

ISLINGTON *news*

The Journal of the ISLINGTON SOCIETY incorporating FOILfolio

Saving Local Shops

The Council's development plans, and all the Islington Society's campaigning for a sustainable environment, will fail unless we residents use our local shops, and learn to appreciate what an important part they play in the life of the community, *writes Harley Sherlock.*

In 1997 the Islington Society, with others, won a great victory over the Council and Sainsbury's by defeating the latter's proposals for an out-of-centre superstore on the Lough Road site in Holloway. There can be little doubt that such a store, being mainly accessible only by car, would have increased traffic in the area enormously; and, more importantly, it would have been the death-knell for food-shopping at The Nags Head, Highbury Barn and Caledonian Road, as well as for local neighbourhood shops generally. The abandonment of the superstore means that those of us living in the south of the borough, at least, have retained our ability to walk to the shops rather than having to emulate the rest of the country by getting the car out every time we need an extra loaf of bread.

It is very sad therefore to find our local shops again under threat. But now it is not from anything so obvious as a Sainsbury's superstore, but from the more insidious actions of the shopkeepers' absentee landlords who, over a period of time, try to improve the value of their properties by letting their ground-floor shops to estate agents, restaurateurs and the like, who are able to pay rents far higher than anything that the ordinary shopkeeper can afford. The Council, as the local planning authority, has powers to prevent such gradual erosion of our ability to shop locally for food and other essentials. All they have to do is to designate "protected shopping centres" where estate agents' offices, coffee-bars etc are limited to

only 30 percent of the shops. And the Council's Development Plan does indeed designate such areas, which must be located so that everyone in Islington "should be within easy reach" of essential shops. It seems to me that this policy has worked reasonably well, and that without it we would by now be considerably worse off than we actually are. But there can be no doubt that the planners' good intentions will be brought to naught unless we, as residents, support them.

So why don't we? And why do so many of my fellow residents in Canonbury take the car to places like Brent Cross or Palmers Green when we have good-quality grocers, green-grocers, butchers, delicatessens and even a fish-monger within walking-distance?

Two answers are usually given to this question. The first – and the most feeble one – is "price". But surely anyone who puts a value on their time cannot really afford to spend a large part of their Saturday morning in the inevitable traffic jam. The second – and better-founded answer – is that the car is a very good shopping trolley, and allows you to make one trip for a whole week's shopping. But who needs to do all the shopping in one trip by car when there are shops available at the end of a short health-inducing walk?

Admittedly, when we were still a family of five, I did do most of the shopping on Saturday morning. I did it on foot; and, needless to say, it usually

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Campdale Road, N19



Roman Way, N7



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In this issue :

Use Them or Lose them

Many members have expressed concern about the future of our local shops. Harley Sherlock's has set out the case in his front-page article in this issue. The number of such shops has been in decline for decades. Pressure on road space, the money to be made from cafés, bars and restaurants, and other changes in the way we live our lives are just some of the pressures causing loss of shops. But older people and those without private transport rely on their local shops.

We and a number of number of like minded groups have persuaded the Council to join with us in a "Use them or Lose them" poster campaign.

Two posters come with this issue of ISLINGTON *news*, one for your own use, and one for your local shop.

PLEASE PUT THEM UP

Parking Control

George Allan, the council's Executive Member for Customer Focus - which includes Parking - has sent a frank reply to our letter to him expressing members' concerns about parking enforcement. The full text of his reply is on pages 4 & 5 of this issue.

The Society is holding a special meeting devoted to Parking Control on 8 March 2005.

Come along and have your say.

Andrew Bosi, Chair

Impaired Vision?

At this year's AGM a member asked whether it would be possible for the Society to produce an audio version of the Newsletter for people who have sight problems. The Committee agreed to look into this, but cannot make any decision about a response until we know what the demand is likely to be. There might be some members who are totally blind who would require audio tapes and there might be others who are partially sighted who have access to computers with large type programs. Another possibility is working with DAI to produce a regular audio newsletter to include one or two articles from the Islington Society newsletter each time.

It would help the Committee to consider the matter if everyone who has difficulty reading the Newsletter would let us know which of the two alternatives would best suit them. By the very nature of the problem, it is probable that people who need help will not read this note, so if any member knows of other members who have impaired vision would they please bring it to their attention.

If any member might be interested in reading the articles, please make contact.

Please call Alan Turner on 020 7226 2053 or email at alan.turner3@btinternet.com

ISLINGTON *news*

The **Award winning** Journal of the Islington Society
incorporating FOIL Folio

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Suggestions for topics to be covered and articles to be considered may be sent to the Society at this address. Local organisations are asked to send notification of activities and events they would like to be listed.

Opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Society.

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Saving local shops

amounted to more than I could carry in one journey. But so what? Surely two 200-yard journeys were better for my health than one! Unfortunately our children have always been the only members of our family who can cook; and, now that we oldies are left to our own devices, we are rather dependent on Marks and Spencer's oven-ready meals. We have, therefore, become involved in a weekly journey to M&S at the Angel which, although once regarded as walkable, is now usually a bus-ride.

