

ISLINGTON *news*

The Journal of the Islington Society incorporating FOIL folio

Referendum on higher charges for gas guzzlers

Following the decision of Richmond Council to introduce differential parking permit charges reflecting degrees of pollution, Islington is considering a similar plan. However, while the Council leader has made clear his support for the idea, it is to be subject to a referendum, and Society members living in the Borough should have received a ballot paper.

Use of the referendum

The referendum is being conducted through the Electoral Reform Society. Its use raises the issue of when a referendum is appropriate. People like to be consulted, but if they are consulted too often the response rate declines, while once consulted on one issue others will see a stronger case for consultation on something else. At least this issue is not geographically skewed: it is not something on which the interests of one street are directly contrary to those of another (such as a road closure), even if the high concentration of gas guzzlers in leafy lanes produces pockets of resistance.

An astute politician would call a referendum only if there were some certainty in winning it. In Edinburgh a referendum on congestion charging came to grief because although people said they were in favour beforehand, self-interest kicked in once the decision time arrived. However, in this case self-interest would appear to support the scheme, given that 59% of adults have no access to a car and many of the remaining 41% have access to a car which would be paying less under these proposals.

Changing behaviour

The real test of the scheme, if it goes ahead, will be the extent to which it changes behaviour. To some extent Islington Council is pushing at an open door. Unlike Richmond, part of Islington is in the congestion zone and most of it is close enough to be affected by it. With Ken Livingstone promising a graduated Congestion

Charge, and already offering exemptions for less polluting vehicles, there is already an incentive to clean up in Islington which does not exist in Richmond. However, it should not be forgotten that a 50% reduction in pollution from cars containing on average 1.1 person pales to insignificance compared with the reduction that could be achieved by switching to public transport. With fares generally rising faster than motoring costs, there is a danger of modal shift in the wrong direction if the low polluting cars attract a lower congestion charge and a lower annual parking permit charge.

Next steps

Voting closes at noon on Monday June 25th and the result should be announced soon after.

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Society publications

Twentieth Century Buildings in Islington, by Alec Forshaw, £14.99, ISBN 0-9541490-0-9

The Story of Day Flats in and around Islington, by Andrew Bosi, £5, ISBN 0-9541490-1-7

An architect in Islington, by Harley Sherlock, £14.99, ISBN 9-78-0-9541490-2-4

[all of the Society's publications are available from the Society at 35, Britannia Row, London, N.1]

Books from our President and Vice-President

Suicide of the West, by Richard Koch & Chris Smith, £14.99 and available on Amazon, ISBN 0-8264 9023-9.

A History of Islington, by Mary Cosh, published by Historical Publications at £18.95, ISBN 0-948667-974

Protection for local shops

The decision of the Council's ruling Liberal Democrat group to sell its interest in local shops has provoked widespread criticism from shop owners and users. Andrew Bosi looks back at the development and decline of local shops in the Borough.

Mixed use development

Planning authorities have been encouraged to promote mixed use development for a long time. The theory has always been that a large council estate would support a parade of local shops, and post war developments like Sickert/Bentham Courts and later the Packington and Marquess followed the pattern of the five blocks around the Society's office: Finnemore, Strang, Price, Turnbull and Gough Houses. The two blocks fronting main streets incorporate a parade of small shops which share a freehold with Council flats.

As commuting distances grew, the need for mixed use development became stronger. Providing work close to home would reduce the need to travel and one of the barriers to employment for those with domestic commitments. Unfortunately, attempts to insist on employing local people have never been very successful.

Gradual decline of local shops

The growth of unemployment on the one hand, and of supermarkets on the other, has undermined local shopping as more time less money forces people to shop further afield. Moreover, the extended range of goods available from supermarkets place them in competition to more than just the corner shop. Shops within a council estate have been particularly hard hit; those on the main streets like Essex Road attract a wider footfall. In the 1990s, Essex Road bucked the trend partly because the Red Route had an adverse impact on shops in Upper Street.

