

BRENTFORD & CHISWICK LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Annual General Meeting, 15 May 2023

Agenda

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting, September 2022
3. Chairman's Report
4. Hon Treasurer's Report
5. Appointment of inspector of accounts
6. Election of Officers and Committee
7. Any other business

Chairman's Report, January 2022 to May 2023

As always our Financial Statement covers the calendar year to 31 December 2022 but parts of this Report bring us up to date to the AGM.

Programme: We continued our online monthly talks programme though we postponed the talk which would have taken place on the day of the Queen's funeral in September. Members received the spring and autumn programmes, then we sent out booking details for each individual talk. When Ticket Source began to charge a fee we moved to Ticket Tailor which was not only simpler to manage but also free to use. We offered a joint event with the Hounslow & District History Society and the Isleworth Society in November 2022, when Bob Cowie spoke of the findings from decades of *Syon Abbey* excavations.

In 2022 I gave a talk on *Making a Living from the River* in January, Dr Alison Appleby presented recent research on the *Impact of the Great War on Health & Housing in Brentford* in February, Phil Philo's talk on *Local Men who Voyaged with Captain Cook* took place in March and Nadege Forde Vidal described the *Black Chiswick Through History* project at Chiswick House in April. Following the AGM Val Bott shared her study of 125 years of the residents of the *Hartington Park Estate*. In October John Collins described the stunning work on *Refurbishing Boston Manor House*, and in December Janet McNamara and Val Bott presented a quirky *Winter Scrapbook* of images and news-cuttings.

Other Groups and societies: Individual committee members have given talks to various local groups on Brentford and Chiswick subjects. David Shailes and Jim Storrar (both B&CLHS committee members) have work tirelessly monitoring the impact of redevelopment on Brentford's historic buildings and landscape, mainly for Brentford Voice but keeping our committee informed. David promoted street displays for Local History Month in 2022 while Jim has been co-ordinating the production of heritage panels in Brentford, the first to be launched in summer 2023. Our Society continued to be one of the nine sponsoring societies for the annual West London Local History Conference. The 42nd conference, entitled *Play the Game*, about sport in South & West London, was held on line in November 2022 but attracted a very modest audience. The steering group is reviewing the future and hoping that a face to face event will be possible in future.

Publications: We published *Brentford & Chiswick Local History Journal 31* in late May and distributed it to all members. This publication continues to be something in which we should take great pride, for its excellent content (for which we thank our authors), the careful editing by Val Bott, the elegant layout design by Mike Paterson and the handsome production by Carfax Cards, the printers with whom we have worked for many years. Once again we sold a number of copies via

mail order through our online bookshop.

Website: We use the website as a means of keeping in touch with our members and with members of the public, promoting our own talks and relevant lectures of historical and local interest put on by others. The online bookshop page has been busy, dealing with 41 different purchasers during 2022. We have continued to buy small stocks of publications with local connections, some linked to Society lectures, to help them reach a wider audience. We currently have 31 items for sale and everything can be ordered online using Paypal.

Once a *Journal* has sold out, we post its articles for open access onto the website, and in 2022 we did this for the contents of *Journal 17*.

We are getting around a dozen email local history queries a month coming in via the website. Janet McNamara, our Vice-Chairman, monitors these and co-ordinates our responses wherever practicable; some are passed on to the Local Studies team.

In 2022 the number of website users slipped from the 22,560 of the previous year to 19,478; 76% came from the UK, 7.2% from the USA and the rest from 143 other countries. The visitors made 38,879 page views (50,960 in 2021). We had three inexplicable spikes of interest: 414 users on April 11th, 692 on 17th May and 286 on 13th November. As before, the most read pages were about the Great West Road; other popular topics were the Glebe estate, Gill Clegg's brief history of Chiswick, Public Houses, the Corona stage school and the V2.

Social media: Emma White has continued to oversee our Twitter and Facebook accounts (both @BCLocalHistory). By posting regular messages and pages on a variety of history topics she promotes interest in local history, and raises awareness of our talks and our publications. On Twitter we ended the year with 2,568 followers (an increase of 178). Followers are registered to receive everything we send, and a number of whom are local organisations who often re-tweet her stories to a wider audience. Because of the way that tweets are multiplied through the users, the tweets are receiving an average of c25,000 views a month. Readers can then open the messages on their phones or computers. On our Facebook site we ended the year with 378 users (an increase of 55) with an average of c.4,000 views per month.

Hounslow's heritage: The 5-year restoration project at Boston Manor House is nearing completion. Costing around £6 million it should open to visitors this summer. Queen Camilla visited earlier this year to mark its 400th anniversary and it recently won a Civic Trust Award. Work continues on a separate project to restore the Park. Both elements of the work have received substantial grants from the National Lottery Heritage Fund. This will complete investment by Hounslow Council in its major heritage sites which also include Gunnersbury Park and Hogarth's House, putting them into good heart for the future. In September we learnt that Gunnersbury Park Museum had been given a grant an oral history project on the Great West Road. We are delighted that the first steps have now been taken towards an application for Lottery funding to support the conversion of Gunnersbury's stable blocks into storage and study space for the Museum's collections, including the transport collection, along with the archives and local studies holdings of Ealing and Hounslow.

As part of the redevelopment of Brentford, in 2022 the Museum of London Archaeology team created a virtual tour of the interior of St Lawrence's, in which Janet McNamara, Jim Storrar and David Shailes were involved.

As is our usual practice, in September we placed a wreath on the V2 memorial in Staveley Road, Chiswick.

The committee: The Society's small committee organises its activities and monitors aspects of local history and archaeology in our area. The current members are Janet McNamara (Vice-Chairman), Cluny Wells (Hon Secretary), Roger Squire (Hon Treasurer), David Bright (Membership Secretary), Val Bott (Editor), Adam Grounds (Hounslow Local Studies), David Shailes and Jim Storrar. We must thank them for their enthusiasm and support for the Society.

Our membership: Membership numbers have remained stable at just under 200. As always I want to offer my enthusiastic thanks to our loyal members who have continued to support our talks. We look forward to the time when we can once again make them lively and sociable events where we meet in person.

James Wisdom, Chairman
May 2023