

ISLINGTON *news*

The Journal of the Islington Society

All change at the top

Within 48 hours of David Gibson's announcement that he would stand down as Chairman by 31st December, Lee Cain and Dominic Cummings made similar announcements about leaving number 10. Cain is best known for dressing as a chicken during the 2010 election; Islington resident Dominic Cummings for a trip to Barnard Castle last year. David Gibson's achievements have attracted less notoriety.

Neither Cain nor Cummings appear to have been directly replaced and the same is true of the Chairman of the Islington Society. However, the

Committee is "on the case". The Committee has been strengthened by the co-option of some new members. Michael Gwinnell, who has contributed a recent series of articles to the News, joins as Treasurer as Robert Coyle has stood down. The Committee will however retain a link with Colman Coyle because we are joined by Patrick Green and Colman Coyle hosts our web site. Emma Smith also joins fresh from a successful campaign at King's Cross. Aurelia Faure and Fredrik Borjesson are joining the committee and will work on recruitment of new members.

Lockdowns 2 and 3

The more optimistic report on the Covid pandemic in the Autumn issue proved short-lived. As we went to press a further lockdown was in place in Wales and soon England followed suit. The loss of trade in November further hit the hospitality sector and when we came out of lockdown it was touch and go whether London's pubs and restaurants would be allowed to reopen. In the event those serving food were allowed to do so; more expenditure on Covid security followed in the hope of some pre-Christmas trade. However, this lasted only two weeks before further restrictions close to lockdown. The Prime Minister repeatedly promised a break over Christmas; plans were laid and train tickets sold, only for the plug to be pulled. Many people were reluctant to cancel their plans and there were fewer turkeys still on sale on Boxing Day than in previous years.

As it became clear that children and particularly teenagers were not immune from transmitting the virus, some London Boroughs attempted to close schools early for Christmas. This was opposed by the government, who threatened legal action. The stand off continued with a baffling list of Boroughs forced to keep schools open which bore no resemblance to infection rates. This time the legal advice found in favour of the boroughs anxious not to spread the virus further. The problem was not so much the schools themselves but the journey to and from them. The only means of transporting students, particularly in outer London, was to run school special buses with zero social distancing. It was fortunate that London schools did not reopen because those that did elsewhere in the country had just one day before closing to all but vulnerable children and those of key

worker parents. Regrettably, children with two parents only needed one of them a key worker in order to qualify for school. The result was that far more children attended than in lockdown 1, though not by any means all of the vulnerable children for whom it was most needed. The Prime Minister finally acknowledged that Covid can be transmitted by touch, particularly in self-service essential shops. The difficulty is in enforcing hand washing, coupled with the unfortunate fact that the tops of sanitizer dispensers contain the most concentrated areas of contamination, along with keyboards and mice.

After rising for more than a month, rates of infection began to fall in Islington around January 9th.

Islington has continued to fare better than much of London, though far worse than the National average. A mutant version first seen in Kent seemed to be more easily transmitted and was responsible for the high rates across the capital. Other variants led to restrictions on travellers from abroad which the Home Secretary had been pressing to impose from the start.

Better news came in the approval of three vaccines and the early progress in inoculating those over the age of 80. If the government had been slow to order lockdowns, it had been quicker in committing to orders of vaccine. Controversy was stirred when, having approved the vaccines on the basis of two jabs, the government made a unilateral decision to delay second jabs in the belief that giving more people half of what they need would more quickly arrest the pandemic. The consequences of this decision should be clearer by next issue but the prospects of an early end to lockdown seemed to be receding as this issue went to press.

Islington Society News

Islington Society: What 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 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 send advisers to 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 and is a member of Civic Voice
- we publish a regular newsletter

The views expressed in the Islington Society's Journal are not necessarily those of the Editor or the Society's adopted policy.

SOCIETY PUBLICATIONS

Available from the Society's Web Site on
IslingtonSociety.org.uk/Publications

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

The Story of Day Flats in and around Islington, by Andrew Bosi, photographs from C.F. Day Limited and Oliver Craxton, £5, ISBN 0-9541490-1-7

The Building That Lived Twice - The story of the Royal Agricultural Hall and its rebirth as the Business Design Centre by Alec Forshaw, £14.99, , ISBN 0-9541490-0-9

Caledonian Park and its Surroundings by Caledonian Park Friends Group, £5, ISBN 978-0-954 1490-4-8

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

Books from our President and late Vice-Presidents
Available from usual sources

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

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

53 Cross Street - the biography of an historic house by Mary Cosh & Martin King, photographs by Pauline Lord, published by the Islington Archaeology & History Society

CURRENT OFFICERS OF THE SOCIETY

President : Lord Smith of Finsbury

Secretary: David Trillo 45, Ellington Street, London, N.7 020 7607 9325; e-mail david@trillo.net