Protected shopping fronts

The Unitary Development Plan recognised that shops needed some protection against market forces to survive. This was provided in the form of designated protected shopping fronts. This designation was aimed at the areas perceived to be most at risk: those off the beaten track where the survival of each shop was contingent upon the continued presence of its near neighbour offering a complementary product. Highbury Park is probably the biggest success of this policy.

The parade in Southgate Road has also survived and flourished. I recall an application to

convert two of the shops to a doctors' surgery which was recommended for refusal because it breached the conditions laid down in the plan. The planning committee overturned this recommendation, to a great cheer from the public gallery. It was felt that the surgery, while a different use class to that specified in the plan, was suitably complementary to the retail outlets. Unusually, the Committee had no idea how many people had come for this particular item as the applicant had not invoked popular support in his three minute presentation. Ironically the surgery is now under threat which seems to be passing unnoticed in Islington, because it counts as a Hackney general practice. Its origins were across the road in Hackney, though its patients are not yet prohibited from crossing the road.

Another successful example of an evolving policy of protection came in Exmouth Market (see *Independent bookshops*, page 4). A relaxation but not abandoning of the protection boosted an area which had become a poor relation of Chapel Market.

Eye off the ball

With the slow but inexorable decline in local shops and pubs, the concept of protection should with hindsight have been extended to the main thoroughfares. Upper Street remains vibrant, despite the loss of many shops, because their replacements bring a vibrancy of their own, albeit in the hours of darkness rather than daylight. Essex Road however has recently suffered the grievous loss of its only London-wide attraction, the Bingo Hall. This may well have a more serious impact on the shops than either Hendy's Bendy buses or the Council decision to sell its freehold in the shops.

Role of a local council

What should be the role of a local authority? In this era of Thatcherite government, to which council ownership of homes is anathema, Council's are increasingly being asked to be facilitators rather than providers. How then can they facilitate the continued existence of local communities in which people can live, work, learn and play without spending thousands of hours each year travelling to do so? Before renouncing this provision, we need to be told how the Council will facilitate.

The Rose Bowl Youth Club - a short history

Many Islington Society members would have been at the Annual Auction and Dinner of the Friends of the Rose Bowl Youth Club on 8 February 2007 at the London Art House off Essex Road. The event raised over £9,000 which later donations increased to over £13,500 and provided much needed funds for the Youth Club.

Early Days

Those with long memories will recall when the Marquess Estate was built in 1972 on Essex Road. A Youth Club was added a few years later and named after Ron Rose, a popular community worker. As Harley Sherlock writes in his book "An Architect in Islington" the Marquess Estate was "imaginative and took account of how people want to live". Harley continues "to me it is still one of those great mysteries that, after initial popularity, the Estate ultimately fell apart". The Rose Bowl Youth Club suffered like the Estate as a whole; its building became vandalised and then burnt down, truly *facilis descensus avari*.

Revival

Brighter days dawned ten years ago when Islington Council obtained funds for redeveloping the Estate, including a new Youth Club on the original site. The handsome new building opened in January 2000 with a ground floor café, a versatile basement space with a sound-proof room doubling as a recording studio and an enclosed outdoor area for games and exercise.

The revived Youth Club has proved a great success in the community both for young people and for their parents. There are now nearly 400 children on the register aged from five to eighteen years old, mostly from disadvantaged backgrounds. Included are several from neighbouring estates, who make use of the Youth Club too. Here are three quotes from users:

B. aged 16 "The club is great, it's somewhere to go and get support and advice about things. It's cool".

T. aged 13 "Because it's better than hanging about on the street and getting into trouble all the time".

C. aged 12 "The club is fun; you get to meet new people".

Activities

The Youth Club offers a wide range of facilities including Educational Programmes; a Homework Club; School holiday and half term projects; Art and Music activities; Gardening Club; Healthy Eating and Cooking Programme.

The Club is open six days a week.

The benefits to the community of the Youth Club have been evident not only in the provision of popular and useful facilities for young people but also in reducing street incidents in the area.

