

# ISLINGTON *news*

*The Journal of the ISLINGTON SOCIETY incorporating FOIL folio*

## Packington: Rounds One and Two

With the imminent redevelopment of the Packington Estate, *Jack Winkler* reports on Harry Brack's account of the politics behind the original development, given to a packed meeting of the Society.

The fight against the Packington Estate in the 1960s was "the turning point in the battle between conservation and demolition. After Packington, government policy on rehabilitation of our older housing stock changed for the better.....We lost the battle, but won the war"

But, the same mistake is in prospect for the imminent rebuilding of the estate --- higher government forcing Islington to construct multi-storey flats instead of terraced housing.

Those were the twin messages from Harry Brack, former borough Councillor who led the opposition 40 years ago, in a passionate address to a packed Islington Society AGM, in the same Committee Room 1 of the Town Hall where the initial debates took place.

His accounts of the history of the estate and its lessons for the future were supported by veterans from the original fight, including Society president Harley Sherlock, historian Mary Cosh, civil servant Eric Sorenson, architect Sam Webb, and adviser to the present tenants, Brendan Bird.

With commitment undiminished by intervening decades, Brack made a spirited appeal for two principles: consultative democracy instead of autocracy by "town hall and Whitehall", and terraced housing as English heritage rather than "brutal concrete warehousing".

He even prepared, especially for issue at the meeting,

multiple copies of a 38pp report, "The Packington Estate: A Story of Municipal Endeavour, 1965-2005". It includes excerpts from key documents and plans of the area, past, present and future.

Bringing the story up-to-the-minute, he cites the tenants' Packington Reference Group earlier this year: "We want the new homes to essentially consist of terraced housing street properties like we used to have in the 1960s. We do not want another estate of medium-rise slab blocks. We want to get away from the estate mentality".

But, said Bird, the GLA insists rebuilding should not merely replace 538 flats of the existing Packington, but include 200 additional flats for sale. Such density is impossible with terraced houses.

This is a re-run of the 1960s. Then, Islington Council backed by Harold Wilson's Labour government used "devious means" to override 400 objectors, including the Islington Society.

At the 1965 Public Inquiry on the proposed estate, the Society described the pre-existing Packington area as "a very agreeable environment...perhaps more essentially Islington than any other part of the borough".

But the Council denigrated it as "drab and uninteresting", proposing comprehensive redevelopment with flats, using industrialised methods, that would "last for up to 100 years".

Brack was brutally candid about the political "dirty

*The Packington Estate now*



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ISLINGTON SOCIETY

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*Packington: Rounds One and Two*  
*continued from front page*

tricks" that secured the "liver sausage coloured concrete" blocks we know today.

First, the government committed itself to building hundreds of thousands of new council houses. It then biased subsidies to favour redevelopment over rehabilitation. The new Packington was a means to achieving its target.

The old Labour Islington Council went for these financial incentives. It also saw more council housing as a bulwark against "gentrification" of the borough, which it feared (correctly) would tilt the political balance against Labour.

Despite these pressures, the relevant Minister at the time, Richard Crossman, who has Brack's sympathy, still favoured rehabilitation. But he was "doublecrossed" by his Permanent Secretary, Dame Evelyn Sharp. She approved redevelopment "behind his back", then left to join housebuilder Bovis, owned by Conservative MP Keith Joseph. (See accompanying article).

Now, Packington is being demolished after 35 years. Brack, a Chartered Surveyor, and Webb, who studied Ronan Point, both identified the design fault in the 1960s. Furthermore, financing for the estate was spread over 60 years. We will be paying for it for another quarter century.

Still, it could have been worse. One earlier plan was to build a motorway along the canal!

JW

## Coming Events

### ISLINGTON SOCIETY Events

28 February 2006

The Islington Society Dinner  
Repeating our very successful visit to The Landseer, Landseer Road. The inclusive cost per person is £25 which includes a delicious meal, wine and after dinner coffee. Book tickets for this very popular event from :

THE ISLINGTON SOCIETY c/o  
21a Huntingdon Street,  
Islington, N1 1BS

6 April 2006

The Annual General Meeting  
As usual, the AGM will be followed by a stimulating talk and lively discussion, details to be announced

7.30 at Islington Town Hall

30 June 2006

The annual Bill Manley  
Memorial Pub Crawl :  
Commencing at the Nobody Inn  
(formerly the Clarendon Hotel)  
Mildmay Park, Newington Green.  
This year's tour will feature a walk past two former pubs, as well as the usual formula of real ale and short walks between pubs.  
6.00pm start at the Nobody Inn.