I can truthfully say, however, that I have only once in my life driven to a superstore; and that was to collect a turkey for a friend who was ill over Christmas. The queue at the check-out took so long that I vowed never to visit a superstore again. And I haven't!

Long may my local shops make it possible for me to keep my vow; but they won't be able to do this unless we residents, as their customers, and Islington Council, as the local planning authority, work together to ensure that they are not driven out of business.

In this connection we should be very grateful for the fact that we have in the Planning Department a powerful ally in the form of Bob

Hawkes. It was he who drafted the clauses in the Development Plan to encourage local shopping, and who drew our attention to them recently when we expressed our concern about the onward march of the estate agents and coffee-bars. It was also he who recently helped to convene a round-table meeting with all concerned after Chris Ashby (of the Green Party), Philip Walker (of the Canonbury Society) and Norman Beddington (of every environmental organisation under the sun) had complained about irrational parking restrictions around shopping streets.

As one who has always campaigned for shopping without cars I found myself a little outside this particular campaign; but I do recognise the shopkeepers' arguments that, even if the number of car-borne shoppers that can be accommodated in a particular area is small, it might be enough to turn their unprofitable business into a profitable one. And it can certainly be argued that our main roads are just as important in their shopping-street role as they are in their commuter-carrying role. So why shouldn't bus-lanes in the out-of-London direction be short-term parking spaces in the morning, and bus-lanes in the

into-London direction be short-term parking spaces in the evening?

But all the Council's development plans, and all the Islington Society's campaigning, will fail unless we residents use our local shops, and learn to appreciate what an important part they play in the life of the community. This latter point applies particularly to corner shops which have long been run by expanded families who live above the shop, and can thus offer long hours of service to the public by spreading their workload. The Amin brothers at Canonbury Place now stock everything from lavatory paper and groceries to freshly baked bread and good-quality wine. They can also give us the latest cricket score from any part of the world. But above all they provide the sort of place for meeting-by-chance that used to be provided by our pubs.

Why our pubs should be losing their importance to the local community is another story – for another time! But it seems clear to me that a very important contribution that we can make to the maintaining of our feeling of community is to patronise our local pubs and, above all, to use our local shops. HS

"Use Them or Lose them"

ISLINGTON SOCIETY PUBLICATIONS

20th Century Buildings in Islington

Alec Forshaw | photographs by Richard Leeney
200pp. 210 x 210 ISBN 0-9541490-0-9
at £14.99 (inc. post & packing)
available from bookshops or from The Islington Society

The story of Day Flats in and around Islington

Andrew Bosi
32pp. 148 x 210
at £5.00 each (inc. post & packing)
available from the author or from The Islington Society

Coming soon

Fifty Years an Architect - in Islington

Harley Sherlock

One of the founders, now the President of the Islington Society has been involved in urban housing in London for most of his working life, and he is actively involved in the related issues of transport and land-use planning.

In his new book, due out in the spring, he tells the story of high quality and socially responsible urban architecture - and of campaigning for a civilised living and working environment in Islington - over the past fifty years

Parking in Islington

From: Andrew Bosi
To: Cllr. George Allan
Executive Member for Customer Focus

I am writing to ask you about parking enforcement in the Borough.

Although there are differing views about the need for and extent of parking control, there is general agreement that the rules of engagement are not always clear. This is in part because people have become used to flouting the law, and to believing that it is not as it is, but there are also issues about consistency and about signage. People argue about the definition of loading, and while "loading a packet of cigarettes or a newspaper" is clearly straining the definition there are purchases which require

transport which can most efficiently be provided by the purchaser. There is also anecdotal evidence that Wardens are instructed to act without flexibility, thus giving rise to the charge that their interest is in revenue raising rather than keeping the streets clear for essential users. Hard cases make bad law, but if it were the case that a driver left his or her vehicle, walked immediately to the nearest operational pay and display machine, and received a ticket before the display could be effected, this would be unreasonable and would bring the enforcement regime into disrepute.

I was pleased to learn that you are giving attention to the need for improved information.

I look forward to receiving your comments on these matters.
Best wishes, Andrew

From: George Allan
To: Andrew Bosi

Thank you for your letter, which I gather derives from concerns expressed via the Islington Society.

If I may classify your concerns into three areas, I think these are:

1. clarity of parking rules;
2. flexibility or otherwise exercised by parking attendants;
3. their motivation when issuing tickets.

I would like, however, to begin by putting these issues into context.

Parking in Islington

Islington has the second-highest human density in London, the second-lowest rate of car ownership in Britain, and yet still has the second-highest car density in the country.

Parking controls clearly have a major influence over vehicle use, and are thus an important part of our transport and planning policies to encourage sustainable forms of transport and thereby improve the quality of life of our 180,000 residents.