Funding

Financially the Rose Bowl Youth Club has never been secure. Islington Council's budget for Youth and Play only enabled the Youth Club to open a couple of nights a week. The extra costs to cover six nights a week have been covered by appealing to the generosity of local residents. It was soon recognised that fund raising needed to be formalised, thus in 2000 the Friends of the Rose Bowl was founded as a Registered Charity with Trustees, who give their time and work free. The aims of the Friends are to help young people to develop the skills which will better equip them for life.

The Annual Auction and Dinner (see above) has been a vital source of funds to extend the Youth Club's facilities, increase staff numbers and fund training and advice for unemployed youth.

The Rose Bowl Youth Club would welcome the help of Islington Society members, either by making a donation by contacting the Treasurer (Frances Sieber, 56 Canonbury Park South, London N.1, Tel: (020) 7354 3570; e-mail: rosebowl@blueyonder.co.uk) or by arranging to attend the next Annual Auction and Dinner at the London Art House on 7th February 2008 by contacting the Treasurer.

Independent bookshops in Islington

Our intrepid office manager ventures beyond the A1 "spine" of the Borough in search of the more traditional bookshops for which it was once famed.

Independent bookshops may have been squeezed out of Upper Street, but they are still to be found not far away. They can be a destination in their own right, and also an opportunity to explore another Islington neighbourhood. Three distinct and rewarding bookshops can be found in E.C.1.

Old Street Station is not where you would first look for Camden Lock Books, but that's where it is - just along the passage to exits 3, 4, 5 & 6. Owner Jason Burley began selling books at Camden Lock in 1984, but moved to Old Street Station in 2002. It's a well-stocked general bookshop that has gradually taken on the character of the neighbourhood as the stock of books has reflected customer demand. Thus it is strong in the fields of photography and of fashion, as well as African and Caribbean literature. Jason also sells CDs of African and South American music because that's what he likes to listen to - and customers like it too. As well as ordering and obtaining British books quickly, he is also able to obtain American books in three days, a shorter time than usual. Books of local interest are in stock and, having noticed a gap in the market, Jason himself is writing a history of Hoxton. Have a look above ground yourself. There are attractive improvements in Old Street, as well as history all around.

Metropolitan Books at 49 Exmouth Market is in another area of change. Phil Griffiths first opened his shop there in 1998 after working at one of the now vanished independent bookshops in Upper Street. The bright, well-lit shop is now an integral part of Exmouth Market. Fiction is a strong feature, and the stock of books on cookery and on travel have grown as customers have asked for them. In the back corner is a good selection of children's books too. And if you are looking for new non-fiction and current affairs, head for the tables in the middle of the shop. As in all good bookshops, if what you want is not in stock, ask and it most likely can be there in just a few days. Exmouth Market has been changing dramatically in recent years; right now there is a good mix of the new and the old. You

can eat at Moro or at Clark's. Go on a Friday or Saturday and you can sample the foods in the street market. Just do your book-shopping before you tuck into one of Dominique's crepes.

Just up the hill from Exmouth Market and Rosebery Avenue is the Amwell Book Company at 53 Amwell Street. After working in the antiquarian book trade in Soho, in 2001 Charlotte Robinson moved to Islington and the Georgian house where the shop is now located. She stocks new books of local interest, but her main business is second hand and rare books. Not surprisingly with a family with architects and artists who have been involved in doing up the house, Charlotte specialises in books on architecture, art, applied arts, and photography. There are also children's books for collectors. Much of the business is done through mail order and the website, but this misses out on the pleasure of browsing and the pleasure of the building itself with the view into the garden at the back. If you have a particular book or subject in mind, it's good to phone in advance. Take some time to look around the other shops in Amwell Street too; it's still a bit of old Islington - or should I say Finsbury?

At all of these shops the owners have a love of books, know their business and are ready to help the customer. Browsing in all of them is a great pleasure. Buying not only brings you further pleasure, but also helps to keep the shop in business. Bookshops have a low margin of profit, and small shops like these are especially at risk from developers and steep increases in rent. Give yourself a treat and support an independent bookshop.

