
THE ISLINGTON SOCIETY

ANNUAL REPORT

1998

Notice is hereby given of the Annual General Meeting of The Islington Society to be held on Wednesday 22nd April 1998 at 7.30pm in the Town Hall, Upper Street, Islington, N1.

7.30 Agenda

1. Minutes of the last AGM (circulated in the June 1997 newsletter).
2. Adoption of Annual Report (enclosed).
3. Adoption of Treasurer's Report and Accounts (enclosed).
4. Appointment of Auditor.
5. Election of Executive Committee (nominations in writing to Secretary before the meeting).
6. Any Other Business.

8.15 Refreshments

8.30 Tradition... Here Today and Gone Tomorrow?

Tony Allcock, Editor of the Islington Gazette, reflects on, and you are invited to discuss, whether tradition is transient. Islington is steeped in it. Many of its major institutions and companies have been established for a century or more. What makes Islington such a fascinating place is its unique cultural and social mix...and its sense of history.

The Royal Agricultural Hall was saved and brilliantly reincarnated as the Business Design Centre and Sadler's Wells Theatre is set to rise again on its traditional site. Shouldn't care be taken to preserve all our treasured institutions - not just those of artistic or architectural merit?

Order of the Executive Committee

Sondra Beecroft

Secretary, 27th March 1998

Officers of The Islington Society

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Telephone 0171-226 3404

Vice-Chairman - David Gibson,
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Telephone 0171-226 2207

Secretary - Sondra Beecroft,
24 Islington Park Street,
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Treasurer - Adam Bower,
12 Cloudsley Square, London N1 0HT
Telephone 0171-278 7663

Recruitment - David Holland,
61 Theberton Street, London N1 0QY
Telephone 0171-226 7170

Membership - Jim Lagden,
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Conservation, Planning and Transport
Committee (Chairman) -
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Chairman's Report

With a new Government in power it is hardly surprising that 1997 will be remembered as the year that Whitehall showered us with consultation documents. Of course we wouldn't have had it otherwise; but as usual, in their anxiety to clear their own desks, civil servants landed all this very important literature on our desks just as everyone was going away on their summer holidays. Nevertheless, as reported in the February *I.S.NEWS*, we managed considered responses on "London Government", "Traffic Management and Parking", "Integrated Transport Policy" and "Trunk Roads" although it struck us that dealing with the last two separately was a contradiction in terms!

The Islington Scene

Lecturing recently in Tunbridge Wells I discovered that the well known home of the Disgusted family had recently lost all its food and hardware shops following the opening of out of town stores. I reflected on how comparatively lucky we are in Islington.

We may argue about restaurants versus real shops, especially in places like Exmouth Market, but we still have a lot of useful shops, and restaurants do help to revitalise run-down shopping areas. The exception are those restaurants that open only in the evenings where they extend to daytime the plague of graffiti covered aluminium shutters that give a run down, ghost town appearance to many of our streets after 6pm.

The Nag's Head is surviving the competition from out of town centres as a result of the stand against out of centre retailing which has also helped the survival of smaller centres like Caledonian Road and Highbury Barn.

The Angel is positively on the way up with derelict sites either already being

developed (Anderson's Yard) or about to be (Parkfield Street).

However, Finsbury Park and King's Cross are both blighted by uncertainty over the details of the Thameslink 2000 railway project. And the whole future of the King's Cross area could be put back into the melting pot by the possible collapse of the Channel Tunnel Rail Link.

Archway, the most blighted of our town centres, has at last got a whiff of developer interest. As a result the Council has recently approved a planning brief which, apparently, will not affect the joint Islington Society and Highgate Society proposals to abandon the present roundabout and to create a priority area for pedestrians between the Underground station and Archway Close.

With fifty percent of Islington residents living on council estates, it was sad to see the Borough's excellent programme of estate upgrading beginning to slow down. But now we have planning permission and funding for the rebuilding of the Marquess Estate: the most intractable of all the Council's housing management problems.

There seems to be more new housing under construction now than at any time in the last fifteen years in both the private and social sectors. But most spectacular has been the conversion of large commercial buildings to residential use.

To the extent that this provides homes near the City for those who have previously commuted long distances, this must be seen as a welcome trend from the London wide point of view. But loss of commercial and industrial buildings, especially in the north of the Borough, could affect the prospects for local employment.

Excessive traffic is still one of our main obsessions. Not only does our environment continue to deteriorate as a result of more traffic pollution and all day parking but traffic congestion so slows down the buses that the Underground gets more crowded than ever.

Planning, Conservation and Transport

Planning permission has now been granted for the Parkfield Development at the Angel and for the rebuilding of the Marquess Estate off Essex Road. But the

Planning, Conservation and Transport, *continued*

futures of Arsenal Football Club, the former "Sainsbury's" site at Lough Road and the Archway Station site are not yet the subject of formal planning applications.