Treasurer: Michael Gwinnell

Membership manager: Peter Kilborn 18, Bewdley Street, London, N1 tel: 020 7609 8822; e-mail pkilborn@aol.com

Newsletter: Andrew Bosi, The Croft, Wall Street, London, N1 3NB 020 7354 8514;

e-mail: AndrewBosi@aol.com

Events Secretary: Andrew Clayton

e-mail: andrew.clayton@blueyonder.co.uk

CONTENTS OF THIS ISSUE

Pandemic in Islington	1
Society News	2
Dixon Clark Court defeat	3
The Bauhaus in Islington	4
Book review:	
The History of Islington Literary & Scientific Society	5
Dr. Pitcairn and the Wilson Estate - Part 3	6
A walk from York Way to the Rosemary Branch	8
A walking map	10
Housing & public service infrastructure	11
Transport News	12

Our web site is : www.islingtonsociety.org.uk

Our email address is : info@IslingtonSociety.org.uk

Our postal address is : **Resource Centre,
356 Holloway Road, London N7 6PA**

Dixon Clark Court defeat

As the previous edition of *Islington News* went to press the occupation by Extinction Rebellion of trees due for removal to clear the way for the Council to build more housing on the open ground round its own Dixon Clark Court (DCC) tower block was continuing (as we reported).

But this campaign, started initially by the late Conor McHugh (not Hugh McConor as we incorrectly stated) about sixteen months ago, was brought to an end at a court hearing on 29 January. Deputy High Court Judge David Rees QC found in his careful assessment between the respective rights of the tree-occupiers to protest and the Council to exercise its rights of ownership, that the balance came down in favour of the latter and, at the second time of asking, granted a possession order effective within 20 hours. The merits or otherwise of the Council's scheme did not come into it, and neither did Mayor Sadiq Kahn's declaration that London is a National Park City, nor the Council's own declaration of a Climate Emergency (both after planning permission was granted for the scheme).

So, the forces of Process and Order have won, and there was to be no repeat of the great victories in defence of greenery and open space which in its early days the Society enjoyed – mainly in opposition to projects designed by Sir Bail Spence and Partners to redevelop much of Canonbury to a higher density and to realise the commercial potential of Barnsbury Wood. But those battles of course were fought at planning application stage rather than long after it and, crucially, the applicant was not the Council itself, nor were those who were primarily to be negatively impacted Council tenants. Also, the context comprised early nineteenth century villas or terrace housing, not a 1960s tower block such as DCC.

Acting *pro bono* for the Save the Trees group (in succession to XR, but involving some of the same people) was barrister Jeremy Frost of Goldsmith Chambers, who started his submission with two quotations from William Blake:

“The **tree** which moves some to tears of joy is in the eyes of others only a green thing that stands in the way. Some see nature all ridicule and deformity... and some scarce see nature at all. But to the eyes of the man of imagination, nature is imagination itself.”

And secondly:

“To see a *World* in a *Grain of Sand*.

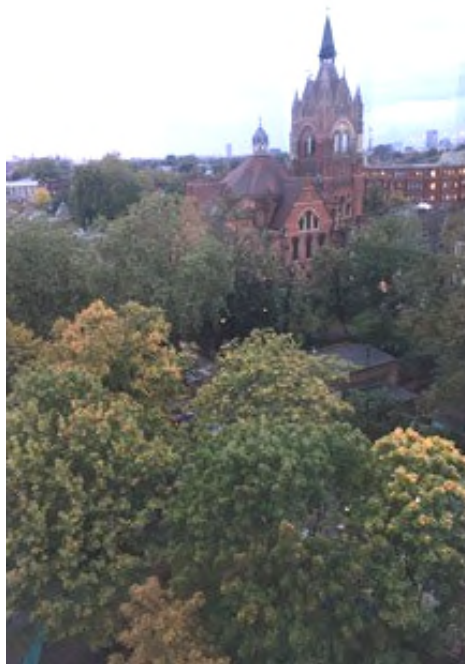
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower.

Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand.

And Eternity in an hour”.

The Point being, as Frost explains, that the council's own policy is to embed the macro-scale CEE [Climate and Ecological Emergency] into micro-scale local decision. (Or, apparently not!)'. It wasn't very much on which to pin the fight against eviction, though he, like most of the protesters, are very committed to this issue. But as regards my own commitment the chief issue was the related but distinct question of the environment for human life. That the long-sought ideal of the Green City, which in the 1920s Le Corbusier saw as having been made attainable by modern technology and which, though attacked ever since, influenced housing design such as DCC during the two decades post war, was once again to be critically undermined, with worrying implications for much other excellent housing in the Borough reflecting that ideal. This is not the place to argue the merits of the Council's house-building policy, but clearly new social housing should not be built at the expense of social housing that already exists. Also, it must be doubted whether a one-party Council is in the best position to assess objectively so political and controversial a planning application submitted by itself.