### Other Events

Don't forget the regular, informal "Meet the President" evenings at the Marquess Tavern at 9 pm on the first Tuesday of every month:  
7 February, 7 March, 4 April, 2 May, 6 June  
4 July, 1 August, 5 September, etc.

## ISLINGTON *news*

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

35 Britannia Row, London N1 8QH  
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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.*

## Letters to ISLINGTON *news*

*Mr P. Stevenson of N7 writes:*

May a member of the Society say a word about the question of Vehicle parking in the Borough of Islington; for it does not only mean motor cars but goods vehicles, most of which are twice as long as any car. That means they take up too much space. Why then are so many used?

The real answer to that question is that we in Britain, more than anyone else in Europe, totally ignore the use of our Inland Waterways, even for the mini-mum barge standard of 400 tons capacity; which I have already written to Ken Livingstone about, where the waterways of London are concerned on such river navigations as the Rivers Lea and Stort and the Regents Canal or even the Grand Union Canal from Brentford to Watford or Bulls Bridge Junction near Southall and Hayes and Harlington.

These would-be useful waterways have been almost totally ignored for the last 200 years and it should now be our urgent recognition that nothing else will serve our present purpose better than to rehabilitate them for both our raw material trades and our industries.

A former chairman of the British Waterways Board, Sir Frank Price of Birmingham, has stated that "only by the use of 400 ton capacity barges can we show our traders how to cope with modern transport conditions on our Inland Waterways System."

By rebuilding the locks for such vessels, proof will be given that our Waterways will cope and that any of those who say

they cannot are "running scared" of the results of such a Public Test. Who will bet on it, because I would!

Yours faithfully,

P.Stevenson

*Angela Potter of Tetbury, Glos. writes:*

The principle of shopping on foot, (albeit perhaps rather more frequently than shopping by car at the supermarket) has to make sense if the diversity of individual local shops is to be retained. However, to make a profit, shops don't only need pedestrian customers, they need vehicular trade and they need to be supplied too. And supplies come by vehicle. In Essex Road, some local shops that I know have enormous difficulties with parking wardens who give no flexibility to these essential activities.

Advocating policies of 'protected shopping centres', and reducing traffic by encouraging local residents to walk must also allow for a sensible arrangement of adequate short-term parking to serve the needs of small businesses all over the Borough.

Yours faithfully,

Angela Potter

*Bob Hawkes of*

*Islington Council's Planning Division writes:*

There is concern, too, in the Council's Planning Division about the continuing loss of local shops.

The present UDP does include protected shopping centres, where we aim to ensure that at least two thirds of the units are in retail (A1) use, with the remaining units available for compatible uses such as local services and restaurants. The selection of these shopping

centres was designed to ensure that every-where is within easy reach of a protected centre. Essex Road, for instance, includes some protected areas, but the majority of the street is not covered.

This policy has worked reasonably well, but does rely on local residents patronising local shops rather than driving to large supermarkets! If a significant number of shops close down, the policy becomes unsustainable. The recent trend of the super-market chains to open small neighbourhood stores has also muddied the waters a bit - are these good because they provide reasonably good quality cheap food near-by, or bad because they threaten more traditional outlets?

Clearly the Council can play a pro-active role in supporting local shops; I know that other Council services are already doing this, for example the Business Partnership, initiated by the Public Protection Division.

UDP's are about to be replaced by a local development framework. Retailing / local services is certainly an issue to be addressed and of course we will shortly be consulting on this.

Sadly at present there is little that planning can do to prevent the general dumbing down and branding of our high streets. The proposed Local Communities Sustainability Bill, a private members bill, may help this, if it sees the light of day.

The New Economics Foundations' publication "Ghost Town Britain" contains an excellent analysis of the situation.

Yours faithfully,

Bob Hawkes

## Bendy Buses – Do We Like Them

**Alan Turner** takes a cool look at the pros and cons of London's new "Bendy Buses"

When I first saw a new bendy bus my reaction was, like that of many people, to think that it was far too long and took up too much road space. However, having travelled on them a few times, I decided to take an objective view and to assume that the people who introduced them had weighed up the pros and cons and had probably come to a reasonable conclusion. Having lived in London most of my life I have formed an attachment to the old Routemaster bus that has served the city so well for so long. Like most Londoners I enjoy the ability to hop on and off at traffic lights or when there is a jam. I feel trapped on all the new buses with doors when, twenty five metres short of the stop, the traffic stalls completely and I can't get off and walk or catch a tube train. The driver is only obeying the rules but it is very frustrating. (Some drivers now have taken to letting people off before the stop in such circumstances, but I suppose they are at risk if there were an accident.) As a result of all this it is easy to take the view, perhaps romantically, that the old buses are better than the new.

