



# BRENTHAM NEWS

## Brentham in Winter

Welcome to the 200<sup>th</sup> edition of Brentham News. It has faithfully chronicled the story of Brentham since the first edition, published in April 1970 soon after the founding of the Brentham Society. Every edition is available in our archive on the website and catching my eye in that first one was a piece about the shocking plan to demolish houses in Neville Road to provide access for a proposed new school! That was the first of many battles we won.

Around now we would normally be preparing for our AGM, which is always an opportunity for a social get together, but unsurprisingly this year's event cannot take place. However, in December I did have the privilege of meeting, safely distanced of course, some of our more senior residents as I delivered their Brentham Society Christmas parcels. They were all in good spirits despite the fact that lockdown is particularly hard for many on our estate.

This is also the time of year for membership renewal. I see that in 1970 this cost 5 shillings, equivalent to £13 today, so the current fee of £5 offers excellent value! If you have not considered joining before, or perhaps forgot in previous years, please do make the small effort. A form is enclosed with this edition. The Society acts on behalf of all residents so membership is really



appreciated. We can sometimes help solve problems that may seem small but mean a lot. One such annoyance recently affected a resident in Meadvale Road, who was disturbed by one of the new LED streetlights which shone straight into their bedroom. We successfully asked

Ealing Council to apply shielding to one side of the lantern, which solved the problem. If anyone is experiencing similar issues please do let us know.

In the past, guided walks for schoolchildren, organised by the Brentham Society, have been an effective way to widen knowledge about the estate - but with Covid restrictions they've been impossible. However in October, following help from us, North Ealing School arranged

a teacher-guided walk for some of their children. Thankfully no-one got lost and it proved to be very popular - so thanks go to virtual tour guides Clive Evans and Alan Henderson from the BS for supervising this. Hopefully you will still be needed in person next time!

As restrictions continue we can't be sure if summer events such as May Day, the Strawberry Tea and Open Gardens Day will

be able to go ahead but we will keep the website updated with any news. Meantime you should see us giving the garden notice boards a good clean and a fresh lick of paint in anticipation.

Thank you to everyone who was able to help clean up the autumn leaves; next year we will arrange collection bags from the Council to assist with this. Swiftly though, we have moved

to winter, and as I write this a lovely snowfall is a reminder that the estate looks good in any season and particularly serene under a fresh white covering. I hope by edition 201 of Brentham News we might not be in lockdown and will be debating the pros and cons of Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs), sure to be a lively discussion, so do take a chance to read the article on page 3.

***Jo Bradley, Chair, Brentham Society***



### **The Allure of Allotments**

They are outdoors and not usually very crowded so an ideal activity for these winter months. Clive Evans sings the praises of a modest step back to nature on page 4.



# Windows of Opportunity

by Steve Jenkins

This is the second in a series of articles in which I promised to share some of the architectural features I have discovered since joining the Brentham Society Committee. In the last issue I described Brentham as a work of art, an estate deliberately designed to give the appearance that it had been created by a small team of local artisans. This craftsmanship can be seen clearly in the windows designed by the two main Brentham architects: Frederick Cavendish Pearson and George Lister Sutcliffe.



The clean lines of Pearson's windows

Even though his street layouts and houses are quirky, many of the windows that Pearson designed are simple and devoid of ornamentation with a flat exterior profile. Hinges are embedded into the casements (the part of the window that opens) so that the straight lines of the surrounding frame are uninterrupted. Despite being over 100 years old, the uncluttered, clean lines of the windows in Ludlow Road and Neville Road would not look out of place in a contemporary development.

Sutcliffe was a more experienced architect. In 1904, prior to working in Brentham, he had edited and published numerous books on modern house design which included eight volumes entitled 'The modern carpenter, joiner and cabinet maker'. Understandably, the windows in Sutcliffe's houses are more elaborate, with a deeper profile so they appear sunk into the building. This gives the comparatively simple houses in Denison Road and Fowlers Walk a grander appearance. His windows are also more ornate, with the transoms (the horizontal bar across the window) sometimes including distinctive wings at each end.



Earlier Edwardian sash windows

We talk a lot about ours being an Arts and Crafts garden suburb but Brentham is unique in that it represents a point in time when architectural styles were changing. The conservation area deliberately includes the earlier Edwardian terraces so that future generations can see the transition in architectural features as the estate developed. One of the most noticeable differences is the sash windows which open and close by sliding up and down, assisted by ropes and metal counterweights hidden in the frame. The wooden window frames are relatively narrow to maximise the amount of light entering the large rooms.