JD



The view from Dixon Clark Court showing in the foreground the trees to be replaced by a six storey block of private flats

The Bauhaus in Islington



2019 was the centenary of the founding of the Bauhaus, the famous design school established by the pioneering Modern architect Walter Gropius in Weimar. This might be thought to have little impact specifically in Islington, beyond conveying to it the general design philosophy which the Bauhaus promoted world-wide. But seizure of power by the Nazis in Germany in 1933 obliged many of the key figures of the Bauhaus to flee and to come to Britain, where the Lawn Road Flats near South End Green in Hampstead, a pioneering Modern development built by Isokon, were conveniently awaiting their arrival. One of these was Marcel Breuer, a self-trained nascent architect formerly head of the carpentry workshop at the Bauhaus, and designer of some of the most famous pieces of furniture of the twentieth century, such as the 'Wassily' chair in tubular steel, and the bent-wood reclining chair for Isokon.

Breuer was also the ideal designer for the new theatre-school established in London by the French Director Michel Saint-Denis in 1936, who had been bringing his company, the Compagnie des Quinze, to London annually since 1932. A new generation of rising local theatrical stars were very impressed by his company, whose work 'exploited mime, movement, music, song, dance and poetry, explored possibilities as yet undreamed of in British theatre', according to Dr Jane Baldwin writing in the little booklet produced to coincide with the exhibition 'When Marcel met Motley' at the Victoria and Albert Museum in 2008. Those impressed included John Gielgud, Laurence Olivier, Charles Laughton, Tyrone Guthrie, Peggy Ashcroft and George Devine, and they persuaded Saint-Denis to set up a theatre



school in London. This he did in 1936-7, establishing the London Theatre Studio in Providence Hall, a former Methodist preaching hall in Providence Place, off Upper Street at Islington Green.

For its conversion he hired Marcel Breuer, well-qualified with his furniture and woodwork expertise. Key collaborators were 'Motley', the business name of three women, Sophie and Margaret Harris and Elizabeth Montgomery who 'were catapulted to fame through working with John Gielgud who invited them to design the costumes for his directorial debut...', and who went on to run a couture salon (also designed by Breuer) and a theatre design business, and to teach theatrical design at the London Theatre Studio. Breuer's designs made extensive use of plywood panelling, supplied doubtless by his friend and patron Jack Pritchard of Venesta Plywood, who had founded Isokon and commissioned the furniture. A lighting box at the back of the auditorium was an innovative feature, playing on a wide stage, and the seating that was used was designed by the Finnish master of bent-wood design, Alvar Aalto. The side walls were hung with pinoleum blinds, a stylish and economical way to disguise their roughness.

Providence Hall still survives as solicitors' offices, albeit with an extra storey added, but neither Breuer's work nor the London Theatre Studio survived the start of World War II. Its ideas and ideals, however, were formative on the post war Old Vic Theatre, 'the crucible of many of the performing arts companies and theatres in London today' according to Wikipedia - including Olivier's National Theatre. JD

*Book review***The History of Islington Literary & Scientific Society**

If you have enjoyed Michael Gwinell's series on Doctor Pitcairn and the Wilson estate, you will not want to miss this recently published further reading.

My first introduction to the concept of a Literary & Philosophical Society was in Newcastle more than forty years ago and even then it seemed something of an anachronism. The Newcastle Society survives to-day as a monument to a movement that flourished in the late eighteenth and nineteenth century, alongside the remnants of two or three others. For many, the introduction of public libraries spelt the end: the Islington society did not last even that long. Libraries came rather late to Islington.

The subject of this book is charted against the backdrop of the changing demographic which Islington experienced in the 1800s. There is an intriguing tale of a message in a bottle which sadly ends in anti-climax. The society seems to have

suffered from more than its share of maladministration and was one of the shorter lived of its kind, but it has bequeathed to us the splendid building which now houses the flourishing Almeida theatre.

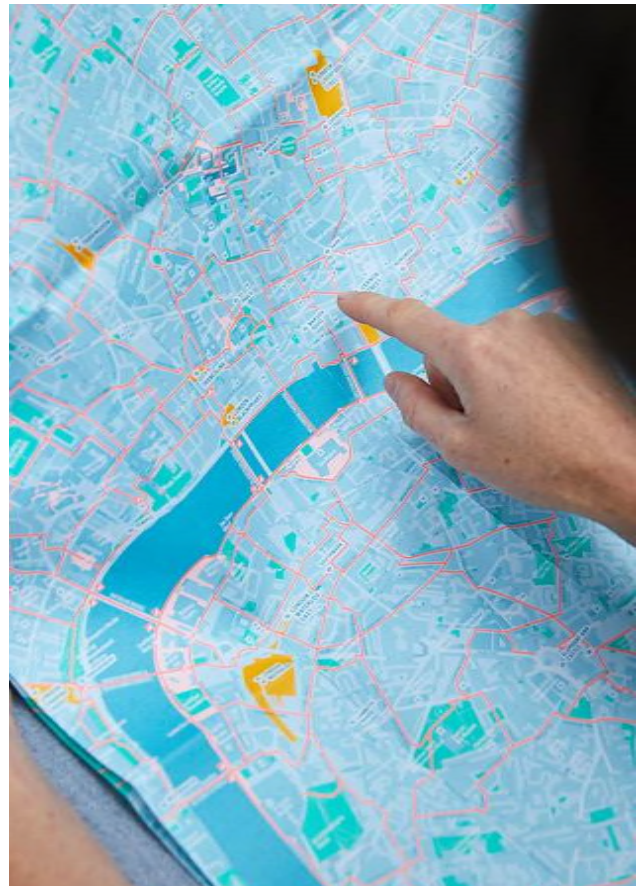
The nature of the Society has ensured that a comprehensive archive has survived to find its way into our public library's Local History Centre.

