

Brentford & Chiswick Local History Society

25 Hartington Road, London, W4 3TL

Registered Charity Number 1212667

Report to members April – December 2026

Trustees

James Wisdom (Chair); David Shailes (Vice-Chair); Roger Squire (Treasurer); Katie Hinchliffe (Secretary); David Bright (Membership Secretary); Val Bott (Editor); James Marshall (Assistant Editor); Jan Cheesman; Janet McNamara

Charity's Object

The Charity's Object is to advance education for the public benefit by the promotion of knowledge and interest in the local history of Brentford and Chiswick, through research and maintenance of an archive; and by organising talks and events regarding local historical matters.

A year of Transformation

This has been literally a year of transformation as the unincorporated society of Brentford and Chiswick Local History Society founded in 1958 transformed itself into a Registered Charity on 24 March 2026 after 68 years of thriving activity.

The Charity formally inherited all the assets of the unincorporated society on 1 April 2026 and has continued the mission of the promotion and study of the local history of Brentford and Chiswick. Following registration with the Charity Commission as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), it was then able to register with HMRC for tax purposes establishing its tax-free status for its charitable activities and enabling it to register for gift aid benefits. All this has now been completed.

Since our foundation, one of the founding trustees – Jim Storrar – stood down after some years' service on the committee of the Society. We are deeply grateful to him for his work during this time and his continuing enthusiasm for the Brentford's local history. During the period we welcomed two new trustees – James Marshall and Jan Shawe. Both bring not only good knowledge of the areas but also links to organisations with whom we have not been regularly in touch in recent years.

The long-standing Vice-Chair of the Society and the enthusiastic supporter of our registration as a charity, Janet McNamara, decided to stand down as Vice Chair but continues as Trustee. David Shailes – an existing Trustee agreed to take over as Vice Chair and has carried a task unexpectedly greater than anticipated as a result of James Wisdom's indisposition. We are all very grateful to him for all his hard work.

Main Activities

In the period under review, the Society's main activities in support of its charitable status have included lectures and publications.

Lectures

Its programme of lectures and talks held to encourage interest in and knowledge of our local history. Many of our speakers live locally and are willing to share with us their deep knowledge of their subject and several are members of the Society. Average attendance during 2025 was 33.

- a. The Charity's first lecture was given by our Trustee and Editor **Val Bott** and shared her research on the wills of local people in the 18th century and

particularly a small group of senior staff who helped to manage Chiswick House and who were sufficiently well-off to write wills. This illustrated talk showed how these documents revealed their property interests, their bequests and their friendships painting a fascinating picture of the lives of those who served at that time.

- b. Using 20 years' research, **David Shailes** told the story of Scot Hugh Ronalds who established a nursery in Brentford in the 1750s. This important horticultural family ran the business for over 100 years until it closed following the death of Robert Ronalds in 1880. David's sources included an archive in Canada and a descendant in Australia. Ronalds family members also include the inventor of the electric telegraph, the author of a definitive book on fly fishing and a famous chemist. At St Lawrence's, Brentford, the family tomb has been restored and a new road in the area has been named after them.
- c. J M W Turner, who lived in Brentford in his youth, built Sandycombe Lodge as a second home in Twickenham for himself. He acted as his own architect although he was undoubtedly influenced by his friend Sir John Soane. Turner lived there from 1813 to 1826. Marking the 250th anniversary of the artist's birth, **Ricky Pound** described his unusual role as house director there. As well as giving an account of the history of the house, he highlighted practical logistical problems such as security and environment and spoke about the work of art historians and curators of subsequent exhibitions.
- d. As a film maker, **David Rust** worked with B&CLHS members some years ago on the Griffin Brewery's history and the process of brewing, including oral histories and information from the then staff team. His illustrated talk included excerpts from the film he made based on his research and published as a DVD (copies are available from the Society's website). David works at the Chiswick Pier Trust, a stone's throw away from the Brewery site.
- e. The Chiswick Nursery stretched from the High Road to the Bath Road along the east side of Turnham Green Terrace, from at least the 1750s. **Val Bott** runs nureserygardenerd.co and was thus well qualified to talk on this subject. She used James Scott's lavish trade card to show the range of plants, equipment and services he offered and also told his brother's story, from working as a senior Chiswick House gardener to setting up a pineapple nursery of his own.