This article is not written as a polemic, either for or against any particular bus type, but merely tries to set out their different characteristics. I have attempted to summarise in note form the advantages and disadvantages of the various bus types. Some of the points below are comments I have obtained from Mark Yexley, managing Director of Arriva London, some are my own views and some have been suggested by others. Not every one will agree with them and it would be interesting to hear other views.

### Routemaster

Advantages to passengers

- Small footprint (i.e. the amount of road space taken up)
- Hop on and hop off
- A conductor to assist passengers

Advantages to operators

- Easier to fit into bus garages
- Easier body repairs
- Easier access to mechanical parts

Disadvantages to passengers

- No access for wheel chairs and poor access for buggies
- Platform accidents

Disadvantages to operators

- Assaults on conductors
- Need a crew of two
- Old technology and maintenance problems
- Low passenger capacity

### Current Double Deckers

Advantages to passengers

- Small footprint
- Access for wheel chairs
- Safer (no open platforms)

Advantages to operators

- Needs only one crew member
- Holds more people than Routemaster

Disadvantages to passengers

- Fewer seats on lower deck
- Takes longer to board
- No hop on and off facility
- Rear-facing seats (very unpopular)
- Poor interior design (not just aesthetic but also in practical terms)

Disadvantages to operators

- More maintenance owing to mechanical doors etc
- Access for repairs more difficult

### Articulated or "bendy" bus

Advantages to passengers

- Fast boarding
- Smooth ride

- More seats without need to climb stairs (important to older people)
- Air coolers in summer
- More likely to get on at busy times owing to large capacity
- Safer (no open platforms)
- Low emissions
- Improved interior design

Advantages to operators

- Fast boarding reduces journey times
- Reliable
- Crew of one
- High capacity

Disadvantages to passengers

- Difficult to walk around them in busy streets in order to cross the road (also unpopular with cyclists owing to their length)
- Need to buy ticket before boarding
- No hop on and off facility
- Rear-facing seats

Disadvantages to operators

- Garaging problem
- Need for more ticket checking
- Need to modify some stops and some street corners
- More to maintain – ramps, articulated connection, air conditioning etc
- Body repairs take longer

One or two of the points above are worth a few comments. There is no doubt that bendy buses take up more space on the road but if you look at the table below, you will see that the road space *per person* during peak hours when the buses are fully loaded is very similar for all the bus types. However, during the rest of the day when there are fewer passengers on board, smaller buses are more efficient in terms of road space. Another point is that although bendy buses are much more manoeuvrable than might be imagined, owing to the articulated joint, their length is a problem at some locations and many bus stops

have had to be altered to accommodate them, though they do manage to weave in and out of the columns in the forecourt of Euston Station.

I have divided the advantages and disadvantages into those that concern the users and those that concern the operators. At first sight it might appear that what is good for the operators is not necessarily good for the users and vice versa. However, there are a number of factors where the effect is mutual –

for instance if the bendy buses prove to be better in operation and this leads to better service, the benefit is felt by both sides. Users have to recognise that the more efficient the whole system is, including management, maintenance and rolling stock, the better it is for those of us who ride on the buses. A final point is that, although many of us regret the passing of the Routemasters, their end is assured by legislation on health and safety and access for the

disabled. There seems to be no way that buses without step free access can continue beyond 2017.

To go back to the title of this article – “do we actually like bendy buses?” – I think the jury is still out and only time will tell. What might happen, as in so many cases in life, is that, if they remain in service for many years, people will get used to them and when the time comes to replace them will say “Oh please can’t we keep our old bendy buses?”.

**Dimensions of different bus types**

Type	L x W (m)	Footprint (sq.m)	No of seats				Total	Area of road per person (sq.m)
			Lower	Upper	Standing			
Routemaster	9.2 x 2.4	22.08	32	40	5	77	0.28	
Current double decker	10.6 x 2.55	27.03	23	42	24	89	0.30	
Bendy bus	18.0 x 2.55	45.9	49	-	100	149	0.30	

Note: The above passenger figures exclude wheel chairs. If a wheel chair is on board the total figures are slightly lower.



Bendy bus



Routemaster

Current double decker

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*The Islington Society works to safeguard and improve the quality of life for everyone who lives, works or has an interest in Islington*

Annual subscription rates are:

Full members : £8 Couple/family membership : £10 Voluntary organisations : £15 Corporate/Business membership : £20

The Society is a member of the Civic Trust and a registered charity no. 261143

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## The decline and rise of London Buses

*In this issue, Andrew Bosi begins a series of articles explaining how the London Bus system has developed to become the way it is today*

### Part I Starts Here

In the 1960s buses suffered an unremitting decline. At the time it was considered an inevitable consequence of the growth of car ownership and of government policies that had the effect of encouraging people to live further from the centre of London so that travel to work needed a train rather than a bus. Electrification of some rail lines and the building of the Victoria line significantly reduced journey times by these modes.