The Society also attracted plenty of coverage in the Islington Gazette after its first appearance in 1856. This has enabled the full story to be told in this book, which also covers the various uses of the building between the Society's demise and the Almeida Theatre.

The History of Islington Literary and Scientific Society by Lorna Seymour, ISBN 978-0-9523336-2-3 is available from the author at £9.99 plus postage (£2.50), pending relaxation of the restrictions on "non-essential" shops. Please contact alanjseymourbooks@gmail.com.

A walking map : see report on page ten

Paul Thornton (on behalf of the London Forum) receives a copy of the map

**A close up view of the new walking map**

Dr Pitcairn's Physic Garden and the Wilson Estate - Part 3

In Parts 1 & 2 Michael Gwinnell described the inception of the Wilson Estate and its subsequent development.

We now turn to buildings at the Upper Street ends of Almeida Street (until 1889 Wellington St.) and Waterloo Terrace.

After the building of the Islington Literary & Scientific Institution and the 4 adjoining houses in 1837, Wellington Street was only a short approach road to the market gardens beyond, as shown in the 1843 map in Lewis's History (see Part 1).

This changed in 1846 when the houses on the north side of Almeida Street were built, following which in 1856 the original Myddelton Hall was constructed in the garden of what had been Dr Strahan's house on the corner of Upper Street. The hall was entered via shop premises at 142 Upper St.



Former house of Dr George Strahan, vicar of Islington (died 1824, friend of Dr Johnson who frequently visited him at Islington) in Upper Street, north of Almeida Street, with advertisement for Islington Institution on the wall. FN Shepherd, c.1841

The name of the hall derives from the fact (recorded in an inscription on the adjacent corner of 140A Upper Street) that Sir Hugh Myddelton, who brought the New River to Islington in the 17c., lived in a house on this site, so the hall would have been built on its former gardens and outbuildings. That house had been replaced in the 18c. by Dr Strahan's house (as depicted in an 1841 watercolour by FN Shepherd), to which was later added a shopfront as shown in the 1886 engraving of Upper Street below:



Myddelton Hall was in active use for 60 years as a venue for concerts, lectures and fund-raising bazaars, and was also the headquarters of a number of local societies and political parties. Charles Dickens is stated in the Daily News to be giving a reading there in aid of a local charity on 31 January 1866. The hall was considerably rebuilt in 1891 when the buildings in Upper Street were replaced by the terracotta row of four shops now numbered 140A - 143 Upper Street. The new entrance in Almeida Street bears the name Myddelton Hall and date 1891 beneath the pediment over the central doorway.

The hall continued in such use until 1916 when John Masham and Sons, a grocery and oil and colour business with other outlets at Nos. 38 & 62 Cross Street, moved in. After the first world war it continued in industrial use by such businesses as leather goods manufacturers, shipping agents and aeronautical instruments manufacturers. The latter company, Aircraft Patents Limited, moved in in 1937, having been formed in 1913 to acquire their British aircraft patents from Orville and Wilbur Wright, and remained in Almeida Street as an electric clock manufacturer until the mid-1950s.

The façade is comprised of two parts, that on the left, possibly dating from the original 1856 building, has five recessed bays beneath low brick arches, three of them blank and two glazed. The windows were inserted and a horseshoe shaped raked balcony within the hall was removed when a mezzanine floor and roof lights were inserted to provide office space, probably mid 20c.

Wellington Hall was built in 1874 behind and to the left of Myddelton Hall and was used for meetings and displays, suggesting that there was enough demand for it to flourish next door to Myddelton Hall. However, demographic change in the neighbourhood and no doubt competition from Collins Music Hall (rebuilt 1897) and other central Islington venues led to its closure in 1906. It became a factory for Coopers Gowns (robe makers), which remained there until 1941 when the business moved to 133 Upper Street.