Camden Lock Books: Old Street Station, E.C.1; tel 020 7253 0666; www.camdenlockbooks.co.uk

Metropolitan Books: 49 Exmouth Market, E.C.1; tel 020 7278 6900; www.metropolitanbooks.co.uk

Amwell Book Company: 53 Amwell Street, E.C.1; tel 020 7837 4891; www.amwellbookcompany.co.uk

"An Architect in Islington"

Frank Hopkins reviews the latest Islington Society publication, which the Society published in November last year.

"When a man is tired of London, he is tired of life; for there is in London all that life can afford". Samuel Johnson 1777. Harley Sherlock writes in similar vein on page 116 of his latest book: "living near the centre of a great city is what living is all about".

In "An Architect in Islington", Harley first briefly depicts his early years as a student at the Architectural Association and then qualifying as an ARIBA in 1952. In a characteristic aside, he adds that ARIBA really stands for "Always Remember I'm the Bloody Architect". In his formative period, Harley worked for five years with other young architects living as a commune in Canonbury, a period which he describes as "most adventurous and most experimental". Their first big breakthrough as a "Planning Design Team", or PDT as they were known, was the Southwood Development, Highgate, marked by what became a constant theme: to design the houses and the central common garden as a unity. The next logical step was to establish the practice of Andrews Sherlock and Partners (still so named).

The book ranges much more widely than the title suggests and embraces in many ways a very personal overview of major social and economic changes during the last 50 years. There is a mingled sense of sadness and nostalgia for past mixed balanced communities; London has retained parts of its heritage but has lost much. These themes were already developed in a previous book of Harley's: "Cities are Good for Us" with its subtitle: "The case for close-knit communities, local shops and public transport". In both books, Harley addresses key issues of urban housing, planning and transport. He campaigns "for a better environment for all our citizens" (page 125), aptly defining his convictions as "rather moderate leftwingery".

In chapter 4 of his book, Harley writes on successive commissions for Public Sector Urban Housing, mainly in Islington: Popham Street, Blenheim Court, Holloway, Sutterton Street and

Grovedale Road, Archway as well as work in Greenwich and Lambeth. The importance of everyone having "their own front door" (page 62) and "the idea of compact communities without building tower blocks" are stressed. Increasingly too Harley's vision as an architect broadens to encompass planning and transport issues with the emphasis on seeking to ensure that new developments respect the environment. The reader is moved to reflect on what constitutes good architecture and how best it can help to create a successful urban environment.

In addition to architectural commissions, the book describes planning issues, in particular how Harley served for 20 years as an advisory member of Islington Council's Planning Committee. His keen interest in transport issues is also emphasised, including active roles in traffic reducing schemes, opposition to proposals for the London Box Motorway, the campaign to save the North London rail line and measures to curb inappropriate developments along the Regent's Canal.

In the course of these multifarious community activities, Harley has served as member and Chairman of numerous committees, amongst others the RIBA, London Region; Transport 2000; London Amenity & Transport Association; Campaign to Protect Rural England, London Branch; and of course the Islington Society.

One of Harley's current activities in "semi-retirement" is to oppose the plans to build a 35 storey tower block overlooking the City Road Basin of the Regent's Canal.

Harley writes with humour and modesty about his extraordinarily active life. A particular pleasing memory from early years contrasts builders who all "tended to drive Jaguars: whereas most of us architects rode bicycles".

The final sentence of Harley's book reads: "For everyday living, give me the city life: with all its vitality and convenience". And so say all of us.

James Hudson Taylor (1832-1905)

In this issue, we continue our series on the Blue Plaques of Islington, compiled by our vice-chairman Alan Turner.

