

# ISLINGTON *news*

*The Journal of the Islington Society incorporating FOIL folio*

## Later tubes threatened by safety worries

The Mayor and Transport for London conducted a detailed and open consultation on whether tube trains should run later at the week-ends. It found that a half-hour extension on Friday and Saturday nights, balanced by a later start on Saturday mornings, would best meet Londoners' needs within the constraints imposed by the absurd PFI. But implementation is still some way off.

### Case for extension

The case for running later on Friday and Saturday nights was overwhelming. As we know in Islington, most pubs are staying open for an hour longer following changes in the licensing laws. There has in any case been a drift over the years towards later partying. The problem is that, under the contracts tying Transport for London's hands for the next 30 years, private operators of the tube are entitled to the present night-time shut down hours for engineering work. There had to be a quid pro quo of later starts on Saturdays and/or Sundays. Commendably, TfL explored the impact in detail, having regard to the alternatives available, and discovered that the hardship caused by a later than present Sunday start (generally an hour later than weekdays) would be greater than that relieved by the later finish on Friday and Saturday nights. So a well crafted compromise emerged. Interestingly, among the groups using early morning tubes on Sundays are the hardest Saturday night revellers just on their way home!

### Objections to the change

Inevitably not everyone agrees with the decision. Concerns have been expressed in particular by the Unions representing rail workers. Personal safety of staff is already an issue and the Unions are right to object to anything that makes it worse, but the brunt of late night violence towards staff is being borne on the buses, with several high profile incidents in Islington alone in the past year.

The issue of personal safety on public transport needs to be addressed in the round, and the underlying causes tackled.

Residents close to overground tube lines have expressed concerns about noise, although there is nothing to protect them from overnight engineering trains, which are likely to be more disruptive of sleep. A more serious obstacle may come from Network Rail, on shared lines. If you think the tube finishes too early, be thankful you are not reliant on heavy rail services which for the most part, shut down even earlier.

### Managing the Night-time Economy

The Mayor recently concluded a round of consultation on managing the night time economy. This is draft guidance on best practice for local authorities in considering planning and licensing applications for night clubs, pubs, etc. However, best practice starts with there being adequate public transport at the hours authorised establishments need.

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## Alexander Cruden 1701-70

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

Alexander Cruden was born in Aberdeen, the son of a respectable merchant. He died at his lodgings at 45 Camden Passage on the 1st of November 1770. It is not evident when he first moved to that address, although it is on record that he settled in London in 1732. The rectangular bronze plaque is not strictly speaking a Blue Plaque and was put in position by the Chapel Market Stallholders Association. Adjacent to it is a large relief of a head (disfigured by electric wires), presumably of Cruden although there is no inscription to say so. My guess is that it pre-dates the plaque by many years. There is a brief note in 'People Places & Plaques' (Islington Council) which refers to him as a 'wildly eccentric man'. However, this hardly does justice to the scale of his eccentricity or his wildness. After receiving an M.A. at Marischal College the first signs of insanity became apparent and he was confined, presumably in what in those days was called a lunatic asylum. One can only guess at the horrors of such an institution and the grossly inhumane treatment of the inmates. It must have been a dreadful experience for a man of such sensibility. It seems that he was an extraordinary combination of intellectual brilliance and unbalanced behaviour, moving from bouts of extreme depression to periods of considerable achievement. It is quite likely that he was manic depressive or what is usually referred to as bi-polar nowadays. Today he would have been treated medically; in his day the only thing to do with 'loonies' was to lock them away.

His greatest achievement was the 'Concordance of the Bible', a work of enormous labour published in 1731 and presented to Queen Caroline, the wife of George II. This went on to several editions, bringing Cruden quite substantial fees and establishing him as a writer and thinker. I believe it is still consulted in clerical circles. This was the good side of the man; the bad or mad side was bizarre in the extreme. He said that he had been commissioned by God to reform society and gave himself the title of 'Alexander the Corrector'. He tried to persuade parliament to confirm this officially by passing a bill to make him 'Corrector of the People'. Not surprisingly he failed in this endeavour but turned his energies to going around the country exhorting everyone he met to keep the Sabbath and reform their ways.

