new space in offices on the site of the NCP carpark.

**HAMMERSMITH SOCIETY ARCHIVE MATERIAL:** Warm thanks to Anne Wright who answered our request for old newsletters with a treasure trove reaching back to 1983. Among other curiosities, they record the controversy in the 1980s over plans to widen Glenthorne Road to dual carriageway in both directions - thankfully, never carried through. Does anyone have copies of AGM minutes pre 1993? Much of our earlier material went to the Borough Archives about then – so (ironically) is no longer readily accessible.

**OPEN HOUSE 2011 - "THE LIVEABLE CITY":** Open House London is the annual opportunity to get out and discover great architecture and design in every London neighbourhood. The theme for 2011 embodies the impact that quality of place has on everyone – something the Hammersmith Society keeps affirming. Dates this year are 17 & 18 September. There are volunteering opportunities available as well – go to [www.openhouselondon.org.uk](http://www.openhouselondon.org.uk)

**C**ontact the Hammersmith Society by emailing or writing to the Secretary, 35 Ashchurch Grove W12 9BU, [secretary@hammersmithsociety.org.uk](mailto:secretary@hammersmithsociety.org.uk)