In the case of Arsenal, however, it seems ever more likely that business pressures for more use of the ground will force the club into a function that is incompatible with a residential area. This is a great pity because the club is well served by public transport and the last thing, surely, that we would want is for Londoners to be forced to travel to greenfield sites to watch football. Many of us would like Arsenal to continue as a local club but, if this proves incompatible with the Premier League, let's hope that the club can find a larger site in inner London that is well served by public transport.

We have much to be pleased about on the Society's original *raison d'etre*, conservation. Islington Society member David Gibson was involved, through the Islington Building Preservation Trust, with the upgrading of St Luke's Churchyard which won the 1997 Geoffrey Gribble Award. There is now planning permission for the church itself to be restored as a rehearsal and recording studio.

Fellow Society member Roger Mears has been involved in the immaculate restoration

of 17th century terrace houses on the west side of Newington Green.

We can also be pleased that Wynford House, part of Tecton's Priory Green Estate built in the 1950s, has been repaired and will be restored and that the Council's conservation team had been very active in the Keystone Crescent conservation area at the southern end of Caledonian Road. With the assistance of grant aid a large number of properties have been repaired and the street frontage greatly improved.

In spite of the Council's poor record of looking after its historic buildings, the conservation team has set up a procedure for monitoring historic buildings at risk in conservation areas. Owners of such buildings are contacted and pressed to carry out urgently needed repairs. The process has been a considerable success and is resulting in many buildings being rescued. The conservation team is largely funded by English Heritage and the Society is concerned that, without alternative funding, this team will be broken up when the English Heritage funding ends in a year's time.

Cable London has continued cabling throughout the Borough (in theory hand digging around tree roots!). In conservation areas we have pressed for careful siting of control boxes, and in many cases we have succeeded, thanks to hard work by Roger Mears, in getting them placed

underground having been told originally that this was impossible.

We have been assured by the Leader of the Council that, in future, changes in design of important items of street furniture, like street name plates, will be presented to the Council's Conservation Advisory Committee, on which we are represented, before the changes are implemented. We hope that the Council's new Street Scene Manual will lead to a reduction in clutter and an improvement in the appearance of street furniture.

The Society's twenty year old suggestion on priority for southbound buses at the Angel (Liverpool Road) traffic lights has at last been implemented; the route of the 274 bus (from Camden Town) has been extended to the Angel; the pedestrian safety scheme at the main Angel intersection will be installed shortly, as will the extension to the Barnsbury Controlled Parking Zone.

However, commuter car parking in the Borough is still excessive, as is rat running by commuters' cars. Much has been done to reduce this in the south of the Borough, though with only limited success, but much more needs to be done in the north. The Society will continue to campaign for real traffic reduction throughout the borough helped, we hope, by the new Traffic Reduction Bill and by our representation on the Islington Transport Roundtable.

Society Matters

Organisation

Marion Harvey, with her commitments as Chairman of the London Forum, is clearly not going to be able to return as Chairman of this Society. You therefore look like being saddled with me for another year, until David Gibson is in a position to take over.

Mary Cosh has said that she would like to resign as Vice-Chairman and it is proposed that Mary be made a Vice-President, in recognition of her long, unstinting service to the Society including many years as a very competent and active Secretary. The President, Lord Broadbridge, is happy to continue and we wish him a speedy recovery from his present illness.

For some years the activities of the Society have been managed by the Executive Committee, as required in our constitution, working with the Conservation and Planning Committee. With so much now happening, the Executive Committee has decided that the Society needs a more rational committee structure to support it.

This will be achieved by the restructuring of the Conservation and Planning Committee as the Planning, Conservation and Transport ("PCT") Committee and the creation of a Membership and Finance Committee and an Events Committee.

You are being asked to re-elect, to the Executive

Committee, Harley Sherlock (Chairman), David Gibson (Vice-Chairman), Sondra Beecroft (Secretary), Adam Bower (Treasurer), David Holland (Recruitment), Jim Lagden (Membership), Kathleen Frenchman, Marion Harvey, Maud Heath, Frank Hopkins and John Milner. It is proposed that Gordon Wigglesworth (Chairman of the PCT Committee) should be elected to the Executive Committee.

The PCT Committee, which is appointed by the Executive Committee, comprises Gordon Wigglesworth (Chairman), Robin King (Vice-Chairman and Secretary), Roger Mears (the Society's representative on the Council's Conservation Advisory Committee), Frances Balfour, Norman Beddington, Mary Cosh, James Dunnett, Maud Heath, Peter Powell and Roy Vinjevold.