Cruden published a great many other books and tracts on religion and the scriptures, achieving considerable recognition and respect by society in general and King George III in particular who gave him £100. Unfortunately he was unable to overcome the other side of his personality and suffered further confinements in his later life. It seems absolutely characteristic that he was found dead 'in his closet in the pious attitude of prayer'\*. He was, as they would have said in the 18th century, a man of many parts.

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\*Reference; [www.electricscotland.com](http://www.electricscotland.com) - Significant and Famous Scots

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## Fourth Annual Church Crawl

Having visited the south of the Borough and then the north, this year saw the turn of West Islington for our annual church crawl. Bob O'Dell, who masterminded the whole event, relates what we encountered in 2006.

This year's Church Crawl on July 12th, a fine summer evening, began at Cloudesley Square at the Celestial Church of Christ. The building was designed by Charles Barry and built in 1826-29 as Holy Trinity Church. After being made redundant in the 1960s, it was leased to the Nigerian congregation, which has been there since 1980.

Currently repair and restoration work is in process at the grade one listed building. This is partly funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and mostly by the congregation. The church is open to visitors on Tuesdays and Fridays from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. when you can view the interior and the east window with the image of benefactor Richard Cloudesley himself. There will of course be someone on hand to answer questions. Just outside the west entrance is a plaque commemorating the use of the crypt during Zeppelin raids in the 1914-18 war.

From there we walked to St Andrew's, Thornhill Square. The church was built in the early 1850s as Islington continued to grow northwards and resembles a village church. The rector, Michael Learmouth, showed us around the building, explaining how it is used flexibly for a Montessori pre-school, maths tuition, and a children's orchestra, as well as for various community meetings and of course for worship. It was a reminder that like many church buildings it is in use not only on Sunday mornings, but throughout the week as a community centre and resource. Happily for us, the exhibition prepared last year by Kathleen Frenchman for the 150th anniversary of the church was still in place and of much interest.

Continuing our walk northward and following the growth of the borough, we passed the entrance to Barnsbury Wood in Crescent Street behind the church. Approaching Offord Street we came to Thornhill House, the very large block of flats erected for working class families in 1902 by the East End Dwellings Company. Proceeding up Westbourne Road we went through Arundel Square, the most northerly of Islington's Victorian

squares. It was good to see that the square, having been sliced through by the railway in the 1850s, is now benefiting from the extension of the Channel Tunnel Rail Link to St Pancras. A landscaped overdeck and new housing will at last complete the south side of the square. Further on we passed the former St Clement's Church designed by George Gilbert Scott in the mid-1860s and now converted into seventeen flats.

St. David's Westbourne Road was our next stop where we met the vicar, Jonathan Rust. The building dates from the late 1860s, though was largely rebuilt in the mid-1930s after a fire. In the 1980s it was closed for Anglican worship and subsequently used by a Greek Orthodox congregation. The church hall, however, remained in use by St Mary Magdalene's and became the base for the Paradise Project, a significant new community initiative run by the church, as well as for a new Anglican congregation. Now the Greek congregation has moved to a permanent home in Finsbury Park and there are plans for refurbishing the original church building for both the Paradise Project and the congregation, with flats on the church hall site.

From St. David's Jonathan Rust took us to St Mary Magdalene's, built in 1812-14 in a spacious former burial ground off Holloway Road. Many of the early 19th furnishings are still in place, but perhaps of greater significance is the Centre for Refugees and Asylum Seekers operating every day of the week offering English classes, computer training, advice and referrals, food, clothing and general support. Recently church members have also begun outreach work to the significant numbers of drinkers and drug users who congregate in the church gardens. So here too is an historic building that one might glance at from a passing bus in Holloway Road, quite unaware of what is happening inside and how the larger community is being served.

Bob O'Dell

## Publications

### Your way at Archway

Islington Council has produced a seven-twelfthths A1 pocket guide to Archway Town Centre (sic). It comprises a 3D map of Islington from its north western boundary to the northern fringe of the designated Town Centre, Nag's Head, and a directory to the shops and businesses in the area.

With a welcome emphasis on the health benefits of walking, and the location of bus stops (though not route numbers), this is an initiative which the Society is pleased to report. The directory of shops is broken down into usage categories: clothing, food, household and other goods, with separate sections for pubs and restaurants. Hospitals, health centres and secondary schools are clearly marked, as are Post Offices and other landmarks. Not every church is indicated, though, and two of the better pubs - both slightly off the beaten track and therefore all the more in need of a mention - have failed to attract the compilers' attention.