I hope I have piqued your interest. Of course, some of the original windows have been lost or modified over the last century due to modernisation, bomb damage or simply because people were unaware of their significance. Thankfully, these days, almost all residents want to either restore the original windows or replace them with replicas that reinstate the original features that are specific to their house.

I recently joined the small team of volunteers who respond to queries from residents and review Brentham planning applications. I still have lots to learn but thankfully we are able to draw on a wealth of conservation knowledge, and the documents contained in the Brentham archive. So, if you are considering modifying or changing your windows, please email us first at: [planning@brentham.com](mailto:planning@brentham.com)



A typical Sutcliffe window

## Planning and the Brentham Society

*'Many thanks for the clarity of your email and your continued advice', 'Thank you so much, that is most helpful! Thanks again for your time', 'I just wanted to say a big thank you for your quick and detailed response. It is much appreciated'.*

Just some of the feedback received from over 60 residents whose queries we've dealt with over the last 12 months. We've given advice on boundaries, bike sheds, satellite dishes and trees, as well the building-related topics of extensions, windows and garden buildings. We have wide experience of planning applications and how to go about changes to your property. We are more than happy to help – if you need advice please contact us at [planning@brentham.com](mailto:planning@brentham.com)

Included with this edition of BN is a separate sheet intended to fit into the residents' **Welcome Pack**. It gives a guide on how to prevent some of the costly conservation mistakes that sometimes occur after planning permission has been granted.

If anyone needs a copy of the Welcome Pack, please contact us at [welcomepack@brentham.com](mailto:welcomepack@brentham.com)





## Low Traffic Neighbourhoods

*So far these traffic schemes have not reached Brentham  
but there is every possibility that they will*

**L**ow traffic neighbourhoods (LTNs) are a Government initiative to build on the increase in cycling and walking that happened during the first lockdown. Funding is given to local councils to provide barriers in residential areas to prevent through traffic and rat runs. The thinking is that if it is made more difficult to drive through these areas, people will consider alternatives to driving for short journeys, with the result that there would be fewer cars, safer and quieter streets, better air quality and fitter residents. This has been proved in surveys in other London Boroughs where LTNs have been introduced.

It's difficult to see who would oppose such outcomes, but the implementation of LTNs has proved controversial. It seems we all have different attitudes to street closures depending on how much they affect us personally.

The west and south Ealing schemes, which are still technically considered to be a "trial", have met with strong vocal and physical opposition, with barriers being damaged or removed by residents. Part of this is because the barriers appeared overnight without consultation, but residents argue that they move traffic and pollution, rather than reduce it. Having only one entry to an area also means that residents have to drive further to leave, increasing pollution.

Nevertheless, Ealing Council is pressing ahead with further schemes, as part of their Transport Strategy and Climate Change Strategy. One proposed LTN includes **Brentham Way** and **Fowlers Walk**. Future schemes will have formal

consultations, and the one for our area has not been issued yet, so we are not first in the queue. However, the Council believes that these are a "good thing", and it is likely that the rest of Brentham will be considered for an LTN at some point in the future. The Brentham Society are seeking to make sure any proposals affecting our streets are fully discussed before action is taken. Please let us know your thoughts at [ltn@brentham.com](mailto:ltn@brentham.com). More details can be found on the Council website: [www.ealing.gov.uk/info/201268/low-traffic-neighbourhoods](http://www.ealing.gov.uk/info/201268/low-traffic-neighbourhoods)



**Richard Costella**

## Annual General Meeting

Last year in early March, before lockdown, we held our AGM in the Brentham Club. This year however, we cannot do that safely.

One of the main actions required is to vote in the Committee. This year five of last year's committee are willing to stand again. They are: Jo Bradley (Chair), Andy Akerman (Treasurer), Martin Mortimore (Newsletter editor), Alan Henderson (Archivist), and Steve Jenkins (Secretary). We propose to form the committee with these five candidates unless we hear of any formal objections. Clive Evans, a hard working committee member for the last 10 years is stepping down this year in order, it is rumoured, to spend more time with his allotment. We thank him and wish him well. Many residents are already involved in supporting the work of the committee but we are always looking for new blood. If you'd like to get more involved contact Jo at [chair@brentham.com](mailto:chair@brentham.com)

## Brentham Society Membership

Included with this newsletter is our annual membership collection form. **The household fee is still just £5.** This year we'd like to encourage you to either set up a bank standing order or send us payment via bank transfer (details on the form). We will of course still accept cash or cheque in the enclosed envelope and would ask that you post this through the door of your collector (details on the form).