Finance

Reproduced on page 6 is a summary of the Society's audited accounts for 1997. The subscriptions income has increased over 1996. This is due to a combination of the success of a drive to collect subscription arrears and payment by new members of their subscriptions at the increased rates which did not apply to existing members until January 1998. However, the subscriptions total includes £550 which had been received at 31st December in payment of tickets for the Members' Dinner which was held in March 1998 and paid for then. This is partly compensated by £208 received,

as was explained in last year's report, in 1996 for the Wilmot Bennett Memorial Fund which was not spent until 1997 when commemorative benches were bought. Adjusting for both of these factors leaves a deficit of £8 for 1997 and of £58 for 1996.

The increase in printing and distribution costs is attributable to the enhancement of *I.S.NEWS*, the Society's newsletter. These have been widely welcomed and the Society is keen to maintain this level of activity.

Achievements

During the year the Anderson's Yard Campaign Group and the Angel Improvement Trust have both merged with The Islington Society bringing with them funds and members including three active new members of the PCT Committee. It has been agreed that the Angel Improvement Trust's annual Sam Morris Shopfront Award should be carried on by the Society. Peter Brades will administer it and the Morris Trust has agreed to finance it.

The Members' Survey last year showed that a lot of our members were already heavily committed to other activities but wanted to be kept informed of what was going on through an expanded programme of meetings and an enlarged newsletter.

The Society has responded to this and, since the last AGM, has organised twelve events, some in conjunction with other societies. There

Achievements, continued

have been eight meetings with expert and memorable speakers, a guided walk in Canonbury, the annual Gribble Award for architecture, the Manley Memorial Pub Crawl and the Society's first Members' Dinner.

The size of *I.S.NEWS* has been expanded to sixteen pages an issue. As previously, we operated a stall at festivals held in the Borough last summer to inform people about the Society and encourage them to join.

Promotion

There has been an active public relations and publicity campaign which has resulted in The Islington Society being mentioned in nearly every issue of the weekly local papers. This has helped to ensure that our meetings were well attended and reported in the local press, a more timely and appropriate coverage than the later and briefer re-

ports that could be given in *I.S.NEWS* with its limited circulation and thrice yearly publication.

Currently, a series of posters publicising our events is being developed for display on notice boards and in shop windows. The Society needs support in finding sites for displaying these posters.

If you can offer help in doing this, please telephone Kenner Beecroft on 0171-226 7429 or complete the form at the foot of this page and send it to the Secretary.

Handbills, which have an events poster on one side and enrolment forms on the other, are being put through letter boxes in the Borough on a selective basis as a field test. When this is completed it will be evaluated to see whether it is cost effective and should be continued.

The objective of all this is to bring in new members

and thus increase the influence of the Society. Our membership has increased but it should be higher as a proportion of Islington's population and the message for 1998 must be to get the interesting themes in our meetings and newsletters to a larger number of people. The best recruitment is through word of mouth by existing members. Please help the Society to achieve this by enrolling friends and neighbours as members.

Telephone David Holland on 0171-226 7170 for enrolment leaflets or complete the form at the foot of this page and send it to the Secretary.

Conclusion

It has been a good year for the Society. Our progress has been achieved through much hard work by dedicated people and the Society is indebted to them for all they have done.

Harley Sherlock

Chairman

Please complete this form or a photocopy in CAPITAL letters and return it to:
The Secretary, The Islington Society, 24 Islington Park Street, London N1 1PX

Yes, I would be pleased to help promote The Islington Society.

Please add me to the mailing list for (number) of the A3 posters

and..... (number) of the A4 posters advertising the Society's events.

Please send me..... (number) of the Society's membership enrolment forms.

Name.....

Address.....

.....Postcode.....

**Income and expenditure account
for the year ended
31st December 1997**

	1997		1996	
	£	£	£	£
Subscriptions, donations and events	3,232		1,991	
Interest receivable	71		70	
	<u> </u>	3,303	<u> </u>	2,061
Printing and distribution costs	2,501		1,681	
Meeting expenses	47		139	
Miscellaneous expenses	248		52	
Donations to other groups	173		39	
	<u> </u>	2,969	<u> </u>	1,911
Surplus for the year		<u> </u>		<u> </u>
		£334		£150

**Balance sheet
31st December 1997**

Cash at bank		2,124		1,790
		<u> </u>		<u> </u>
		£2,124		£1,790
Accumulated funds:				
Balance brought forward		1,790		1,640
Surplus for the year		334		150
<i>A R Bower</i> Hon Treasurer		<u> </u>		<u> </u>
		£2,124		£1,790

**Auditor's report to the members of
The Islington Society - Registered Charity number 261143**

I have audited the above accounts and, in my opinion, the accounts give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the Society as at 31st December 1997 and of the surplus for the year then ended.

Raymond Harris, FSCA, FAPA
5 Alwyne Square
London, N1 2JX

9th March 1998