PRESIDENT ‘S REPORT 2023-24 JEF PAGE

It's been a good year for us. Membership has returned to pre-Covid numbers therefore the proposal on the agenda is no rise to our subs for 2024-25: £10 for an annual sub’ is excellent value as it includes 9 monthly talks, refreshments & 3 Newsletters.

 Our varied programme is the Society’s cornerstone but sadly Neil Houghton was unable to give his scheduled talks. So as a sub’ I gave one on Regent Street’s history, and Rev John Brown gave one on Roman London objects, & also his scheduled talk on London’s public sculptures. Georgina Green revealed Monkhams ‘grand house’ in Woodford and led a guided tour around the area. Alan Simpson took us on a flight around Essex as he recalled the history of s-w Essex aviation, and Lynn Jones described Epping Forest’s history. Cllr Muhammed Javed presented his postponed talk on Redbridge’s social housing problems. Redbridge’s Mayor Jyotsna Islam accepted our invitation to come along to hear his lecture and I hope she enjoyed the evening. Using graphs & stats, he gave a rare talk on local history and contemporary issues which was quite technical and good. In April Colin gives his talk on Ilford’s post war development. We finish this season’s programme with my May lecture on the National Gallery’s founding in 1824; it’s progression to become an international gallery and show a few of its great paintings. Thanks to all the speakers who freely gave their time, knowledge & effort and I led a guided walk around ‘Fitzrovia’: Fitzroy Sq & Cleveland St - a little known area of Camden covered in Blue Plaques. The tour’s fee raised some money for the Society.

Our Committee ably organised our monthly talks meetings, provided refreshments and attended committee meetings mostly held in Redbridge library foyer. Lynn Jones and Peter Haseldine generously hosted 1 committee meeting at their house. Treasurer Colin Runeckles excellently manages our finance, accounts,keeps uptodate our list of members & accepting money from visitors to meetings.Our membership has held up well- 65- returning to pre-Covid numbers. We have a healthy £2,946 in the bank (minus some bills to be paid) and we’re encouraging visitors to attend our talks and importantly, enticing ex-members back so no need to raise subs.’ He will also propose a ‘joint membership’: £15 per household couples. Colin manages our Twitter account with a solid 454 followers whilst Martin Fairhurst looks after Facebook with 646 followers. Our uptodate website, very well managed by Colin, lists our talks & events. I get many enquiries via it- mainly requests for local history of streets & family history info. When he’s got nothing to do after breakfast it’s often Colin, Alan & Georgina I go to first to answer questions- using old maps of Ilford and local directories. I also pass queries onto Redbridge Archives where Gerard Greene, Saima Qureshi and Paula Wade are very helpful as when they generously hosted our book launch event in the Heritage Centre.

Our biggest problem has been Zooming out talks to distant members. It has proved to be really aggravating getting it going but Great Thanks to Secretary Janet Seward for keeping the Minutes of Committee meetings and her perseverance and for Gary Barnes & Kevin Dopson (ELFHS Treasurer) helping her getting Zoom working. Whilst it would be great to get back inside the Gloucester Room for our meetings at present that’s impossible and making use of the Studio has been OK but we know it’s not to everyone’s liking. Our Newsletter is a continued success. Vice President and Editor Georgina Green does a great job, it comes out 3 times a year (free to members) with excellent high- quality researched articles ranging from: the coming of the railway to Ilford in the 1830s, the Ingleby family- last owners of Valentines Mansion and Park, beer and paper on Ilford Hill, & building the Woodford Avenue 1922.

I would like to thank the Society’s Committee for all their help at our book launch events & agreeing to invest £200 towards its publishing. Of all our successes over the past year, top for me of course was getting *“A* *Photographic History of Gants Hill”* written, photos selected and produced by Vincent Goodman and myself. We got excellent research help from Mathew Saye, Colin & Alan. The History Press of Cheltenham took us on as novice joint authors and we beat the odds to win a contract for 900 books to be published. Our 2nd launch event was held at Redbridge Institute of Adult Education at Gants Hill, generously arranged by Gita Makwana. Their hall was given to us free to use and the queue to buy books was tremendous. So far 768 have been sold by History Press- effectively sold out. They hold a minimum stock level, Amazon have the rest and copies can now only be obtained from them, History Press by ‘print on demand’, Ilford HS, Vincent’s *Speedprint* shop at Gants Hill & even WH Smith in Ilford of which Rob Meyers, book department manager, has been very helpful displaying it for sale.

A proposal by Colin Runeckles on the agenda is to move our AGM from April to October to make it easier for him to complete our yearly accounts I will lead a tour around the National Gallery: Saturday 1st June, 10.30am; £3, fee going to Ilford HS. All the committee are seeking re-election so I hope you will support us & our 3 Vice Presidents: Dorothy Lockwood, Cllr Muhammad Javed & Georgina Green.

Jef Page, President, Ilford Historical Society, April 2024.