Successive Islington Unitary Development Plans have endorsed this, and we now have tough controls over residential off-street parking in new developments, as

well as in commercial schemes. We are starting to require "car free developments". Mayor Livingstone wants Islington to absorb 18,000 additional households during the period of the London Plan, and this, at current rates, implies a further 11,000 cars in Islington, unless restraining measures are taken.

Our parking policies complement the planning policies in providing, for example, through Hire Car permits and the Car Club, opportunities to avoid residents feeling they have to own their vehicle to enjoy the benefits of occasional car use.

Parking controls require constant enforcement, as long experience suggests that some car drivers will exploit the opportunity to park for their own convenience, with little regard for that of vulnerable road users, bus passengers and other traffic.

A survey carried out for The Association of London Government in 2003 found that 51% of Londoners think that parking enforcement should be stronger, 33% say it should remain as it is, and only 13% think it should be weaker.

Islington motorists have for some years been rather sheltered from the full application of parking

controls in force in other boroughs, since the Council's own in-house enforcement team was too small for the growing task, and we had until recently no clamping or tow-away facility. It is undoubtedly the case that many motorists learnt some unfortunate habits in this period.

As you may know, we have recently decided to issue a "Parking Plan" enumerating our parking policies, after a long and fruitful interaction with many stakeholders. This is undergoing final revisions and will be issued in due course, and kept under review.

Clarity of Rules

There is undoubtedly a huge gulf between the rules as they are enforced, and the rules as many motorists believe them to be, bolstered as you rightly say by a legacy of under-enforcement locally. I share the frustration that some people feel about this, and we are doing what we can to make the rules easier to understand and apply.

There are three concepts which motorists have to deal with: stopping, "waiting and loading" and parking. Stopping - for any reason, notably to let down passengers - is not permitted on large stretches of Red Routes such as Upper Street

and Holloway Road. Waiting and parking are self explanatory, but "loading" is a matter of considerable debate, as to the size of goods required to justify a claim to be loading, and whether the activity has to be continuous. There is guidance from the Association of London Government on this, and we follow it. There will always be disputes, but if motorists are aware of the burden of proof on them, they might be better able to get tickets cancelled by keeping delivery notes, receipts and other evidence of delivery requiring loading, particularly if they use private cars rather than commercial vehicles.

A further problem seems to be that motorists have difficulty in interpreting some of the road markings and signs that we are obliged to put up. I have the impression that single-use Residents Bays and pay and display bays are well understood, but dual or even treble-use bays (ie residential/ business permit/ pay & display) can cause confusion, as can the Match Day scheme. The signs are as prescribed by law, and if they are deficient for any reason then this can be a ground of appeal.

The Council's web pages on parking have recently been revised and now offer much enhanced guidance on what waiting and loading restrictions mean, and the various types of sign that are in operation. We also have regular spots on parking in the residents' magazine.

I accept that in some areas, the signage can be so complex that the attendants themselves make mistakes. We test them on their knowledge of local parking policies before they start work for NCP.

Flexibility

It is true that parking attendants are required to operate in

accordance with the rules they are given, rather than making them up as they go along by displaying what some motorists would call "flexibility". There are sound practical reasons for this.

First, it is in the interests of fairness that the rules are applied equally, and local practices are not allowed to grow up which have no basis in our parking policy. Instead we give them rules which incorporate basic common sense. It would be quite wrong for Barnsbury residents, for example, to persuade attendants to give them a 10-minute period of grace while parking near primary schools, while other areas had none. Our policy is - subject to some conditions - to allow 5 minutes for parents to escort primary school children into their school. Similarly, our rules say that the lead vehicles of funerals and weddings are not normally clamped or removed, although they may be ticketed. There are guidelines for the clamping and removal of vehicles which also embody common sense: vehicles parked dangerously are not, for example, clamped (a situation to which some motorists bizarrely appear to think clamping is confined) but may instead be towed away; vehicles overstaying in pay and display are not clamped for 15 minutes after the period expires.

Secondly, there are serious management and practical problems with giving attendants a wide degree of discretion. They can for example be subject to bribery attempts or threats of violence, and the more discretion they are perceived to have, the more these opportunities increase.

Thirdly, and for the reasons above, we do exercise an element of discretion. We withdraw about 15% of tickets after representations, or on appeal, and I am glad to say that the number of successful

appeals is small - at about 2 per 1,000 tickets issued.

Parking attendants are trained to deal with the behaviours they routinely encounter, and we monitor their conduct both on-street and by analysis of the tickets they issue.

Incentivisation

I am happy to deal with the myth that the attendants are in some way incentivised to issue tickets. Our contract with NCP bans them from being offered any such incentives. In fact the reverse is true: NCP is required to compensate Islington for each ticket issued in error, which we later withdraw. We agree the likely number of tickets to be issued every year with NCP, in the light of changes such as new CPZs, and can both penalise and reward them for performance below or above this level, but if the number of tickets exceeds 10% more than the agreed level, no further bonus to NCP are given. This gives NCP an incentive to provide appropriate levels of manpower, and to operate efficiently, but it does not give individual attendants any personal incentive to issue tickets wrongly.