Bus managers gave every impression that they thought the decline inevitable. Industrial relations declined alongside. In the 50s, London Transport had gone to the Caribbean to recruit crews. Unions were rightly concerned at potential job losses. Once the trolleybus conversion programme was completed in 1962, new Routemasters were intended to replace the RT motorbus. However, the RT had 56 seats to the Routemasters 64, so the management wishes to replace eleven RTs with ten Routemasters. Counting standing places, this raised the capacity in the peak by 2.8%, but it increased waiting time by 10% throughout the day, making the service far less attractive outside the peak.

The year before London trolleybuses ran for the last time in the twentieth century, an experimental lengthened Routemaster had been built with a further increase of eight seats. Their use was the subject of even more protracted debate with the unions. Many managers believed that 64 rather than 72 was the optimum number because adding to the number of seats simply added to

the dwell time at stops as more people alighted and then boarded. A shorter vehicle is marginally less subject to congestion delays. No effort seems to have been made to substantiate or refute these arguments, a criticism that extends to the present day.

There were two initiatives to arrest the decline in bus use. Both were unmitigated disasters. The first was the widespread introduction of one-way gyratory traffic systems. Highbury Corner had been remodelled in 1958, before the opening of the Victoria line and closure of the 1904 entrance to the Northern line (now WAGN). Those changes exposed the folly for what it is. More extensive schemes at Tottenham Court Road, Nag's Head, Shoreditch and Vauxhall took buses away from the places people wanted to visit. Often they added to congestion rather than curtailing it. A scheme at the Angel, utilising Islington High Street for southbound traffic and Upper Street northbound, was mercifully abandoned after just three hours of chaos.

The second was a revamping of services known as "Reshaping". Under this scheme, routes were curtailed and central London was to be peppered with short distance Red Arrow buses. There were no travelcards then, only primitive pre-pay systems, and with the exception of one or two routes, the Red Arrows missed the mark. The additional cost to passengers, not to mention the inconvenience of changing buses and thus waiting twice, was completely overlooked.

Instead the 1970s and 1980 saw a more gradual introduction of One Person Operation and reduction in the length of routes. These were budget led decisions, and once the Ove Arup / Christopher Chope concept of Red Routes had been replaced by the Derek Turner /

Steve Norris version, buses ceased to be the Cinderella service of public transport. In part this reflected the inability to obtain funds for much needed new tube lines. Funds were found for the Countdown information service, and a refurbishment programme for the 72-seat Routemasters implemented. London Transport bosses explained that those extra eight seats were crucial to the economics of bus operation, but as before no evidence was provided to support this contention.

In the event, demand for bus use continued to increase, and the now privatised bus Companies like Stagecoach were making every effort to find additional Routemasters of either length. The Mayor pledged to increase the number of conductors on London's buses and Transport for London purchased 51 Routemasters some of which had last been seen in London in 1984. By the time the last of these 64 seaters entered service, some 72 seaters had been withdrawn in the face of a changed policy towards conductors. A BTEC diploma to encourage good practice in conductors was made available just before the conductors received their P45s.

Congestion charge and the increase in frequency has meant that the average time of travel by bus has been significantly reduced. This is fine for shopping and office jobs where the total time rather than the specific hours worked is critical. If you have to be at your destination by a fixed time, to catch a train or a play or a meeting, it is no substitute for the freedom to abandon the vehicle in the face of sudden and unexpected gridlock. The increasing tendency to close bus stops, or the need to divert routes at short notice, have increased the need for this freedom. Most bus drivers will be

helpful but it is unreasonable to ask them to assume the risk of accident which properly lies with us the passenger. The high capacity largely standee articulated buses provide an urgency to assess optimum bus size. Their inability to use many diversionary routes calls for an urgent assessment of bus stop provision, both generally and when diversions are in operation.

The articulated bus is an attempt to address the problems of the morning peak which overlooks the needs of the rest of the day. For all that, and even with the implementation of a recommendation from the Islington Transport Aware study that buses some should start from Newington Green, demand on Essex Road in the morning peak

cannot be met. The only known solution is the Hackney Chelsea line, now called CrossRail 2, which would do for Essex Road what the Victoria Line did for Upper Street. The trouble is, CrossRail 1 has not yet started.