**Mike Gandon**

## For Sale: Acorn Stairlift

Big saving on buying new.  
Nearly three years old, serviced annually. Fits any typical curved Brentham staircase.  
Price includes delivery and fitting by Acorn engineer and 3 months manufacturer's warranty.  
Price £1,700  
Call Sheila 020 8248 9119.  
Other walking aids are available free.



# The Allure of Allotments

By Clive Evans

The designers of the Brentham Estate might as well have had pandemics in mind when they set about their work. We have been blessed with our front gardens – however small – our back gardens, and our open spaces. Contrast that with a flat dweller, trying to home-school a child, in a fourth floor flat.

In addition, there are local allotments – where you can be exercising outdoors, safely isolated, and be productive at the same time. My wife, Tricia, and I have one on the Brentham allotments site, near the A40. There we can potter about planting and weeding in the open air, growing potatoes, onions, blackcurrants and runner beans. Fellow gardeners are always generous with their surplus produce, and their advice. It's a hobby that connects a wide range of people, rich and poor, young and old; it has been a lifeline over the past year.



Allotments run in my blood. I remember going to the allotment with my father, and visiting my grandfather, whose back garden was entirely given over to the production of vegetables. I have a picture of him, and his long-suffering wife. My job there was to water the compost heap.

Not much has changed, my primary responsibility today is the production of compost, which I find fascinating and frustrating in equal measure. The basics are simple: make a heap of recently harvested weeds, vegetable peel, grass cuttings, hedge clippings, egg boxes and shredded paper and watch while it decomposes into a wonderful friable addition to the garden. Or doesn't.

Its sidekick is leafmould, which is even simpler to make: just pile up wet leaves and leave them for a year – maybe two. The resulting brown crumbling material is ideal for adding to our clay soil, to change its structure into something easier to work.

The best leaves for this are those from the oak tree, with which Ealing is blessed, but any leaves will do, especially those scraped up from the gutters, already well on their way to decomposition. The Council has had to make decisions about street cleaning, and we are well down the list. However, we might view this an opportunity – collect the leaves, pile them up, or stuff them into punctured plastic bags, and leave them to rot.

Add the results to the earth in your garden, and you too could feature in the Brentham Gardens annual competition.

More information at [www.brentham-allotments.org.uk](http://www.brentham-allotments.org.uk)



## Garden Suburbs, Villages, Estates & Cities A DIRECTORY

Back in September 2019 we mentioned a project of potentially national importance - the development of an on-line directory of garden suburbs – which had been started by the late Geoff Baxendale. The Brentham Society is keen to continue its development and is looking for someone to help. It would make a good project for someone with an interest in the Garden Suburb

movement along with website management skills and who finds they have time on their hands. Recent garden suburbs added to the site include Barry in Wales, Sea Mills in Bristol, and Pinehurst Housing Estate in Swindon.

You can visit the site at [www.gardensuburbsdirectory.co.uk](http://www.gardensuburbsdirectory.co.uk)

If you would like more information or are interested in helping, contact us at [gsdirectory@brentham.com](mailto:gsdirectory@brentham.com)

**Alan Henderson**



## Hedgehogs at Home

*When **Derek and Sheila Galsworthy** heard a snuffling from the shrubbery in their Meadvale Road garden, it would be the start of an adventure in hedgehog husbandry*

**O**ur garden backs on to the fields behind Meadvale Road and we have had a few brief encounters with our spiny friends over several years, but this year things took a definite upturn. It began one evening in early August, when we heard loud snuffling and grunting noises coming from the shrubbery at the bottom of the garden, which may have been the onset of what was to come. We had regular visits from one hedgehog in particular, and we started to feed it when it became obvious that it was nesting under the shed. We learnt that hedgehogs have a liking for non-fish catfood, and should not be given milk. We also ensured there was water provided. They need to attain a weight of around 600 grams to survive hibernation



through the winter. We think the picture (*above*), taken late September, would be the mother who would have been pregnant at the time.