James Hudson Taylor is remembered as one of the great missionaries of the Victorian era seeking to bring Christianity to the heathen people of distant lands. He lived at 6 Pyrland Road, N.5 from 1872 for twenty years; during this period he extended the property to include numbers 2 and 4 to house the headquarters of the China Inland Mission (CIM) which he founded in 1865. He later moved to nearby Newington Green, but the plaque is at Pyrland Road. CIM was very successful and sent over 800 missionaries to China during the 51 years of Taylor's stewardship and it is estimated that this directly resulted in 18,000 converts. Taylor was unusual for his time in that he tried to be sensitive to the culture of the people among whom he worked, by learning their ways and by adopting their dress - he and all his missionaries (including women) wore Chinese clothing. Many people were shocked by what they thought to be scandalous but he was highly regarded by others as one of the leading evangelical missionaries of the period. He was also surprisingly liberal in his views and CIM was entirely non-denominational, accepting Protestants from all

groups. An American writer (Arthur Glasser) said of him that he was "biblical without being bigoted... and catholic without being superficial".

Taylor was born in Barnsley, the son of a Methodist lay preacher and in his early years studied medicine at the Royal London Hospital in Whitechapel. Although he never qualified as a doctor, this training was a useful background for the life he chose in ministering to the needs of the "unreached" people in inland China. Like many of his Victorian contemporaries he was incredibly industrious and dedicated to his work, making no less than eleven visits to China between 1854 and 1905. In those days each journey would have taken several weeks and would no doubt have involved a certain amount of suffering in the cramped conditions of a ship during stormy weather. Now that we can fly to China and back within a few days, it is difficult for us to imagine what an effort all this would entail, but it does impress on us the extraordinary zeal of the man.

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A lasting legacy for London?

Commissioned by the London Assembly and undertaken by the London East Research Institute of the University of East London, *A Lasting Legacy for London? Assessing the legacy of the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games* examines the impact of previous Olympic Games and Paralympic Games in a number of areas - economic, social, cultural and environmental.

Under social, cultural and lifestyle, it looks at the regeneration momentum in Montreal, Barcelona and Sydney noting 'white elephants' are the most common characterisation of infrastructure with Montreal cited as the worst case scenario. However it also notes typical hard legacy gains: infrastructure, the reorientation of city spaces, improved amenity, new types of land use and economic activity.

Soft gains are classified as social capital and evolving and engaged governance structures, networking capacities, co-operative entrepreneurship; community buy in, openness; strong communications links, civic confidence, alertness to 'the next project' and 'buzz'.

For confidence, buzz, reputation, national and international status, both tourist driven and commercially driven, memory and 'pride of place', Barcelona is the acknowledged success story here but positive socio-cultural legacy momentum emerges when these factors are sufficiently evident in the host city and beyond. These soft legacy factors sustain co-ordination, communication and consensus, before, during and after the Games.

The full report is on <http://www.london.gov.uk/assembly/reports/econsd/lasting-legacy-uel-research.pdf>

Cautionary tale from Corsica Street

The way local authorities consult us often arouses more ire than the subject matter of the consultation itself. The Chair of Islington Living Streets, which campaigns for streets and public spaces to be safe and attractive for people on foot Christine Mabey, reported as much to that group's A.G.M.

We know that consultation does not mean that what we want will be accepted - even if that is the majority view. But we do expect that what happens is broadly what was in the consultation unless a variation is announced. We learnt a salutary lesson in January.

Any one passing by Highbury Corner will know that Corsica Street - which joins St Paul's Road just off the roundabout - has become one way from the CTRL site, a much widened pavement, raised entry treatment and double yellow lines to ban parking in the one-way stretch. This scheme, finished last month, was funded by Transport for London and forms part of the Canonbury School Travel Plan (on which the school has been working for the last 5 years) to enable Primary school children a safer route on their walk to school. What you see now is roughly what Islington Council consulted on last June. However, it nearly wasn't.

In late December Living Streets received the draft Traffic Management Order (TMO) with information that work would begin in early January. (A TMO is the formal, legal statement of what is to be done; it is issued after consultation and there is a very limited period to make comment). The TMO, however, differed radically from the earlier proposals: the widened pavement for pedestrians was to have shared use with cyclists and the whole of the width of the pavement outside The Junction pub was to be devoted to a loading bay - not only radically different but potentially highly dangerous to pedestrians.