Articles were published in 1968 advocating the benefits of a mixed economy of crew and one person operated buses. An analysis of which should be where needs a detailed study of demand throughout the day. This extends beyond demand for buses to demand for other road space, including the needs of pedestrians and of local shops. I suspect that a detailed study would support a five tier system, as follows:

- open backed crew operation on tube deprived high use routes;

- 3-door articulated buses on central London routes catering for short journeys, where standing is acceptable;
- 2-door double-deck opo buses with staircases over the wheelbase to maximise lower saloon seating, and with entry by the rear door permitted in peak hours only, on other central London routes;
- 2-door double deck as above but without rear door entry;
- single-decker buses on routes unsuitable for double-deckers.

To meet the needs of people with varying disabilities, only on routes unsuitable for double deckers should there be a monopoly of any one type. AB

## Farewell Routemasters

**Frank Hopkins** reports nostalgically on an exhibition at the Islington Museum paying tribute to a great London icon.

Islington Museum's recent Routemasters Exhibition created feelings of both nostalgia and sadness. The Exhibition displayed 19 photographs of Routemaster buses, one of which is shown rounding Highbury Corner. The Exhibition's notes read as follows:

"Welcome to the "Islington Routemaster Exhibition" to celebrate the buses' history in the community and to pay tribute to their long service.

The Routemaster hop on and hop off approach and their unique design made them a popular London Icon, and sadly after fifty years in service the Routemasters are being phased out and replaced. In Islington the 73 has already been phased out, the number 19 will be replaced in April and the last remaining one, the 38, will be phased out in August.

The Exhibition is a collection of 19 digital images, taken of the Routemasters by resident Artist Jennifer Chapman, who has designed the photographs to appeal to everyone

Jennifer Chapman writes: "I have been an Islington resident all my life and am currently completing an Art Diploma at the City Lit college in Fleet Street. I decided to organize and photograph the Islington Routemasters for the community of Islington, to pay tribute to a great London Icon, that will be very sadly missed".

Photographs from the Exhibition can be bought at "The Only Place for Pictures" on Upper Street, either a portfolio of the complete set or a limited edition, mounted and framed and signed by Jennifer. FH



## Threat from Development Pressure

This is an extract from the Islington Chamber of Commerce Newsletter, reproduced with their permission.

The London economy continues to grow and the demand for new housing both affordable and market appears to be almost insatiable, particularly in Islington. Over the last few years Islington has seen a steady stream of large sites come up for development and go through the planning process. Most notably, Arsenal, where the attraction of keeping a major football club in the Borough outweighed the interests of businesses on the sites, and the P&O sites at Kings Cross where a poor scheme was radically improved by pressure from locals. It is too early to judge the outcome of the Arsenal development but at Kings Cross we now have some excellent new business space and facilities that will greatly benefit the local economy.

More recently there have been a number of applications for very radical schemes and schemes that have caused huge controversy because they are seen to offer major change and an increase in development without any compensating benefit to the existing community. More worryingly, it seems that many of these schemes are being pushed through the planning process without regard to the opinions and feelings of existing residents and businesses.

The most recent example is the Almeida post office site which was refused planning permission this month but only due to a massive protest and effort by hundreds of local residents and businesses. Here we had a scheme which in everyone's opinion, apart from the applicant and Islington's planning department, was a massive overdevelopment of the site, and contravened a detailed, widely consulted, and approved planning brief in numerous respects. Even so, it was only turned down due to the chair of the committee bravely ignoring officers telling her that there was no way it could be refused.

Next up for approval is a proposal for Finsbury Square, which basically involves closing the square for two years, digging a huge hole and filling it with a car park and events venue held up by a large concrete arch spanning across the square. Again in everyone's opinion, apart from the applicant and Islington planning department, the proposal is completely unacceptable, and it will again take a massive effort to get the councillors to refuse permission.

So what is going on? There seems to be a view in parts of the council that all development is good, and to meet GLA and government targets we need to cram as much onto development sites as possible. There are clearly serious housing needs, and much of the local environment could be improved, but no advice from the GLA, CABE or central government suggests that development should be carried out to the detriment of the existing community and they do advise that high density development should be of the highest quality.

Islington and Islington businesses do need good high quality new development but at present the balance doesn't appear to be correct. There appears to be almost uncritical encouragement being given by Islington planning to new development. With a tall buildings policy about to be finalised and major schemes emerging for Archway, Highbury Corner and City Road Basin, as well as a number of school sites, this is worrying. We should not need to depend on the resources and vigilance of the existing community to protect the quality and future health of our environment. **Tim Attwood, Alan Conisbee & Associates.**

*Since this article was written:* The proposal for Finsbury Square was approved by the South Area Planning Committee and a slightly revised scheme for the Almeida Post Office has been passed.