In early October we were surprised and delighted to find some small additions to the hedgehog clan foraging for food. The photo (*left*) shows the mother (top middle) and 6 hoglets - noisy eaters with poor table manners. We decided that as this was a late litter, we should continue feeding them and try to get them up to hibernation weight. The dishes are saucer size, so you can see how small they were at this stage. We also contacted

a hedgehog organisation for advice, and they sent us a parcel of live, fatty insect grubs (which they loved) to supplement their diet. We think the food also attracted one or two other more mature hedgehogs from neighbouring gardens. Hedgehogs are solitary, and all but two (probably the smallest) had dispersed from the shed by early December. We invested in a small 'camera trap' which takes infra-red images overnight, so we could monitor what was happening (*right*).

We were advised that we should try to weigh the remaining hoglets, to see if they had reached an



adequate weight, and to bring

them in over winter if not. To stop them retreating under the shed, we were advised to shout at them from close range, which would make them curl into a ball. This was successful, and the one we brought in (*left*) proved to be over 700 grams, so we released it to re-join its sibling. At least one of them continued to feed until about the 4th January, but they haven't been seen since so we assume they have started hibernation.

Hedgehogs begin to emerge from hibernation in March, having lost around a third of their body weight. Food is scarce at this time, so we will continue to

monitor them, and feed them if we feel it necessary.

Hedgehogs are the gardener's friend, so please be cautious with pesticides and slug pellets. Also, they can cover a surprising amount of ground in pursuit of food, so if your garden is surrounded by a fence, 'hedgehog corridors' (just a hole in the bottom of the fence) can be a real boon.

For more details contact: [www.britishhedgehogs.org.uk/](http://www.britishhedgehogs.org.uk/)



## The National Census - March 2021

**census**  
2021

The census is a survey that happens every 10 years and gives the government a picture of all the people and households in England and Wales. It helps plan and fund public services, like transport, education and healthcare. By taking part and encouraging others to do the same, you'll help make sure our community gets the services we need.

For more information go to [www.census.gov.uk](http://www.census.gov.uk)

# Brentham's Bletchley Girl

*In an occasional series featuring senior members of our community we visit Rena Stewart who lived through exciting times during World War II.*

**R**ena Stewart has lived in Meadvale Road for 30 years, sharing the house with her elder sister, Isobel until she passed away in 2004. Life for the Stewart sisters started several hundred miles away in a small village on the Fife coast in Scotland. Unusually for the time Isobel and Rena both went to University. "My mother chose St. Andrews because this was in 1940 and she thought it was less likely to be bombed than Edinburgh."



Rena says: "I took a degree in French and German, and then when I graduated in 1943 my friend Aggie and I thought that maybe we'd been enjoying ourselves too much for three years and it was time we did something about the war. So we

volunteered for the services. We wanted to go into the WRENS but they only had vacancies for mess orderlies. So instead we were interviewed for our knowledge of German and various other things. And I think we were positively vetted at the time. So eventually we were called up to the Auxiliary Territorial Service – the ATS".

After basic training, the two friends were sent to Hampstead, "One of those glorious big houses in Fitzjohn's Avenue, where the first thing we had to do was sign the Official Secrets Act. After that, we were told what was happening at Bletchley, but not going into very much detail. That was what we had to keep quiet about - we would never ever be able to tell anyone about it."

Bletchley Park was the top secret wartime Intelligence Headquarters, where enemy messages, picked up at listening stations, were decrypted and interpreted by Alan Turing and other code-breakers. When she got there Rena was assigned to the so-called German book room. "What we were doing was typing up the decrypts in German, so the intelligence people could work from them rather than from great bundles of decrypts".

Rena knew very little about the bigger picture at Bletchley, but picked up a certain amount. "We realized that for instance, the Lorenz code was something very special; we didn't know –

although we guessed - that these messages were going straight to Hitler and that was certainly the most interesting thing I ever had to type. Once I had to type a complete situation report by Field Marshal Kesselring, a high up German commander, giving his opinion on every single theatre of war. At the time it was quite fascinating. It was strange to be doing such important work but not to be able to breathe a word about it. You weren't even supposed to talk to people in your own office when you were outside."

Rena is one of thousands who worked at Bletchley Park and who kept the secret. When eventually some details emerged in a book in 1974, she was horrified. "We felt we'd been forbidden to talk about it. And then they go and spill the beans. We were only ever told about our bit of the operation. We found out an awful lot more when they started writing books about it."