In the case of a ticket issued to someone away getting a permit, I would agree that this would be unreasonable, and the parking service would consider the circumstances of each case. It is sadly true, however, that there are often major conflicts of evidence between parking attendants and motorists and for this reason we are increasingly taking digital photographs of parked vehicles before ticketing, clamping or removing them, to avoid these disputes later.

In conclusion, may I thank you for the opportunity to explain the Council's position on these issues.

Kind Regards, George Allan

City and Islington – Building a Better College

Peter Marsh, (Deputy Principal of City & Islington College) explains the college's ambitious development plans

City and Islington College was formed in 1993 from four ILEA institutions. The new College inherited a talented set of staff and a desperate portfolio of 13 buildings spread across North London. For seven long years the Governing Body - led by Jack Morris - put together the jigsaw pieces of what has now become the largest investment in FE buildings in the United Kingdom.

Faced with exceptionally challenging cost constraints (determined by the FEFC/LSC funding quango) in the order of 25% less than schools and 40% less than Higher Education, the College decided to keep design high on their agenda. Both the previous Principal, Tom Jupp, and the current Deputy Principal, Peter Marsh, have continued to champion the importance of good design through membership of the RIBA Education Forum. With cost parameters fixed and timescales for completion predetermined by the academic calendar, the College embarked on an extensive physical building programme in 2000.

The Governing Body approved an ambitious programme involving three concurrent £10m building projects and appointed a dedicated in-house client team, headed by Ann Sutcliffe, to manage consultants and oversee the

briefing process. Key elements of the brief for each project included creative design, importance of natural light, sustainable low energy solutions, flexibility of design, and low cost solutions.

In 2002 our new Principal, Frank McLoughlin, introduced a 5 Centre model for curriculum delivery - creating 5 Centres of Excellence on 4 sites - all part of one amazing College. Using our new buildings to create individual communities of learning has helped to unite staff and learners at each Centre with a unique curriculum and learner focus united under a common mission and purpose.

The 'building a better college' programme is far more than just replacing old building with new ones - it has involved a complete rethink of how we organise and coordinate learning across our new campus and how excellent design can transform aspirations of staff and learners - even with the most limited of budgets.

The Further Education Sector is 'the but in the middle' where learners come to take their A levels and vocational equivalents at 16 before going onto University, or where adult learners come back to education to pick up new skills to equip them for work or expanded learning for life. With over 3,000 full time 16-18 year olds and more than 20,000 learners in total, City and Islington is now the largest FE College in London.

Our building projects consist of:

City and Islington Sixth Form College

- a brand new building designed by architects van Heyningen & Haward (VHH) appointed following a RIBA design competition. Located at the Angel Islington. Originally designated the Centre for Lifelong Learning, the brief changed midway and the FE budget didn't wholly cover the aspirations raised through the design competition. With the opening date looming ever closer the building was constructed under a design and build contract on detailed Stage E+ information. Constructed by Norwest Holst, the building opened in September 2003. The finished article reflects the quality of the design approach offered by VHH - using high ceilings and an exposed concrete frame to give space and coolth. Despite the long, tall, narrow nature of the site, the building retains an intimate feeling with vision panels throughout that let light, and wonderful urban views, through the Goswell Road classrooms into the corridor spaces. The cladding material 'Kalwall' has a translucent quality which is calming by day and glows at night.

City & Islington Centre for Applied Science

- a refurbishment and recladding of the old Dame Alice Owen Girls School. This project has been



overseen by Gollifer Langston Architects with works carried out in occupation. Completed in May 2004, the works have transformed the look and feel of the building with a new glass façade and lift that make the best of the panoramic views over Islington. As part of this contract the new Piazza, which brings our two Angel sites into one campus, has also been completed.

City & Islington Centre for Lifelong Learning – a New building on Blackstock Road which preserves the old Victorian School Board at it’s heart. It was opened in January 2004 together with a new public “N4 library” operated in partnership with the London Borough of Islington. The reviews speak for themselves:

“a building of unusual spatial richness“

(Architecture Today),

“who would have thought a further education college would get an avante guard design and Philippe Stark chairs ?”

(The Independent)

“...you have to see it to believe it” (FX)

Together with art installations funded by the Finsbury Park Partnership this new building contributes substantially to the regeneration of the Finsbury Park area – raising hopes and aspirations and creating a safe place for learning that deliberately looks outwards and provides learning opportunities that reflect the cultural richness and diversity of this part of North London.

City & Islington Centre for Business Arts and Technology

– a new build and refurbishment project that will add around 2500m2 of modern Wilkinson Eyre design and breath new life into a 1960s secondary school structure located on Camden Road. Using

an environmental screen onto the Camden Road together with cut outs down through the structure to encourage natural ventilation, this project promises to be the most ambitious yet. The building is being constructed by William Verry Ltd under a under a design and build contract on detailed Stage E+ information. Work started on site in September 2003, and is scheduled for opening in Spring 2005.