Myddelton Hall's last industrial occupant, Shop & Store Planners, used it as a shop fittings factory, combining it with Wellington Hall and using the house forming the latter's frontage next door as its offices. In the late 1990s they moved away and the buildings were sold to developers, who in 1999-2000 converted them to a restaurant on the

ground floor with 9 flats on the first and second floors (the latter being within the roof). The restaurant premises include the former under stage pit area, which remains as a lower level adjunct to the bar, with the kitchens at the back in the former Wellington Hall part of the building, which has rear emergency access into Terrett's Place.



Shop & Store Planners

Premier House and Bouton Place

The Metropolitan Street Improvements Act of 1883 (*inter alia* authorising the widening of Upper Street from Islington Green to the Unitarian Chapel on the east side and from Waterloo Terrace to Barnsbury Street on the west side) required the rehousing of "the number of persons of the working classes displaced by the improvements". That number was fixed by the Home Secretary at 140 persons and the Metropolitan Board of Works set apart a site in Waterloo Terrace to accommodate this number. The site, coloured blue in the plan opposite, included No. 1 Waterloo Terrace and various stables and outbuildings behind the properties in Upper Street.

The site was sold for £950 on a 999 year lease at one shilling per annum ground rent, with the purchaser bound to erect dwellings for 140 persons within 9 months and to expend £4,000 on the buildings. They were completed in October 1887 permitting the widened street to be opened for traffic early in 1888.

The Local Listing description of the five storey block (now divided into 30 flats) describes the building with its red and yellow brick and stucco façade as an impressive and rather overwhelming example of a Queen Anne revival Arts & Crafts

design, probably influenced by the work of Norman Shaw. The original Victorian setts paving the street remain in this section of Waterloo Terrace.



Site of Premier House as approved for rehousing persons of the labouring class displaced by the widening of Upper Street in 1888

Opposite Premier House, Bouton Place is a gated courtyard development by Aitch Group, built around 2004. Eight houses and 6 flats face each other across a narrow space, with 2 ground floor offices facing Waterloo Terrace. The name derives from the site's previous occupation by a garage used by the de Dion Bouton motor company, which had an active presence in London from 1907 until the 1930s. Latterly the building, which can be seen in the 1947 aerial photograph in Part 2 of this article, was occupied by a wholesaler of hairdressers' supplies, and still had the French company's name over the entrance.

Sources:

Islington Local History Library:

- Dent's Survey of Islington 1805/6 (plan and listing of owners and occupiers)
- Records of the Islington Literary & Scientific Society, Rate Books, Registers of Electors, street directories and various watercolours

London Metropolitan Archive:

- Barnsbury Court Rolls and Middlesex Land Registry
- Metropolitan Board of Works reports and papers
- LCC photograph collection

Cosh, Mary – The Squares of Islington Part II (1993)

Willats, Eric A – Streets with a Story: The Book of Islington (second edition 1988)

The Victoria History of the County of Middlesex Volume VIII (1985)

A walk from Blackstock Road to Green Lanes

This walk takes us through Islington's eastern borderlands, along the frontier with Hackney. It continues Andrew Clayton's series based on the updated register of Islington's Locally Listed Buildings, recently completed by a group of volunteers though not yet approved by the council.

We start from Finsbury Park, along Blackstock Road towards Highbury. On the right is one of Islington's London Board Schools, Ambler Road School. This displays the Queen Anne Baroque architectural style used by TJ Bailey and his colleagues at the School Board at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. Their style was deliberately secular, not "churchy", to mark the break from the religious foundations which dominated London schools before the Education Act of 1870. This school is comparatively plain, but given distinction by its central tower and turret, and the stone tablet with its name and date facing Blackstock Road.

Continuing south you come on the right to one of the many shopfronts locally listed by Islington in 1993. No. 132 is now a bar and music venue but it still has its T Bird fascia from its days as a clothes shop, selling children's items, ladies' underwear and hosiery. The T-Bird bar is known for the times the young Ed Sheeran did acoustic sessions in the downstairs bar.

The road curves slightly to the right and on the left is one of Islington's finest police stations. It has an attractive almost domestic front, designed in 1903 by John Dixon Butler. He also built police stations in Hornsey, Muswell Hill, Tottenham and elsewhere in north and east London. The police moved out in 2012 and it has been converted into flats. The late 1800s and early 1900s were a time of rapid expansion of police stations, particularly in London. The architectural style followed was strongly influenced by Richard Norman Shaw and New Scotland Yard, and Highbury Vale police station is no exception. It is a building, of high quality with excellent materials, combining Baroque (doorway and gable end) and Arts & Crafts (windows and cast-iron railings).



Highbury Vale
Police station

No. 217 is a former fire station, now converted into a day nursery and flats upstairs. It is similar to the converted fire station in Mayton Street, off Seven Sisters Road, also locally listed. Both are Edwardian Arts & Crafts in style, with office and residential space above the ground floor fire station. So this part of Blackstock Road gives us three examples of late Victorian or Edwardian Baroque and Arts & Crafts public buildings. They are historically important as a group, showing how public buildings were developing a less forbidding face at the turn of the century.

