

LEE MANOR SOCIETY



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Review of the year

Leegate has remained a focus of our attention. The plans have been scrutinized by the London Mayor's Office which has informed Lewisham Council that they can deal with it as they wish. The latest news we have is that it may be up to three years before the redevelopment is complete. In the meantime we will seek to influence the negotiation of the community benefits arising out of a Section 106 agreement, completion of which is likely in early autumn. Central to that agreement is a purpose-built community centre. We are still very unimpressed by the cavalier handling of the calculations of public realm and still believe that the community has been short-changed by the provision of a 'linear square' flanking the polluted Burnt Ash Road (see p.2).

On a more positive note, the sorry saga of the **Manor House and Library** now looks set for resolution with the new custodian, the not-for-profit V22 Foundation, aiming to relaunch services at the end of April under the management



Mature trees form Lee's attractive avenues

of local resident Simon Higgs. We have co-chaired a consortium of local organisations interested to ensure the future of the facilities and we continue to keep a vigilant eye on progress. Along with a restoration and extension of the library services we are seeking clarity over the availability of rooms in the building for community use.

Outside the Manor House, the Grade II listed **K2 Telephone Box** is in a poor state, but we have made positive efforts to get the repairs completed and we are also interested to find a longer term solution for the safe-keeping of the asset: your ideas will be welcome!

We continue to manage the **Ice House** which greeted its 25,000th visitor during the year. It is always a favoured destination for those patronising Open House London and brings further footfall to **Manor House Gardens** which was awarded another Green Flag in 2016. The refurbishment of the tennis courts is almost complete and we look forward to their reopening for the summer season. **Street trees** continue to stimulate local interest, and with the obvious limits to local authority finance there has been a welcome upturn in residents anxious to contribute to the street scene with donations: do please contact us if you'd like to take part in our donor

The Society's 2017 Annual General Meeting

The Lee Manor Society's AGM will be held at 7.30pm on Wednesday, May 17 in the Baring Room of the Manor House, Old Road., SE13 5SY

Agenda

Chairman's report; Treasurer's report; Election of officers and committee; The following officers are standing for election: Ralph White, chairman; Sheila Peck, secretary; Lorraine Burton, treasurer. Any other nominations must be received in advance of the meeting.

General discussion.

Speaker

The Rev. Bridget Shepherd, Vicar of the Church of the Good Shepherd and St Peter Lee, will share with us 'A Day in the Life'.

Light refreshments will be served after the meeting.

programme. The highway improvements in Manor Lane should also contribute to the greening of the area – however, there has been some collateral damage to residents’ property and we were dismayed by the loss of some of the original granite kerbstones.

We reported last year on the demise of the Amenity Societies’ Panel because of the funding cutbacks. We were pleased to be invited to a briefing recently where changes to the way the Planning department operates were described. We pressed for at least a quarterly meeting at which matters of common interest can be discussed. There is a creeping tide of planning infringements including a rash of improperly mounted satellite dishes but there are welcome indications that Lewisham’s Planning Department is taking enforcement more seriously.

Finally, installation of the **Lee Green West Controlled Parking Zone** was completed. We campaigned intensively for the two-hour restriction rather than the draconian all-day solution and this was successfully achieved. Some signage had to be relocated because it represented a hazard but by and large the scheme is generally accepted. And what of the 20-mph borough-wide speed limit? It is not enforced and creates a dangerous conflict where some respect it, and others continue to speed. We have raised our concerns with the police but have been unable to get a resolution to these serious issues.

Leegate – the end game

St Modwen, the owner of Leegate, now has all the permissions it requires – from Lewisham council and the Mayor of London’s office – to begin demolition and reconstruction of the Lee Green shopping centre. The council did set conditions when it considered the proposals in May 2016 but it seems to regard these as minor technical matters that will not fundamentally alter the plans. Lee Manor Society has been in discussion with the council and the developer for 10 years simply to ensure compliance with the council’s own guidelines on issues such as public space, traffic volumes and pollution. But our arguments have been ignored by a planning department seemingly increasingly in thrall to the developers and by a London Assembly planning unit equally willing to pick elements of the London Plan that suit development and ignore those that don’t. When final conditions on matters such as the developer’s contribution to local amenities are agreed demolition can begin.

***Brickbat of the Year** goes to BT whose telecoms and broadband cabinets litter our streets. Vital these boxes may be but do they have to be so ugly? Transport for London’s bus stops and bus shelters are also a common feature of our streets as are the increasingly redundant telephone boxes. But the former London Transport and the old GPO put great thought into the design of their street furniture employing top designers and architects. TfL has continued that tradition. BT in contrast appears to have welded a few pieces of sheet steel together and thought that was good enough. It isn’t. The company’s latest set of financial results (for 2016) show turnover of £19bn, pre-tax profit of £3bn and a research and development spend of £472m. Spend on good design: 5p**

**Our estimate but probably an overstatement of the true number.*



Poorly designed street clutter

Timetables tend to slip but work could begin later this year and take three to four years to completion.

We have chronicled progress on the Leegate proposals in our monthly and annual newsletters (available on our website). One of our core arguments was that any redevelopment should include decent public space – a requirement of the council’s own planning guidelines. The existing shopping centre includes generous public space in the form of the square and the connecting walkway to Burnt Ash Road. The ‘linear square’ sanctioned by the planners is narrow, mean and right next to a busy main road. We had hoped that the election of London Mayor who claims to be concerned about pollution and its health impacts might take this into account. But he has not.