As well as creating new buildings for our learners, the College has led the redevelopment of its old sites obtaining planning permission for alternative use. Following the sale of Pitfield St, Chequer and Rochelle the biggest sale followed with the sale of Bunhill Row which was swiftly replaced by the Cass Business School for City University. Both Annette Road and Shepperton Road have been sold to Crest Nicholson for residential conversion, under designs by Heber Percy Parker. The Annette Road – now known as Urban7 - scheme started on site the day after we left. Our last redundant free-hold site on Benwell Road is still in the development stage – we’ve worked with DTZ and Wilkinson Eyre to produce a residential scheme which preserves and restores this Pevsner listed structure to its former glory – complemented by modern new buildings to refill the streetscape along the Benwell and Hornsey Roads.

Our last site - **City & Islington Centre for Health Social and Childcare** – another early1960s building is now coming under the spotlight. Would it be better to re-clad and replace all the services or

Opposite page :

left : Sixth form college, Goswell Road

right : Centre for Business Arts and Technology, Camden Road

Centre for Lifelong Learning and N4 Library Blackstock Road

could a different – more interesting building be created to better fill this space on the A1 corridor. More to follow later.....

Once we leave our rented premises at Willen House (Bath Street) and Spring House (Holloway Road) we will finally be one college, five centres, four sites. With build cost budgets of circa £1000 per square metre and a desire to use good design to help raise aspirations of learners and staff and to open up doors to new learners, the College may have been asking for the impossible of our design teams ? The finished products, together with our client led furnishing and fit out demonstrates that the search for impossibility creates the possible – creating buildings “markedly superior to the norm” (Rab Bennetts in Building Design).

This set of projects would never have happened if it were not for the dedication of the Governors of the College and the continued support of the Local Authority. The planning department has also played a key role in raising aspirations and promoting good design. Our staff and learners have exhibited patience and enthusiasm in equal measures – many have moved four times in as many years!

I hope we have done them all justice.

PM



Letters to ISLINGTON news

City Road Basin

Rab Bennetts of Bennetts Associates
Responds to Harley Sherlock's article
about the proposals for City Road Basin
(*Islington News* : Spring 2004)

Dear Sirs

Among the many interesting items in the Spring edition of *Islington News* were two that had special significance.

The first celebrated "an architectural coup" on Holloway Road, whereby an exotic creation by Daniel Libeskind has enlivened not only a major thoroughfare but also an institution with a less than distinguished reputation for modern buildings elsewhere in the vicinity. Although iconic architecture is now all the rage, there are many places that would have balked at this kind of building and it is to Islington's credit that the potential for visionary architecture was recognised at the right moment in the planning process.

The second article offers something of a contradiction, in that radical change and bold architecture at City Road Basin are seen as a threat rather than an opportunity. As the architect for the scheme I must declare my interest before going any further, but there are several key points to be made that should explain why the Basin is not going to suffer in the way that is suggested.

- Far from being a highly cherished amenity at present, the Basin is run down and largely inaccessible, being surrounded for the most part by the walls and fences of derelict buildings or electricity substations. The whole point of the current master-planning exercise is to open the place up for everyone, with new open spaces, moorings, continuous walkways and a brand-new boat club for Islington. Whilst the ground floors will contain some

cafes and other public uses, the upper floors will be residential rather than commercial, so the Basin will serve as the focal point for a genuine neighbourhood.

- In contrast to Battlebridge and Paddington Basins, the proposed new development parallel to the water is low-to-medium scale and is fronted by new landscape. Only at the head of the Basin by City Road are we proposing tall buildings, where there is a clear case for a grander scale. City Road is in the same category as Holloway Road in that it demands some bold treatment, but there are also several other tall buildings in the immediate area, notably Peregrine House, which rises to 26 stories.

- Quite apart from the fact that Harley Sherlock's plea for a low scale development is an economic impossibility, my primary concern is that it would appear suburban in an area that should have all the vitality and gravitas of a dense, urban "quarter". I have always felt the nearby 1980s Pickfords Wharf scheme to be a tragic lost opportunity on account of its unduly low density; it consumes far too much urban resource for so few beneficiaries.

- Finally, having consulted widely over the masterplan for City Road Basin, I can say with confidence that it has substantial support, not only for the principle of regeneration but also for the

specific proposals for elegant, tall buildings in the right places. Whilst there may be a sentimental attachment to the character of London's so-called villages, the Greater London Assembly, Islington Council and many of the local people we consulted are excited by the prospect of regeneration at a higher scale in places that do not always accord with the established urban centres. The zeitgeist favours bold schemes like City Road Basin and Libeskind's building in Holloway Road.