Keep walking towards Highbury and up the slight curve to the right where Blackstock Road becomes Highbury Park. On the left is St. Joan of Arc Catholic Church, one of the few 20th century modernist buildings on the local list. It was designed by Stanley C Kerr Bate in 1960 - 62, together with the adjoining school, the presbytery and offices. He described the style himself as "modernised Gothic" and that is the impression it gives. The pitched roof and the buttresses make its outline almost triangular, with a central window which nods towards the Perpendicular style of late medieval English churches. The tower too has a medieval air with its steeple echoing the Rhenish church building style. The overall effect is entirely modern and reflects the architect's own words about the building. He said he wanted to build a "happy church"

Turn left down Kelross Road, right onto Aberdeen Road, left onto Highbury Grange and left again onto Balfour Road, developed in 1873-5. Tucked away on the left, as Balfour Road turns at a right angle, is Louise Villa. Its builder has embellished every feature, with prominent brackets under overhanging eaves, tripartite windows on both floors and cast-iron decorative railings on the first-floor sills. The ground



85, Balfour Road:
Louise Villa

floor windows are plastered with stiff leaf capitals and cornice above. The front doorway is also pilastered and its leaded fanlight retains the name "Louise."

Turning your back on Louise Villa you see at the end of the road the elevation of one of the striking mansions on Highbury New Park. The locally listed Nos. 120-126, of around 1860, are formed of two pairs of semi-detached 'Gothic' style villas. Highbury New Park was developed from 1851 by Henry Rydon and his architect Charles Hambridge as an "extensive suburb for the middle classes". They used a variety of styles ranging from Greek revival, through Italianate and Lombardic, to Gothic. A blue plaque marks the residence, from 1898-1939, of David Gestetner, developer of office copying machinery. This was one of the great breakthrough inventions of the late 19th century. Instead of laboriously copying by hand a skilled clerk could turn out a precise copy every ten seconds. Gestetner made his machines in Cross Street Islington until 1907, when he moved the business to Tottenham Hale. It survived until the 1980s.



120 Highbury
New Park

Our next stop is St. Augustine's Church, a mix of the Early English and Decorated styles, of London stock brick, with some polychromatic work and stone dressings. A tower with twinned lancets projects forward on the southwest corner. The west end contains two large pointed windows, with geometric tracery surmounted by a rose window. By the 1860s some eighty houses had been completed by Rydon and the residents needed somewhere to worship. A 'tin tabernacle' was erected in 1864, seating 850, to serve the estate's spiritual needs. This was replaced by the permanent church, St. Augustine's, in 1869-70, seating 1,150 and costing £10,000, paid for by Rydon himself.

Turn left onto St. Augustine's Path to Petherton Road and then left again. At the junction with Green Lanes turn left until you reach Nos. 169-171. These are a pair of very substantial villas, palatial in their scale. They appear on a map of 1868, when large areas of Stoke Newington were yet to be built up, reminders of a time when the area around

Newington Green was a good deal posher than it is now



169-171,
Green Lanes

Return to Petherton Road and walk along the left-hand side to Leconfield Road, laid out and built in the 1870s. These terraces have two stories and semi-basements, but if you walk along to No. 62 you come to another small detached villa, slightly below street level. The four rusticated pilasters on its frontage add a Baroque touch to the façade which increases the impact of its design. This is an unusual building for this part of Highbury, again perhaps earmarked by the builder for his own use.



The
Leconfield

Retrace your steps again to Green Lanes and The Leconfield, the former Royal Oak. A pub has stood on this site since at least 1848 but the current building dates from 1926 in a Tudor revival style popular among brewers at the time. It retains some fine original features including the golden 'Courage's' cockerel above the pub sign at the front of the building, and a tiled 'Courage's' sign on the Leconfield Road side. It also has unusual beaten lead panels on the first and second floor bays above the two front entrances. It is a congenial place to end this walk along the eastern edge of the borough

A walking map

2020 changed our lives and our habits. One good outcome, friends tell me, is that they have discovered or rediscovered walking longer distances, both for leisure and practical purposes. The numbers of people on the streets of Islington bear this out. The next step key post Covid is to see people taking regular, everyday journeys on foot. Walking more and further is critical for tackling our health, pollution and climate crises, not to mention reducing congestion and relieving pressure on public transport.

To promote enjoyable 'utilitarian' walking, Central London Footways has been launched with its network of quiet and interesting streets. There is an on-line and printed map which was published in September. The network and campaign were devised by David Harrison and Emma Griffin at London Living Streets, but it has drawn on advice and knowledge of a wide range of people from amenity societies, local authorities, BIDs and many others. The printed map and design are by Urban Good, funded by TfL. It has proved remarkably popular. 300,000 people have viewed the map online and our first print is disappearing fast. Our London bookshop stockists have been surprised by how many people have turned up at bookshops asking for free copies.