"With its use of strong coloured and highly sculptured render Rick Mather's new technology centre for UNL is arguably the most stunning contribution to Islington's architecture in the 1990's and a brilliant counterfoil to the greyness of the 1966 tower. The jagged projections into the view up and down Holloway Road also take the eye away from the UNL annexe on the corner of Hornsey Road."

It may come as a surprise that the majority of Islington's residents live in 20th Century buildings and most of the borough's institutions and places of work or entertainment date from this period. Alec Forshaw's book, published by the Islington Society, reveals their range and richness and tells their remarkable story

**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 Parking Debate

### **An Islington Society debate**

This well attended meeting gave rise to a lively debate. Three Islington Parking Control staff explained clearly and concisely the rules and how they were enforced, with particular focus on the need to keep traffic flowing and on safety. The debate then moved to the floor with many speakers from small businesses, who expressed their strong views about the damage resulting from parking control. A drop of 15 to 20% in turnover was cited owing to parking fines scaring away customers. The solution would be free short stay parking instead of pay and display and better training of Traffic Wardens, especially with regard to loading and unloading time for shops. *FH*

*Tim Newark, historian, has lived in Highbury for 18 years and fears for the survival of the diversity and character of the community he loves.*

Talk to your local shopkeepers and you'll know that something's gone badly wrong in Islington over the last couple of years. Graham Yearley runs a thriving little food store in Black-stock Road. "Not anymore," he says, "I've never known anything like it and I've been here a long time. My customers are too afraid to come down here. They pop in for a packet of biscuits and risk being fined £50 or £100. It's not worth their while. So they don't come any more. I'm down thousands of pounds in my business and I don't

know how long I can keep going. I can't employ as many people as I used to—that's local people losing their jobs. It's getting too tough for small businesses round here and the parking's the last straw."

The story is the same in Highbury Barn. "Our business is down by 15-20% since the start of this parking punishment," says Stephen Behnam of Da Mario Delicatessen. And in Aubert Park. "Look," says 'Alex' Alexandrou of the Park Cafe, "this place used to be busy with people coming in for a cup of tea and a snack. Now it's empty. It's not worth parking at a meter for a cup of tea. The only people I get in here now are parking wardens."

And it's the same in the Caledonian Road, Liverpool Road, Holloway Road, and Essex Road, anywhere where little businesses are trying to provide a local service but are getting hammered by rising rates and costs of business plus the draconian enforcement of parking zones and bus routes. Even bigger traders like Majestic Wine Warehouse near Highbury Corner are having their customers regularly fined just because they have to cross a red route to enter their car park. It's all madness.

The feeling is growing in Islington that harsh parking measures create too much social misery for the environmental "good" they are supposed to achieve. Questions about such measures are often met by the reply that they favour

"residents over traders", as though these were two separate entities. In fact, most small traders live in the borough and many residents use their shops.

Some environmentalists say that the people who protest against the new parking regime are a "motoring lobby". What nonsense! A car is just a tool, not a wicked weapon, and to attack this one aspect of our community can have a knock-on effect that can be surprisingly damaging to other parts of the community. Local schools, for example, are now finding it difficult to recruit teaching staff because they can't offer them parking facilities.

Many people in Islington are saying that this new parking regime seems to be about ideology and the creating of a sense of fear that our environment can only be saved by harsh measures. I believe this is exploiting our very real concerns for the environment. We all want a safer and cleaner Islington but not at the cost of greater social misery, local shops closing, community services struggling, and small businesses giving up and moving out of the borough. It's time for the ideologues to stand back and consider respecting all aspects of our environment - and that includes cars and shops. The urban ecology, like those of the natural world, is a complex and fragile network of relationships. Stamp on one and you risk destroying the rest.



*Rotherfield Street is punctuated by no fewer than five Day blocks. The house at number 124 is surrounded on both sides. Apart from the (lack of) cars, and the street lamp, the scene is little changed today. Further east on the next street corner another identical Day block stands. Those on the south side have pitched roofs.*

For thousands of Islington residents, a Day flat was the first step on the property ladder. Between 1956 and 1972 around a hundred of these blocks were built. Andrew Bosi's eccentric book, published by the Islington Society, traces their development, and the changes that have taken place since they were built. Each block is listed alphabetically with a brief description.

### **The story of Day Flats in and around Islington**

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

## On Home Ownership

**Adam Bower** explains the information that home owners will soon need to provide when they sell.

### HOME INFORMATION PACKS

Anybody planning to sell a residential property with vacant possession after January 2007 will need to assemble and pay for a package of information before instructing an Estate Agent.