As local and central government come to grips with the high-density policies that underpin sustainability and the creation of the "compact city" (as advocated by Harley Sherlock and Richard Rogers, among others), I believe London will change a great deal for the better. The Angel and the Nag's Head need not be the only vibrant centres within Islington and both the Holloway and City Roads will see regeneration fuelled by high quality, modern development. That change is on the way is inevitable; it is equally certain that the Islington Society is at the forefront of any debate about the Borough's future and I welcome the opportunity to explain why I believe that change of this kind can be a positive influence if it is carried out with sensitivity, vision and quality.

Yours sincerely,

Rab Bennetts

*Aerial View of
Masterplan
model looking
South*



Review

North One Artists

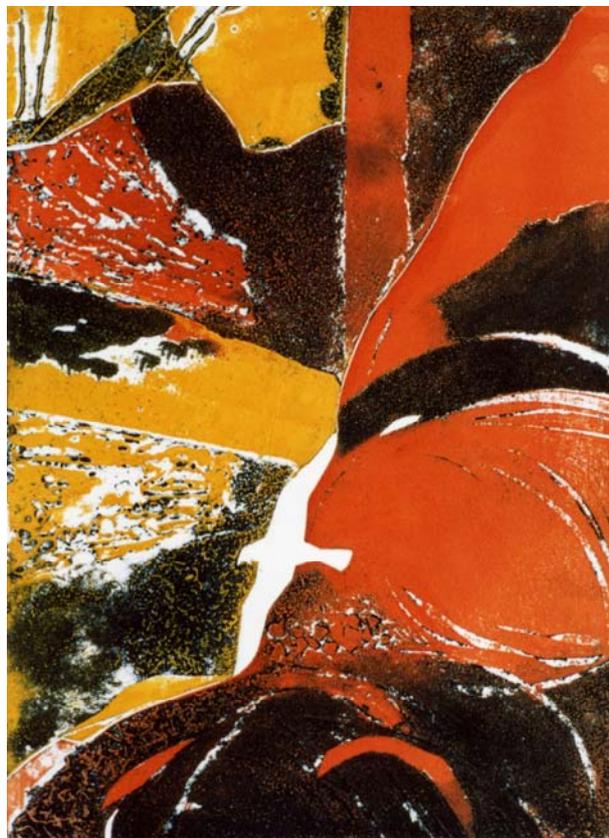
The work of a group of Islington Artists was exhibited recently at the Cowcross Street Gallery. Alan Turner reports

North One Artists recently held their second exhibition of paintings, drawings and prints at The Gallery in Cowcross Street. The name of the group is a giveaway and was chosen because the majority of the members live in South Islington, with one or two just over the border. It is a small group of twelve friends who have backgrounds as either professional artists or as fairly serious amateurs. Some of their names may be familiar to some readers - Joan Dannatt, Shelby Dawbarn, Sally Dawson, Julie Lacey, Dick Negus, Brian Pattenden, Patrick Robertson, Jane Tuely, Alan Turner, Gordon Wigglesworth, Annie Williams and Lucy Wynne.

It was suggested that I should write a note about this for Islington News, but as a participant; obviously I cannot write as a critic. However, perhaps I may be forgiven for reporting that several visitors remarked on the high standard of work and one went so far as to say there is "a wealth of talent in N1" Be that as it may, it was an enjoyable event and seemed to be appreciated by the people who came to see the work. The range of techniques and media was very wide, including etchings, lino cuts, collagraphs, screen prints, paintings in acrylic, oil and watercolour and a wall hanging

sculpture. I think it is fair to say that the artists' motivation is largely that they like doing it and they like other people to be able to see their work. Even so, it is nice when people buy work and over a third of the pictures hung were sold, which seemed a very respectable achievement.

Whilst writing, I must say something about The Gallery. Cowcross Street is just within the Islington boundary and The Gallery consists of two large interconnecting rooms in the offices of Alan Baxter & Associates, consulting engineers, involved principally with design and the urban environment. Over the years this firm has made the space available to a variety of organizations and has become an important meeting place, not only locally but in a wider London context. The Cowcross Street building houses several amenity groups, bodies such as London Forum, who regularly hold their meetings there and Alan Baxter has a programme of changing



"White Bird"
Collagraph
Lucy Wynne, 2004

exhibitions because the partners and staff enjoy having them, rather than using the space merely for economic gain. It seems to me that a firm with this kind of philosophy is a valuable member of the wider community, providing space which is used by organizations whose objectives are cultural and social. It is a pity that there are not more firms with similar attitudes. AT

Harley Sherlock says in response to Rab Bennetts' letter defending the City Road Basin Masterplan

"Of course my old friend Rab Bennetts is absolutely right to draw our attention to the fact that developments must show a decent profit if they are to subsidise the upgrading of the environment around them.

"But since when have developers not made good profits out of four/five storey buildings in Islington? And, in the case of the published masterplan for City

Road Basin, the potentially unprofitable bits are surely the tall slender towers.