The map (see page five) connects London's important destinations, mainline stations, and green spaces. This is about getting people from A to B, but in an enjoyable and healthy way. It includes routes through Central London's many squares (more than 40), superb parks and historic streets. A unique combination. The map extends a little further north than the Regent's Canal, and shows some wonderful routes. Could there be a return to an earlier age? In 1854, 400,000 people walked into and out of the City of London every day. This wasn't for the final leg of a journey from a station, but the entire commute. Many people came from the southern parts of Islington, and the Footways map shows some enjoyable ways of making such trips.

A favourite route takes you from the Angel into Myddelton Square (1820s to 1840s), past St Mark's (1825-7) and through Amwell, taking in Clerkenwell Parochial School (1828-30) in a charming Gothic style and the base of a windmill (1709) and engine house (originally 1767 to house a steam engine installed by Smeaton), which were used by the New River Company. Going south past the entrance to Exmouth Market, the steeple of St James Clerkenwell (1788-92) comes into view, and en route there is Clerkenwell Close with Newcastle Row

(c.1800) on the site of a great house once inhabited by the Duke of Newcastle, which itself was built on the cloister ranges of St Mary's Nunnery. On into Clerkenwell Green with the former Middlesex Sessions House (1779-82) and Marx Library, where Lenin edited ISKRA (1902-3) and turning left you find the Jerusalem Passage and enter into St John's Square. On the left is St John's; the marvellous 12th century medieval crypt of the former great monastic church survives. Ahead of you is St John's Gate (1504), which formed the southern entrance to the monastic precinct. Church and Gate are, however, separated by Clerkenwell Road bulldozed through the square in 1878 as a traffic 'improvement' made by the Metropolitan Board of Works. Passing through the Gate you arrive at Smithfield via St John's Lane and then St John's Street. You are now in the City and St Paul's is easily reached through pedestrianised Little Britain between St Bartholomew's church and hospital.

The back of the Footways Map includes lists of interesting features to encourage a spirit of exploration. The lists range from surviving medieval buildings to the finest social housing developments to urban fossils. It also creates new ways of looking at walking, showing how quickly journeys can be walked: for example, Angel to Farringdon station in 21 minutes by foot, compared to 15 by taxi and 11 by public transport.

It is now intended to extend the network to other parts of London, beginning with Islington and Hackney. The Council's programme of People Friendly Streets (PFS) provides remarkable new opportunities for some really impressive walking routes. While the programme is controversial, there is no doubt that it has produced the most extraordinary transformation of our borough in decades. The PFS schemes now cover a large area from Finsbury Park in the north to Clerkenwell Green in the south, and from Drayton Park in the west to Southgate Road in the East. Not only is this creating a borough for pedestrians, but with streets no longer dominated by traffic strollers can enjoy the many splendid buildings in peace. Similar measures have been taken in Hackney so much of north east London has become a fine setting for walking. Indeed, it is possible to walk from the City of London to Walthamstow Parish Church via Islington and Hackney through parks and residential streets largely free of through traffic. The Islington Society has long campaigned for priority for people on foot. Its campaigning has finally produced some stunning results.

Islington Society response to ‘Supporting housing delivery and public service infrastructure’

The Islington Society made the following comments on the proposed ‘measures to support housing delivery, economic recovery and public service infrastructure’ by the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government. These comments refer specifically to Section 1 of the proposal concerning a new permitted development right for the change of use from Commercial, business and Service use (Class E) to Residential (Class C3). We do not agree that this will significantly improve housing delivery but assert that it will instead have a damaging impact on the community at large.

The Islington society considers the proposed Permitted Development Right to change from Use Class E to Class C3 without hindrance to be entirely misguided and damaging to the viability of our high streets and local centres. Our High streets and our neighbourhood centres provide a variety of community activities on which so much of the vitality of the areas where we live, work, eat and shop depend. The premise upon which this proposal is based is false. It is patently untrue that the change of use from Class E use to Class C3 use will "attract ... additional footfall that new residents will bring" (para.13). The footfall that residents provoke is both considerably smaller than business uses and occurs outside the hours that contribute to any commercial success of high street uses. Furthermore, the number of premises affected are negligible compared to the housing need and the statement that "this will support housing delivery" (para 13) is clearly disingenuous.

It is notable that all of the safeguards provided by the proposed prior approval clauses are formulated to protect the applicant / proposed resident, e.g. is there a danger of flooding, noise, heavy industry or waste management activities affecting the intended occupiers? There is NO provision for prior approval to take into account safeguards for the existing occupiers/

businesses/ users or to consider the impact on the environment, the character, the economic well-being or the vitality of the location. We consider that it is essential that the factors to be taken into account during prior approval consultations includes safeguarding existing user as well as intended new users.

The Islington Society considers that this consultation is fundamentally flawed in two respects.