An interesting point of history is raised when we are told that Archway "used to be known as Upper Holloway". The tube station used to be called Highgate and for many years after that buses terminated at Highgate [Archway Station]. I have always regarded Upper Holloway as from the station southwards and Highgate as from the station northwards, although the postal district of Upper Holloway, N.19, extends further north. This phenomenon of place names moving with the times has been picked up by Transport for London in its consultation on improving London for pedestrians. It suggests that the resultant confusion may discourage walking as a preferred mode of transport.

Looking back at our own *Trail* leaflets, published in 2002, it is good to see that all the landmarks we included in trail 2 are still around. Let us hope that this latest publication enjoys a similar shelf-life.

● Available free of charge from Archway and North libraries.

### An Architect in Islington

The Society is pleased to announce the publication of *An Architect in Islington*, the autobiography of our founder member and life-Vice President, Harley Sherlock. It is our third venture into publishing in this millennium.

As we went to press, the launch was scheduled to take place at Waterstone's bookshop on Islington Green on Tuesday November 7th. The book will then be on sale at Waterstone's as well as direct from our Britannia Row office.

At roughly 8¼" square, it is a companion volume to Alec Forshaw's *20th Century Buildings in Islington*. A review will appear in a future issue of this newsletter. Publications currently available:

*Twentieth Century Buildings in Islington*, by Alec Forshaw, published by the Islington Society at £14.99, ISBN 0-9541490-0-9

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

*An architect in Islington*, by Harley Sherlock, published by the Islington Society at £14.99, ISBN 9-78-0-9541490-2-4

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

### *Books from our President and Vice-President*

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

A broad brush look at the state of the world, and a plea for the reassertion of enlightenment values.

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

The most comprehensive work on our Borough to date.

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An exhibition has opened at the Royal Academy (until 21st January 2007) of which James Dunnett has been designer and co-curator with Alan Powers, about the work of the architect HT (Jim) Cadbury-Brown, now 93, former Professor of Architecture at the RA, key designer of the Festival of Britain, and of Islington's largest primary school, Ashmount, famously photographed by Angus McBean.

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## Green spaces in Islington

Earlier this year we reported on the controversial redevelopment of Finsbury Square. So many of our Green spaces are undergoing change, some welcome, some not, that we now report on a whole swathe of plans and developments.

### **Barnard Park: developers "annex" more greenspace**

Developers building luxury flats on Barnard Park - on land that was controversially sold-off by the Lib Dems - have exceeded their sites and built directly on to parkland that is still legally owned by the Council. A campaign by our own James Dunnett, Councillors Martin Klute and James Murray, has revealed that land registry deeds show the developers have annexed land that was not sold to them. The buildings encroach some 2,000 square feet of parkland. The Lib Dems "environment czar" Cllr. Lucy Watt has said that the council did not approve the plans to which the development was built, although it appears that delegated authority may have been wrongly exercised by council officers.

### **Islington Green reopens to mixed reviews**

Islington Green re-opened in September after a revamp which saw the old war memorial replaced by a modern design, a new tarmac path and new park benches. The Green is tidier than before, but the war memorial is not to the taste of many older visitors to the Green - those whose contemporaries or parents' contemporaries died in the war which led to the original decision to create a memorial from public subscription. The benches are welcome, but they stand in a regimented line which detracts from their appearance. The opportunity to re-open the gate in front of Sit Hugh Myddelton was not taken, even though it serves the obvious "desire line" of pedestrians and would provide sight lines into the "secret" public path leading to St. Mary's gardens, another small open space to have benefitted from council funding in recent years.

The mother and daughter team of Councillors, Joan and Shelley Coupland, are pressing for some changes and it seems likely that they will succeed in getting more York paving stone around the Green.

**Newington Green goes from strength to strength**  
Yet another Green space to have undergone a major face lift is Newington Green. This scheme followed more obvious involvement with the local

community, including Society members ex. Cllr. Haynes and Cllr. Anna Berent, to whom we send belated congratulations on attaining four score years. The Newington Green Action Group continues to thrive, organising community events at the Green and circulating a newsletter.