Most of this information is needed at present, but is usually collected by Solicitors after an offer has been received. This comprises Terms of Sale, Evidence of Title, Searches, Warranties and a Property Information Form.

There is now a new requirement to obtain a Home Condition report plus an Energy Rating.

The Home Condition Report has to be compiled by a specially qualified inspector. This report will describe each constructional element of the property and will assess its condition. It will not specify repairs or indicate any costs that might be involved.

Where a flat is being sold, evidence will be included of past maintenance charges.

The Energy Report will assess the energy efficiency of the building and its services. It will indicate if the building can be expected to use excessive amounts of energy especially in its heating or lighting systems, due to low levels of insulation or antiquated fittings.

The cost of assembling all this information will be borne by the vendor. Various estimates have been made of the likely costs. It could well exceed £700.

The Government has pushed this scheme on the grounds that it will speed up housing sales. There are however those who feel that the Government is equally anxious to use it to demonstrate that it is making strenuous efforts to encourage householders to reduce energy consumption. AB

**The Council** is consulting on its draft policy for licensing Houses in Multiple Occupation required by new legislation

### PRIVATE RENTED HOUSING

If you sometimes rent out a room in your house, the chances are that you are a *Landlord* under the definitions of the Housing Act 2004. The Act, which radically overhauls the way councils regulates standards in private rented housing, introduces compulsory licensing of houses in multiple occupation (HMO's).

An HMO is a building occupied by more than one household and includes houses containing bedsits, hostels and shared houses. The Housing Act 2004 introduces a new definition of "households", meaning "families", including single people and cohabiting couples (no matter what their sexes). A house, even a private residence, of three or more storeys with five or more occupants who are not all in the same family has had to be licensed as an HMO since October 2005.

The law also adds that licences will be granted "where the house is reasonably suitable, the management arrangements are satisfactory and the licensee and manager are fit and proper persons."

The aim of HMO licensing is to ensure that the poorest properties in the private rental market meet the legal standards and are properly managed; in 2003 only 57% of private sector rented homes met the Decent Homes Standard against a target of 70% by 2010. This may not seem particularly relevant to people renting out the odd room in their own home to occasional visitors, but it appears that under the 2004 Act they, too, will have to be licensed.

To find out more, and comment on the council's draft policy for enforcing the new laws, contact Sara Emanuel on 020 7527 3083 or residential.envh@Islington.gov.uk

## ISOC *reports*

### *Impaired Hearing*

In the last issue Alan Turner wrote asking members with impaired vision to let us know if they would be interested in a version of Islington News on tape, or in electronic versions that could be transformed on their computers into large type. The response was very small and inconclusive - one person preferred having a friend read to her and another would like to have tapes. We have been in touch with DAI (Disability Action Islington) who are endeavouring to find funding for a "talking newspaper" and the intention, if this is successful, will be to place audio articles on the Society's affairs with DAI, for distribution. It is likely that that this will take some months, but we will keep members informed on progress.

### *The Islington Society Collection*

The Society and Islington Council's library service have agreed that it would be appropriate for the local history collection at Finsbury Library to include "The Islington Society Collection". We hope this will comprise every newsletter and annual report the Society has produced since 1960.

Later in the year we will hold a formal launch at which the collection acquired to date will be formally handed over to the Library. However, we have been unable to ascertain a complete list of publications. We believe there are gaps in our collection. For instance, there are no annual reports for 1979-82, 1995 and 1996 or for any date before 1970.

We are therefore appealing to our more long-standing members who may have kept these items. We can supply a full list of the items we hold, and arrange copying of any missing items if the holder wishes to keep their original. Any offers of help will be appropriately acknowledged.

*Book Reviews***History Books****A History of Islington** by *MARY COSH*

This new history of Islington is the most authoritative since John Nelson's book in 1811. Mary Cosh is a well-known writer on Islington, describes the evolution of the village into a suburb closely related to the City, and then its role as part of the overall metropolis.

Islington became prosperous partly because it lay on the way to Smithfield. It was here that cattle were rested and fed so as to be in prime condition as they set off on their last journey to the market. They trundled through the worn Upper and Lower Streets, from the north and east, and from the many lairs along the Liverpool Road. The building of the 'New Road' (including today's Pentonville

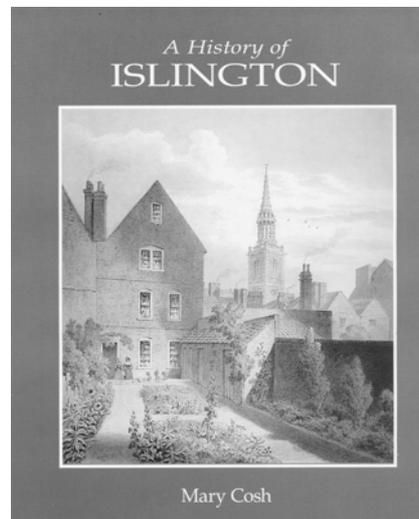
Road) added another strategic advantage to the village, keeping inns and other businesses profitable.