Firstly, there is no facility in the Consultation Questionnaire to challenge the principles or the objective of the proposal. Questions asked only address specific, limited details. We note that the very first question is : *Do you agree that there should be no size limit on the buildings that could benefit from the new permitted development right to change use from Commercial, Business and Service (Class E) to residential (C3)? Please give your reasons.* Whereas the first question to ask should really be : *Do you agree that a Permitted Development right to change use from Commercial, Business and Service (Class E) to residential (C3) is a good idea? Please give your reasons.*

We recommend further consultation on matters of principle in addition to consultation on non-fundamental detail.

Secondly, the current turbulent times we are experiencing occasioned by the Coronavirus (Covid 19) crisis means that we are experiencing unnatural, untypical behaviour to which normal planning considerations have no relevance. We can only guess at the direction that future High Streets might take. We certainly know that local shops in neighbourhood centres are currently in resurgence and are likely to become more significant into the future. This is not the time radically to re-configure high streets and local centres by sweeping changes to the Permitted right to lose critical business and community uses to small numbers of residential uses.

We recommend that this proposal is deferred for two years and re-consulted when we return to more normal times.

DG

Transport News Round-up

Future for rail

Although the juggernaut of HS2 marches on, ignoring the limited constraints put upon it by Oakervee (they continue around Euston as though nothing had been said about taking that part of the scheme away from HS2 Ltd), academics closer to the real world are assessing what has changed. It is clear that Work From Home will be a permanent feature for many office workers for at least 50% of the working week. It is also clear that small conferences of up to a dozen people can operate perfectly well on Zoom and its like, and many longer distance business trips will cease to be needed.

What will take their place? The climate change agenda demands that more places should be accessible by rail, but there will no longer be the crowded commuter trains that brought much revenue but also added to the operating costs. Those who frequently work from home may choose to live further from their office if this makes a garden and a work space affordable.

There will be a desire for some social contact to compensate for that lost by holding meetings on Zoom. The larger scale conferences, affording the chance to meet several old friends over the course of two or three days, do not work well on Zoom and should enjoy a renaissance. If the government is serious about levelling up this would be an ideal opportunity to boost some tired seaside resorts as conference centres and to ensure that they have the public transport infrastructure they need.

There continues to be an appalling lack of freight on rail. In London, freight has always lost out to the growth in passengers - you could fill the North London line to capacity with people, and freight trains inevitably disrupted the schedules. Elsewhere low bridges compromise the use of rail for heavy freight. There may be no case for High Speed Rail now, but there certainly is a case for freight compatible routes. Small high value freight on the other hand might be accommodated on passenger trains if the number of passengers no longer fills them.

And whereas radial routes have seen big reductions in passenger numbers, it is notable that use of orbital routes has held up much better during the pandemic. That partly reflects the fact that orbital trains are far quicker than the private car, deprived of very direct routes, whereas it has been all too easy to drive along radial routes.

Crossrail and Northern line extension

More than two years after the central section was supposed to open, Crossrail has two new stations completed. The last two stations, Bond Street and

Whitechapel, still face a race against time to be ready for the revised opening date of June 30th, 2022.

Better news though of the Northern line extension to Battersea. This line has opened for testing and is on course to be open to the public by September 2021. Obviously it is a smaller scheme but who would have thought even when the Crossrail opening was postponed in August 2018 that the Northern line extension would open first. Unlike Crossrail it adds two new stations to the tube map.

Bus services

Buses to continue to operate for essential users of whom there are very few per bus. The longer term plans envisage a significant cut in buses in central London, fortunately to frequencies rather than the scope of routes. There is little doubt that the inconvenience of having to change buses has accelerated the decline in bus use and that Covid has also speeded up changes in patterns of use that were already evident. Some schemes associated with Low Traffic Neighbourhoods have seen the removal of bus lanes, despite earlier assurances to the contrary from the then commissioner. One has fallen foul of a legal challenge on the grounds that the needs of disabled passengers reliant on buses and taxis (which often use bus lanes) had been overlooked.

Fares

After the government insisted the fare freeze must end as part of the emergency settlement, they remained unaltered at the start of the year. It was subsequently decided to defer this year's fare rise on National railways to March, and there would be all sorts of anomalies if TfL fares rose on a different date. The bus fare rises to £1.55, an increase of 3.3%, on the basis that this was the smallest possible increase. With cash almost totally outlawed, there seems no reason why a sum rounded to the nearest penny could not be used. Fares on the tube continue to be rounded to one decimal place, but the good news is that to some extent the rounding has been more generous to those making shorter journeys - a welcome change from the policy of the previous Mayor. The increases are expected to generate £60m. (£74m. in a full year).

Zone changes

Another long term proposal to generate income is to move some stations around Canary Wharf/ Canada Water into zone 1, just as the central zone extended east when the 071/081 telephone codes were introduced. If this reduces crowding it will be more welcome than if it is another misguided attempt to raise money, like the Shoreditch High Street rezoning. That eventually led to the large zone 2/3 which cost TfL as much as it had gained. AB