Rena was at Bletchley from the beginning of 1944 until VE day in 1945. Before being demobbed in 1946, her language skills were used in an interrogation camp in Germany. "The prisoners had mainly worked in the German intelligence service and were being interrogated to find out whether their claims not to have supported the Nazi party were true or not. Our job was to translate their written statements."

Rena's ambition as a journalist was to write the news, so she joined the BBC Overseas Service at Bush House. But at first she couldn't get a job in the newsroom, so she took up a post at the BBC monitoring station at Caversham.

This is where people listen in to broadcasts from every part of the world. She happened to be on the night shift when Stalin died. "Moscow kept re-broadcasting the same news bulletin in English. It said nothing and was very boring but suddenly a whole lot of people were standing behind me saying, what's happening?"





"I said nothing's happening! But apparently on the Radio Moscow home service in Russian they'd gone over to playing solemn music; they couldn't make up their minds how to announce the news. We could tell Stalin's henchmen were all running around like chickens with their heads cut off as they tussled to take command!" On returning to Bush House, Rena did become a journalist in the Newsroom, a job she enjoyed until her retirement in 1990.

After retiring, Rena moved to Brentham with her sister, Isobel. "We didn't know anything about Brentham before, we just thought it was a nice house. The place is beautiful; people look after the gardens and it's just a lovely place to be. I used to go to the Club down the road quite a bit and people are always very friendly. More like

going back to the village where I grew up."

As a keen musician Rena managed to squeeze a baby grand piano into her back room although she doesn't play so much now. But she is a keen supporter of the regular concerts run by Hugh Mather in St Mary's Church in Perivale. She says "It's amazing how he has kept the concerts going during the pandemic and streamed them on-line for people to enjoy. Let's hope we'll be able to get audiences back into the church before too long."

Today, Rena has many memories but she says "I still look back on my wartime work with a certain amount of pride".

**Martin Mortimore**

*If you've got a story to tell, contact [news@brentham.com](mailto:news@brentham.com)*



*Guy and Vera with great grand-daughter, Rosie*

## Guy and Vera Hawtin

In the last Brentham News we featured the colourful story of long time Brentham resident Guy Hawtin. Sad to say, not long after publication, Guy passed away at the age of 96. His wife Vera celebrated her 100th birthday with her family on the 1st of November but she too died a few days later. They will be greatly missed by their neighbours in Pitshanger Lane and all who knew them during their many years in Brentham. We extend our sympathy to their daughter Jill and her family. She said "we were sad to lose our beloved Mum & Dad but they got to see their great grand-daughters in the summer and have at least been spared the continuing Covid crisis".

## The Brentham Oaks

Before the Brentham Garden Suburb was built, the northern slope of Hanger Hill was covered with fields and orchards separated by hedgerows studded with grand oak trees. Some 20 - 25 of these still survive behind our houses along the old field boundaries. Many of these trees are hundreds of years old and there have been some recent casualties.

In 2018 a giant specimen, in allotment land between Brunner Road and Brentham Way, was felled by a vicious wind and last September the iconic oak in Denison/Ludlow Green lost a huge branch. Here is that tree in 1909 (*left*), forming a backdrop to a gathering of Brentham building workers on pay day. Below is the same tree last year, just after the loss of the branch; and as it looks now after careful pruning. The distinctive curve in the trunk is clear throughout the years.





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## THE BRENTHAM CLUB

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### Current Situation

Since the last newsletter, The Brentham Club has tried to operate as near to 'normality' as possible. However, the regular changing of the rules by the Government has meant a very flexible policy on Club opening times and availability of individual sports and activities. Until early January, most tennis and football was allowed, and the bar and cafe were open at various times on most days. Many wedding ceremonies and some classes (eg Art) also took place. However, the latest lockdown has meant that the Club is now closed.

We look forward to reopening just as soon as the rules allow it.

### Fred Perry and Michael Portillo

One highlight of the autumn was a visit by Michael Portillo and a BBC film crew in October. He was most impressed with our facilities as he filmed a feature on Fred Perry and his link with Brentham, and the Club in particular. The visit will form part of one of Michael's railway documentaries later this year. Look out for it.

**Colin Hearn**



*Michael Portillo,  
with club chair,  
Colin Hearn*

*Michael, back  
to camera, on  
the Brentham  
courts*



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