The village became renowned for its pleasure grounds, spas, music halls and theatres. It was also known for the rapid expansion of housing in the 19th century as one estate after another was developed, often using the system of squares and terraces which happily survives today.

Islington's churches, its fine architecture, slum conditions, desertion by the middle-class in the later 19th century and their return in the 1970s, are all representative of the troubles, achievements and failures of London as a whole.

Mary Cosh was a founder-member, and a Secretary of the Islington Society and is now a Vice President.

Available from Bookshops or  
Phillimore & Co., Shopwyke Manor Barn, Chichester, West Sussex PO20 2BG (01243 787 636 : [www.phillimore.co.uk](http://www.phillimore.co.uk))  
Historical Publications ISBN 0 948667 974 £18.95



*Jacket illustration: View of Mr Upcott's house from the garden with Islington Church in the distance. Watercolour c.1835, artist unknown. By kind permission of The Guildhall Library*

**A History of Ecclesbourne Primary School 1886-2004**

Most of Islington's schools are housed partly or wholly in Victorian buildings of a similar character. In recent years the trickle of conversions of these buildings to residential use has gained pace. Children find difficulty in gauging age and these buildings are a valuable educational resource, the more so when levels of deprivation are -

It is therefore commendable that the imminent conversion of Ecclesbourne School building to residential use has not been allowed to pass without the publication of this well presented booklet. Moreover, it has been produced with considerable involvement of existing pupils and local residents, many of whom are ex-pupils of the school. Society has belatedly recognised the value of

old records. The personal memories of individuals are more difficult to retain with the passage of time and in tracking down generations of past pupils the School has done a great deal more for our knowledge of social history.

The 118 years have seen numerous reorganisations either of schools themselves or the Authorities running them. Inevitably this has presented problems to the compilers of this book. Record keeping on all schools is patchy. In the early days the Head teacher was required to maintain a daily log book of events, devoid of any "reflections or opinions of a general character". Despite this stricture it is not difficult to divine opinions held by the heads, where the log books have survived. Officially they should have found

their way to the Metropolitan Archive in Northampton Road. Many have not done so. Inevitably then, some years are better covered than others.

Ecclesbourne is probably best known across the Borough for its connections with the Anna Scher theatre, and this is given appropriate coverage. The book is commendably frank about the school's more recent travails with OFSTED. Other matters may have been thought too delicate, even after twenty years, for a full account to be given.

The History, published by Ecclesbourne School, is available from the New North Community School, which for the time being will be at the same address: Ecclesbourne Road, London, N.1

*Andrew Bosi*

*City & Islington College building wins the Islington Society's new*

## Architecture and Conservation Award



*City & Islington College's new building on Blackstock Road, the Centre for Lifelong Learning, by architects Wilkinson Eyre is the winner of this year's inaugural award.*

Members will be familiar with the Geoffrey Gribble Memorial Award for the best recent building in the borough, administered by the Islington Society from 1990 to 2001. Sadler's Wells and St Luke's Churchyard, among others, carry bronze plaques commemorating the contribution made to the borough by its

tireless previous conservation officer. Funding for the award was provided by Geoff's wife, Ruth.

This year, a new award - the Architecture and Conservation Award - has been instituted by the Islington Society in recognition of its objective to encourage good architecture, planning and landscape design in the borough. The new scheme is sponsored by the Business Design Centre under its Chairman, Jack Morris, and supported by the Borough Council. The present scheme will also run for ten years.

The winner of the inaugural award was chosen by a panel of six judges, after visiting each of the six schemes on the shortlist of very strong candidates.

A commemorative bronze plaque was unveiled at the building on 18 October 2005 by Jeremy Corbyn M P whose constituency includes Blackstock Road. Award Certificates were presented to the college and to the architects, Wilkinson Eyre, by Andrew Bosi the Chairman of the Society. Certificates were also presented to highly commended projects; Crystal Wharf, Graham Street, by Pollard Thomas Edwards for PTE Services Ltd and Groveworld Ltd and Brewery Square, St John's Street developed by Berkely Homes and designed by Hamilton Associates. AT/dg.

### What else do we do?

#### 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 travelling on foot, by bike or by 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
- 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

35 Britannia Row, London N1 8QH

The Islington Society Office is generously provided by Britannia Row Ltd

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