The Society publishes a high quality annual Journal which is always well received. Issue 34 contained articles on subjects as diverse as The History of the Tabard Theatre, Chiswick by **Wesley Henderson-Roe**; The women of Boston Manor by **Steph Hagan** providing a compelling glimpse of the lives and relationships of the women who lived there in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; **David Shailes'** story of Town Gas and the growth of its use in Brentford. **James Wisdom** and **Val Bott** interpretation of a remarkable early photograph of Chiswick High Road in 1863 and **John Dent's** interesting account of the life Thomas Neill (1755 -1828) who rose from being an apprentice clerk of works for Sir John Soane to being a builder of barracks for the Army, a general contractor and investor in property. He lived in later life in Arlington House, Turnham Green. Demand continues at a good level for both the 2025 edition and for back copies. Thank you to our Editor Val Bott and Dr Julia Phillips our layout consultant who have worked so hard on ensuring the high level of design of the Journal is maintained.

Visits

The Society arranged two tours of Voysey House Chiswick organised by Sanderson's archivists. This was originally built in 1902 by Sandersons Wallpaper company as its headquarters to a design by Charles Voysey. They used the building until 1928 when a fire in the adjoining factory caused them to leave the area. The building passed through several hands but was recently repurchased by Sandersons to become their head office.

It has been substantially renovated with many of the interior finishes restored to their original condition. It was a lovely visit and a real pleasure to enjoy a building which has been re-occupied by its original owner.

Our website continues to offer information on many local history topics of local history including articles from out of print copies of our *Journal*. A selection of books on the local history of our area is also available through the online shop.

Joint Venture

Our joint venture (Great West Road Centenary Project – GWRCP) with Hounslow and District History Society has published a book on the history of Great West Road to celebrate its centenary. This has been hugely successful thanks to the hard work of the book's author and main salesperson James Marshall. The book was published in autumn 2024 and sold so well that the venture agreed to a second print-run in November 2025. By the end of 2025, 425 copies had been sold and sales have continued strongly in the current year. The joint venture was able to repay the founders' loans which funded the publication costs and also made a distribution of surplus income of £700 to each party.

Public Benefit

The new charity is committed to following in the footsteps of its predecessor in offering access to our knowledge and expertise as well as to the programme of work since it was founded.

There is no charge to attend the lectures that are open to all. We ensure our *Journal* is available in the Local Studies Library for those who do not wish to buy a copy. And, as mentioned above, out of print articles are available free of charge on our website.

Via the website we offer an information service that is well used by people living far and wide from our base. It is free of charge to allcomers and forms an integral part of our commitment to the spread of knowledge and the promotion of interest in our local history in line with our founding object. During 2025 the site had 47,022 views by 26,379 visitors. The most common searches related to the Great West Road the new Centenary history, to pubs and to the West London Tornado.

Financial Report

Introduction

The Charity was registered on 24 March 2025 and took over all assets and liabilities from the previous unincorporated society of the same name on 1 April 2025.

Accounts for the period 1 April 2025 – 31 December 2025 together with accompanying notes have been circulated to members.

Inheritance

The charity inherited the assets and liabilities of the unincorporated Society which consisted of cash in three accounts

The funds were made up as follows

Net assets held as cash (Inherited Reserves)	£16,595
Money held on behalf of GWRCP	£892
TOTAL CASH inherited	£17,487

There were no other assets or liabilities

(see 2 above)	(£1,375)	
Loan repayment received	£1,000	
NET ASSETS AT END OF PERIOD		£17,275
Other Cash holding	£456	
TOTAL FUNDS AT END OF PERIOD		
matched with the total of monies in Bank and PayPal accounts		£17,731

Assets and Liabilities Comments

1. The loan repayment was the repayment of a loan from the Society before it became a charity to GWRCP at the outset of its project as start-up capital for the production of the book. This loan was repaid during the period when sufficient funds from sale of the book were available.
2. Other cash holdings included subscriptions paid in advance, money held for GWRCP before being paid to that body and partially paid and overpaid subscription payments held pending resolution.
3. The Society has taken out no loans and has no liabilities that are not shown in the accounts. It has given no guarantees.

Reserve Funds

The Society's Reserve policy provides for two designated reserve funds with the remaining money being held as a General Reserve

The two designated funds are

1. Designated Emergency Reserve. In accordance with our policy, this is set at approximately 6 months of annual expenses assuming no income. At the period end it was at £1,500. This amount was reviewed after the year end and it was agreed there was no need to change it at the present time.
2. A Designated Project Reserve set at a level determined by the Trustees to cover the cost of future projects that are undertaken at a less than annual basis. This fund was £7,000 at the year end. The Trustees have reviewed this sum since the period end and it was agreed there was no need to make any change at this point in time.

The remaining general fund was £8,775 at the period end.

The Reserves Policy has been reviewed by the Trustees and it was agreed that no changes were necessary.

Conclusion

During the period the Society's net income was £1,054 and its Net Assets increased by £680 to £17,275 at the end of the period.

Finally

The Committee wishes to thank all members for your ongoing support as we proceed into the future in our new structure. And the Chair especially thanks the Trustees who have worked so hard to bring the new charity into existence while continuing to deliver our programme to members and the public as a whole