"Such towers are fine in the right place; but, if London is to avoid the monotonous environment that is beginning to swamp so many cities, it must retain its intimate small-scale areas as a foil to the imposing large-scale areas exemplified by the City's Square Mile.

"At City Road Basin lets keep the scale down, the profits up, and the environment typical of London's surprises!"

*Opinion***Make our Town Centre a Coherent Whole**

Dr Jill Nicholls, *Chairman of the Duncan Terrace Association, writes*

The Angel area of Islington and its town centre have come a long way since I first moved here in 1985. We have a smart new underground station; Sadler's Wells has been refurbished to become a world class entertainment venue; the N1 centre with its multi-screen cinema, shops, restaurants and piazza has transformed a previously unappealing area; a new 6th form College in Goswell Road brings large numbers of students, in addition to those from the City University, on a daily basis; we have a high street with more restaurants and bars than any other street in Europe, earning it the nickname "Supper Street", a famous antique market and a farmer's market to add to our long-standing street market in Chapel Market and some excellent pub-theatres. All of these attract huge numbers of visitors to the town centre

But what a disappointment it must be for visitors arriving at Angel to find that this is a town centre where traffic has such priority over pedestrians. Islington Council has named this the "A1 Borough", so keen is it to focus on and prioritise the major trunk road which passes through Islington, bisecting the town centre at Upper Street. As part of the A1 strategy the Council and Transport for London have closed and "calmed" side roads and channelled as much traffic as possible on to Upper Street, with pedestrians being kept out of its way by long stretches of kerbside railing and low priority at crossings, which are overcrowded and dangerous. The crossing of Upper Street opposite the tube station in particular is recognised by all but Transport for London as potentially lethal to pedestrians.

The kerbside railings elsewhere not only prevent pedestrians from exercising their judgement as to when it is safe to cross and limit free movement around the town centre, but actually encourage traffic to travel faster and lead to death and injury to cyclists squeezed by passing lorries.

With the additional division caused by Liverpool Road, visitors arrive to find a town centre essentially cut into three sections: Camden Passage, Upper Street North of Liverpool Road (including the N1 centre) and Upper Street South of Liverpool Road (including Chapel Market, M&S, Sainsbury's and Boots). Surely we want to make the town centre as attractive as possible to visitors, business and residents and surely that means making our town centre a more coherent whole!

The Duncan Terrace Association has suggested a number of relatively simple ways to achieve this end but so far we have had little success in persuading Islington Council and Transport for London to make these changes.

Firstly, we believe that the section of Liverpool Road between Tolpuddle Street and Upper Street should be closed. The two bus routes which use this road could be easily re-routed and access for traders could be allowed via the Tolpuddle Street junction before 10am and for an hour in the evening. As a result, the pedestrian piazza of the N1 centre could be extended right across to Chapel Market, creating a more attractive and safer environment for pedestrians and unblocking the crowded corner of Liverpool Road and Upper Street currently occupied by the magazine seller. This closure would allow a re-phasing of the lights at the crossing of Upper Street opposite

the Angel to allow a single crossing phase, without any additional delays for Upper Street traffic.

By improving this crossing and removing the many kerbside barriers along Upper Street, as has been done so successfully in Kensington High Street, access to Camden Passage could also be improved enormously and this area linked to the heart of the town centre on the opposite side of Upper Street. A further enhancement would be the extension of the pedestrianisation of Camden Passage around the former tram shed southwards to Duncan Street. This would make Camden Passage more attractive to visitors and more easily accessible from the bus stops and tube station and could easily be accomplished by reworking the access to Duncan Street and moving one set of lights.

The Duncan Terrace Association has made this case on many occasions but it always seems to fall on deaf ears. Now perhaps, with the welcome review of the town centre by world-renowned Colin Buchanan and Partners, there is a chance that someone will listen and give us the properly 'joined-up' town centre we deserve. We fear, however, that Buchanan's brief may be too narrow and exclude advice on roadways. We eagerly anticipate their report and urge an extension of their remit to take in a review of our proposals.

The Duncan Terrace Association is a residents association which speaks for 75 households in Duncan Terrace and which campaigns for improvements to the local environment on issues ranging from parking and traffic to crime and cleansing, planning and local services.

Contact
nicola.nicholls@blueyonder.co.uk

Blue Plaques

Alan Turner has been finding out about the Blue Plaques in Islington

I had the idea of writing something for Islington News about the Blue Plaques in the borough. It seemed to me that short articles about some of the people who have been commemorated might be interesting. However, on looking into the scheme and its history I discovered that things are more complicated than I thought. For a start they are not all blue. A call to Alec Forshaw, Islington's Conservation Officer, elicited the fact that in addition to the well known blue plaques, Islington Council put up some green ones (about 12 including one at the Angel commemorating the Angel Inn) and that there are also some erected by the LCC and the GLC.