Not ideal but a refuge from traffic fumes

Lewisham consulted the Mayor's office as they are required to on larger development schemes. The Mayor responded in February saying he was content for Lewisham to decide on Leegate and that he would not get involved. His letter makes passing reference to urban design – though he is clearly not concerned about the question of public space – and raises a number of issues relating to affordable housing, disabled access and the need to help existing businesses find new premises. The Mayor agrees that 15.7 per cent affordable housing is low. But he accepts Lewisham's plan to use any increase in property values during construction to squeeze St Modwen for funds to provide affordable homes elsewhere in the borough. Concerns about air quality are to be met by ensuring that all 64 electric vehicle charging points will be available from day one of the opening of the Asda store and its rooftop car park. You could not make it up.

The Mayor's letter acknowledges objections by the Society and other residents to aspects of the Leegate plans, including the suitability of new public spaces, the bulk and height of the buildings, increased traffic and its impact on air quality. But, the letter concludes: "Most of these issues are of a local nature and have been addressed in the council's report."

The local community has been comprehensively failed by both Lewisham council and its planners and by the Mayor of London's office. Its views have been completely ignored in what has turned out to be a farce of a consultation. Existing residents do not and should not exercise a block on sensible redevelopment but unless their – reasonably argued – views are taken into account the whole democratic process is brought into disrepute. Brexit showed what happens when people feel ignored. Watergate started the

practice of attaching "gate" to high-profile scandals, leading on to Plebgate, Officegate, Camillagate and many others. Wikipedia lists dozens. It is unfortunate that Leegate started out with the tag.

See our website for a review of recent changes to the planning system.

Lee's Literary Associations

Arthur Conan Doyle, creator of Sherlock Holmes, was no stranger to Lee. In 'The Man with the Twisted Lip', one of The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes first published in the Strand Magazine in December 1891, we read that Mr Neville St Clair has gone missing:

"Now, Watson," said Holmes, as a tall dog-cart dashed up through the gloom, throwing out two golden tunnels of yellow light from its side lanterns.

"You'll come with me, won't you?"

"If I can be of use."

"Oh, a trusty comrade is always of use; and a chronicler still more so. My room at The Cedars is a double-bedded one."

"The Cedars?"

"Yes; that is Mr. St. Clair's house. I am staying there while I conduct the inquiry."

"Where is it, then?"

"Near Lee, in Kent. We have a seven-mile drive before us"

Not only does the missing Neville St Clair live at the Cedars, a large merchant's house, now flats, on Belmont Hill but his alter ego, the man with the twisted lip is ... Hugh Boone. It may be coincidence but Boone is a name with strong Lee connections remembered in Boone's Chapel on Lee High Road.

History Corner

Hedgley Street School – now Trinity School

From the History of Lee by F.H. Hart published 1882.

"There is also an infant school in Hedgley Street, Lee Green. The first stone of this school was laid in July 1870 by Mrs Lawrence, wife of the rector, in the presence of a small assembly. The land for the erection of the school was given by Lord Northbrook in order to provide a want daily increasing for the children of the poor of that neighbourhood and the rapid increase of building whole streets of new houses for the artisan classes. A committee was formed to carry out this desirable object with Earl Northbrook as patron; the rector, chairman; the churchwardens of St



Our programme to green the streets

Margaret's and many other influential gentlemen of the parish, composed the committee; hon. Secretary and treasurer. F. Cleave, Esq. CB.

This was formerly a purely agricultural district and the children were literally running the streets. After the building and opening the school, it required great firmness in order to cure their rough manners which, after a few months was accomplished by great perseverance on the part of the mistress and teachers, much to the satisfaction of the managing committee, and Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools, up to the present year, 1881.

The number of children who attend has increased to 150 and the committee have had to enlarge the building by adding a classroom capable of accommodating 50 children to keep pace with the growth of the population of the district.

A junior department was added in 1884 and the school was designated an Elementary School. Pupils were evacuated at the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939. Some two years later the school was badly damaged in an air raid, requiring demolition. A new school opened in 1957 as a Church of England secondary modern. It stood until it was demolished and replaced by Trinity in 2011. Contributed by David Plumer

The Society

We are a voluntary group of local residents keen to maintain and enhance the attractive, largely Victorian character of the local area. We meet on the second Wednesday of every month at 7.30pm.

We are always looking for new members to join in the projects in which we are involved. No special knowledge of planning or architecture is required - just a concern for the well-being of the area. Everyone who lives locally is welcome to

come. If you are interested in taking an active role in the work of the Society come to one of our meetings. We have a formal role in advising the council on planning matters and see all applications made in the conservation area. We work with other local conservation groups to achieve improvements in Lee and Lewisham.

We see our role as encouraging people to take an interest in their street beyond their front gate. Past experience shows that we can make a difference. We do not win all our battles but through concerted action we do achieve improvements and we can prevent ill-thought-out schemes by developers, the council and individuals.

Large home extensions including roof extensions may require planning permission while the demolition of buildings and changes to front garden boundaries are also controlled. Satellite dishes and replacement doors and windows in uPVC are also subject to restrictions. Contact us or the planning department on 0208 314 7400.

Why not contact us to receive our monthly Newsletter and other news from the Society? Just email [Ralph White](mailto:Ralph.White@leemanorsociety.org) on news@leemanorsociety.org and we will add you to our distribution list. Alternatively, visit our website at <http://www.leemanorsociety.org>

Lee Manor Society
2017
Annual PlantMart

2-4 pm Saturday 13th May
2-6 Micheldever Road SE12 8LX

Plants!
Raffles - Tombola -
Children's Games
Bric-à-Brac - Gifts - Cakes
Jams and Preserves
Cream Teas will be
served

*Donations of plants and goods
for the stalls welcome!*
email news@leemanorsociety.org