PRESIDENT’S REPORT 2018-19 ILFORD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

It’s been a difficult year for the Society. We’ve been unable to use Ilford Hospital Chapel due to its refurbishment- we still don’t know when it will start- so they’re not taking bookings at present. Worse, our membership declined as we have lost a ¼ of our members. This had a knock-on effect to our income and only 2 donations and reducing our printing costs offset our financial loss over the year. Financially we are secure at present as we raised subscriptions last year so your Committee are recommending no change to subs’- this year. So it wasn’t all doom and gloom as we reconvened from September 2018 back in the Central Library Gloucester Room which has gone smoothly.

Your Committee is functioning very well at the moment. Members have attended meetings regularly showing their commitment to the Society and we have been aided by Sylvia & Sinclair Frydland opening their home to hold meetings offering excellent hospitality. They have taken over providing refreshments at our monthly talks starting immediately at 7pm when the doors open which has made the Society more welcoming offering a hot cup of tea or coffee before we start the talks at 7.30pm. Similarly, Angela & Alan Banner have helped as well and Alan’s technical help with the Library equipment is really useful to our speakers.

Presenty there is a great deal of high quality, local history research going on provided by our members Carol Franklin, Georgina Green, Dr Colin Runeckles and Alan Simpson- each has their own speciality. This is the bedrock of all history- the effort that goes into making sense of the past and making it interesting, useful and accessible to everyone.

Our members actively support Redbridge library service and the local community with our ‘outreach’ work of events, guided walks and talks. The highlights of the year were the talk in June on ‘India/Pakistan Independence’ given by Eleanor Newbegin and Shabnum Tejani which had a good audience and led to us gaining two donations. Another success was a film show about the life of Cameron Corbett, co-organised by Ben Honeybone and Peter Ranken, Ilford HS, and Sue Page of Redbridge Library service who generously provided the Central Library venue. The film Ben and Peter successfully made is about Corbett’s life (for which they won an HLF grant) who bought up farmland to create new estates in Ilford and Seven Kings and gave the borough land for new parks and recreation grounds.

Georgina Green led the way- literally- with tours around Wanstead and Woodford (twice), and gave talks on ‘*Humphry Repton in Redbridge’* and ‘*Forbidden Love and Broken Hearts’* which had a very large audience. I led 3 summer ‘*Walks for Health’* around Ilford, Barkingside and Valentines Park and gave 2 talks on ‘*Local Artists of Redbridge’* and ‘*Pubs, Taverns and Temperance in Ilford’ which was also ‘*standing room only’. Colin Runeckles gave a talk on Ilford’s ‘*Santa Claus Distribution Fund’* which he will reprise for us in December. Members Alan Simpson and Dave Swinden also gave talks and we all provide speakers in abundance to other local history societies ie Wanstead, and Woodford HS’s.

 Carol Franklin has written an article about her voluntary work for Redbridge Heritage (in the April 2019 Newsletter) where she has been cataloguing planning applications and recording them on the computer, whilst Colin has been on a project recording street names in Ilford and when the streets and houses were built. The close cooperation with Redbridge Heritage has developed well over the past few years for which we are grateful.

Our Newsletter is the best local one around providing members with 3, free, yearly issues and is brilliantly put together by Vice President and Editor Georgina Green. We managed to find a new printer and so saved money printing it and our Programme of talks.

From the replies I got back to the question about returning to the Chapel or staying in the Library, the response was overwhelmingly in favour of the Library as it’s comfortable, warm in the winter with an inside lavatory, buses stop right outside and parking is possible alongside the Kenneth More Theatre or in Mildmay car park, free in the evenings. The library is popular in spite of having less time for meetings which some members mentioned as a drawback. In November I called a special committee meeting to discuss membership and how we can reverse the decline,ie offer a wider range of talks? We met in the Library foyer and everyone attended. We’ll extend the time we stay in the Library from 2 to 3 hours for the AGM and Christmas talk to make the event a more social evening.

The Committee all intend to seek re-election. Some have indicated they may only carry on for 1 more year. Treasurer Sylvia has done a good job looking after our finances, we have around £2,000 in the bank, and also acts as Membership Secretary to collect visitor fees at meetings whilst ‘chef de cuisine’ Sinclair provides the refreshments. Janet Seward keeps the Society moving along, organises the ‘easy’ Christmas quiz and is one of our regular member speakers. Congratulations to Martin Fairhurst on reaching his 80th birthday.

The Mayor attended Alan Simpson’s talk on ‘*Barkingside in the early 20th century’*, the *Ilford Recorder* published his and Colin’s articles, and publicity sometimes works well. We hope to repeat the ‘India Independence’ talk again this year- back by popular demand. Our new talks programme from September 2019-20 is complete and an Oscar Wilde, Sir Thomas More & Mary Poppins guided tour of Chelsea is tbc.

Two Redbridge Heritage talks are scheduled: ‘*Education in Redbridge’* on 10th May at Gants Hill Library 2pm & “T*he Assembly at Wanstead House’* by Hogarth, 17/7 at Wanstead Library. A guided tour & stroll around Valentines Estate is scheduled for 28/8.

Best Wishes to all our members & visitors- we need more and ideas to increase membership and the enjoyment of local history.

Jef Page, President, Ilford Historical Society. April 2019.