I am slightly bemused by the difference in the records. English Heritage claims that there are 15 blue plaques in Islington (not all of them are blue!) whereas the Islington booklet lists 41. I could understand this if English Heritage covered only the BLUE ones, but this is not the case as they have also listed some of the earlier plaques. I have not had time to go into this but I will try to find what the true record is for a later article.

The selection criteria are that the proposed person "must have been dead for twenty years or have passed the centenary of their birth." This is to ensure that the person's reputation is mature and long-lasting. Many of the people commemorated are very famous, but others are (at least to me) totally unknown. Most of us know something about Benjamin Britten, Lenin or Marie Stopes but who were Jabez Bunting or Sir Arthur Keith? This seems to me to be a good reason for investigating one or two little known people, which I will do in later articles.

U3A (University of the Third Age)

Many members will already be familiar with the U3A but for those who are not:

The U3A is a university in the original sense of the word: a collective of people devoted to learning in the third age, a time of creativity and fulfilment for older people.

In the UK the U3A was started in 1982 and there are now over 500 groups with a total membership of 130,000. In London there are groups in Camden, Haringey, Highgate etc but so far none in Islington and Hackney. A small group of enthusiasts are now trying to set up a group for Islington and Hackney.

U3As are self help groups,

Typical study groups include:-

Literature
 Bridge
 Writing for pleasure
 History of Art
 Painting
 Music
 Languages
 Current affairs
 Architecture
 Table tennis
 and many others

organised and run by volunteers, with an underlying philosophy that those who teach learn and those who learn teach. No lecturer or co-ordinator receives any payment. A typical group in the London area may have 350 members and 60 interest groups meeting weekly, fortnightly or monthly. They meet in hired premises or members' homes in the daytime.

Typical study groups are shown in the box above. Quite a mixed bag, but the studies offered will depend on the interests, knowledge and experience of the members. Annual membership contributions are needed to provide for premises, administration costs and some learning materials. Obviously these will vary but a typical contribution would be £15 pa.

So, if you have an interest in continuing learning and/or have skills which you would like to share with others, perhaps you would like to be a founder member of the Islington and Hackney U3A.

If you are interested you can contact the following:

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The Story of the Blue Plaques

1863 William Ewart MP asked the Commissioner of Works to consider placing tablets on buildings where famous people had lived.

1864-66 The Society of Arts (now the Royal Society of Arts) took over the matter and the first plaque was erected to Lord Byron in Holles street. 36 plaques were set up between 1867 and 1900. The early plaques were brown terracotta.

1901 The erection of plaques passed to the LCC which introduced a new rectangular design in stone, lead or bronze. The famous blue plaque made its appearance in 1921. When the GLC was created, it took responsibility for the plaques and continued to do so until its abolition

1970 Islington Council decided to put its own plaques on buildings of historic interest in the borough

1986 English Heritage became the responsible agency on a national basis

(This information is taken from People, Places & Plaques published by Islington Council in 1993 and Blue Plaques: A Guide to the Scheme, published by English Heritage, 2002)

Coming Events

20 January 2005

The A1 Borough
Steve Hitchins, the leader of Islington Council
on the challenges and opportunities presented on
the borough's arterial route.
7.30 for 7.45 at *Islington Town Hall*

23 February 2005

The famous Islington Society Annual Dinner
7.30 (*Venue to be announced*)

8 March 2005

"There are more cars than parking spaces on
Islington Roads"
Presented by Islington Parking Control
See pages 4 and 5
7.30 at *Islington Town Hall, Committee Room 1*

2 April 2005

Visit to Hertford Castle
Hosted by the Hertford Civic Society
Details to be announced

22 April 2005

The Annual General Meeting with
Harry Brack, former Islington Councillor
On the Packington Estate
7.30 and 8.00 at *Islington Town Hall*

24 June 2005

The annual Bill Manley Memorial Pub Crawl
with members of the Camden Society
6.00 start at *The Lamb, Lambs Conduit Street*

July 2005

3rd Annual Church Crawl
Details to be announced

Other Events

Don't forget the regular, informal
"Meet the President" evenings at the Marquess Tavern
9 pm on the first Tuesday of every month. In 2005 :
4 January, 1 February, 1 March, 5 April, 3 May, 7 June etc.

What do we offer Members?

The Islington Society

- supports conservation planning work to preserve the borough's historic fabric and individual buildings of distinction
- campaigns for a high standard of design in new buildings
- organises a varied programme of events including talks, walks and site visits
- campaigns for better public transport and for priority for people on foot, bike & public transport
- produces publications that celebrate Islington's architectural history and its social & cultural diversity
- publishes neighbourhood walking trails to encourage exploration, awareness and pride of place
- builds links between residents, officials and councillors
- publishes a newsletter three times a year

What else do we do?

The Islington Society

- sends representatives to advise the Council groups that deal with development, the environment and transport
- encourages best practice through awards for the best architecture in the borough in new or refurbished buildings
- is represented on the London Forum of Civic & Amenity Societies, which takes up cross-borough issues of concern, and which is a member of the Civic Trust

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