There then followed a flurry of activity with Living Streets formally objecting to the TMO - most unusual. In this we were joined by Canonbury School and the Highbury Fields Association. Without going into the boring details much time was spent but the end result was that the cycle lane and loading bay were abandoned and there is a much safer route for pedestrians - especially the school children.

In the process we learnt a lot: there had been a second consultation (with the TMO

proposals) which we and the School did not receive as it was only hand-delivered to local residents and businesses. To our surprise the standard TMO list includes no representative of people with disabilities although there are - quite rightly - representatives of all the emergency services as well as the AA, the RAC, the Owner Drivers', the Auto Cycle Union, the Freight Transport Association and two organisations representing cyclists - so much for People Friendly Streets.

So, the moral of this tale we think is that, if you care about an issue always respond to consultation - even in Highbury there were not many responses - follow up with the officer (whose name and contact details will be on the leaflet) to see just what is happening and if you think what is proposed is unsafe, ask - as we did - if a safety audit has been carried out.

We have had two useful meetings with Kevin O'Leary, Director of Environment & Conservation, who has volunteered that in future:

1. if, following consultation, a scheme is significantly altered and new proposals are made, then the new scheme will be consulted on and sent to all those initially contacted;
2. the standard TMO list will be reviewed to ensure that it properly includes all relevant organisations and will include a representative of those with disabilities, probably Disability Action in Islington;
3. for any scheme which is part of a School Travel Plan the school will be kept informed as to what is happening and automatically sent the TMO, or for area schemes where there is an active community/residents group they too will be informed.

We are pleased with the outcome on this which should significantly improve accountability but we still feel that our experience in Corsica Street and Goswell Road warrants our call above for a Pedestrian Officer in the Council. CM

■ *Islington Living Streets can be contacted at cmabey@blueyonder.co.uk*

From the Society

Future events

1. Thursday, June 14th @ 7.30 p.m.: Annual General Meeting & talk by Emily Thornberry, M.P., *Islington's Housing Crisis*, Town Hall, Upper Street.

2. Friday, June 22nd commencing 6.0 p.m.: Bill Manley Memorial Pub Crawl, New Rose, (former Half Moon Inn), 86 Essex Road.

7.0 Mucky Pup (former Ram & Teasel), 39 Queens Head Street;

8.0 Prince of Wales, 139 Graham Street;

9.0 Charles Lamb (former Albert), 16 Elia Street;

10.0 The York, 82 Islington High Street.

3. Tuesday July 3rd @ 9.0 p.m. Meet the Officers, Marquess Tavern, 32 Canonbury Street.

4. Wednesday July 4th commencing at 6.30 p.m. Fourth Annual Church Crawl.

St Joan of Arc Church, Highbury Park; Christ Church Highbury, Harecourt United Reformed Church, Harecourt Road; St. Paul's Steiner School in the former St. Paul's Church.

5. Thursday, July 5th, 7.30 for 8.0 p.m. Annual Dinner, The Albion, Thornhill Road

6. Thursday July 19th 7.30 p.m.: New Buildings for Old? Fifty years of argument. Harley Sherlock, speaking at Amwell bookshop, 53, Amwell Street, London E.C.1.

Conservation Award 2007

A short list of projects has been drawn up and these will be visited by the judging panel within the next few weeks. It is hoped that a decision will be made by early July and we will publish the results in the next newsletter

What else do we do

- we support conservation planning work to preserve the borough's historic fabric and individual buildings of distinction
- we campaign for a high standard of design in new buildings
- we encourage best practice through awards for good architecture in new or refurbished buildings

- we organise a varied programme of events including talks, walks and site visits

- we campaign for better public transport and for priority for people travelling on foot or by bike

- we produce publications that celebrate Islington's architectural history and its social and cultural diversity

- we publish neighbourhood walking trails to foster exploration awareness and pride of place

- we build links between residents officials and councillors

- we publish a regular newsletter

- we send representatives to advise Council groups dealing with development, the environment and transport

- we are represented on the London Forum of Civic & Amenity Societies, which takes up cross-borough issues of concern and is a member of the Civic Trust

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