### **Highbury Fields popular with football fans**

The council is being obliged to turn its attention to the largest open space in the Borough, Highbury Fields. An unexpected outcome of the move from Highbury stadium in Gillespie Road to Ashburton Grove has been the number of fans walking through Highbury Fields to and from matches. The lack of promised improvements to public transport, chronicled in these newsletters, has meant that fans are having to allow more time than they would like to get to games, and are being delayed on return to their still greater dissatisfaction. The "main" pedestrian routes to Arsenal, Finsbury Park and Highbury stations, are heavily policed, so the Fields have become the best route to get close to the ground uncontrolled. New "desire lines" are being etched in the grass, which will soon disappear if something is not done to change them. However, local people would generally prefer as little change as possible. Far better to provide alternative routes for the football fans, e.g. by re-opening Drayton Park station: but we have said this before.

### **Rosemary Gardens**

A series of development proposals has failed to find support with councillors on the South Area Committee. The current proposal is more modest: a single storey amenity block, upgrading the tennis courts and football pitch, and the loss of four sycamore trees.

### **Bride Street revisited**

Last in our round up of changing green spaces is Bride Street open space, just south of Paradise Park, which is being swallowed up by the St. Mary Magdelene Academy. No direct changes are planned to Paradise Park, but construction is having a serious impact on the park and continues to be contested by the local action group RAMMA.

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## The Miracle is Happening

Avis (Saltsman) Baldry has been associated with the Anderson's Yard Campaign Group from its inception, and a tireless campaigner for the Arts. Following the regrettable failure of funding for the original scheme, subsequent plans have attracted controversy from local residents given false assurance about the height of subsequent development, campaigners for affordable housing, and those disappointed by the failure to secure the Rose theatre. Earlier this year, Avis facilitated a visit to the site by members of the Committee, and here Avis sets out her personal account of events to date and the likely end-result.

At last the premier aim of the Anderson's Yard Campaign Group, a theatre to replace the Old Collins Music Hall, is within sight of realisation.

The group was formed in 1989, determined that the Angel area would not have to suffer the building of another huge office block like the Royal Bank of Scotland headquarters building (which has now been empty for about four years). In the early days there were three 'Planning For Real' exercises, during which residents were able to indicate what they would most like to see on the site and there were many other opportunities to do so.

As chairwoman of the campaign for six years from 1991 I accumulated papers which are two feet high, including eighteen newsletters, mostly written by myself and printed and posted by a social worker at the Neighbourhood Office. We collaborated with the then council in relation to the Planning Brief and the MP, Chris Smith, always took a close interest. Anyone could be a member of the campaign which was well advertised in the local papers and by posters, for (£1) one pound per year. For this they received information on coming meetings and news of successes in achieving our aims. What I learned most was patience and a realisation that there would be ups and downs, for example over the time taken. Since then there have been enormous changes, mostly for the better, in planning for the inner city.

Since the closing of the campaign in 1997 when, being weary, I could not find anyone to replace me as Chair, we had already seen the installation of Waterstones Bookshop. They spent an extra £250,000 on researching and reconstructing the frontage of Collins Music Hall as it had originally been before the fire in 1958. We also saw the building of the flats with a very attractive garden, open to the public from Collins Yard (where the original dressing rooms were), a courtyard off Essex Road with access to a gym and swimming pool, and attractive restaurants on Essex Road. There was first a delay of three years before the Planning application for the theatre was considered by the council, twice, in 2000, and at which I spoke on behalf of the theatre plan. Amazingly it barely scraped through the first time, but by the second a little more light prevailed.

We are fortunate in the residential developer Fairbriar and the theatre trust sponsor Robert Bourne and his wife, the very experienced theatre entrepreneur, Sally Greene, because it is almost impossible to build a new theatre nowadays, especially in London. It is an act of great courage and philanthropy as there are no grants and the seventy flats which will fund it are a one-off income. They engaged the well-known architect Piers Gough of CZWG who produced an excitingly imaginative scheme based on the Midsummer Night's Dream theme. There will be income from the leases and the restaurants round the huge new town open space, a much needed gift to Islington. It will be entered through two towers, which contain the theatre services, off Essex Road facing St Peters Street. Looking up towards the glazed canopy from this space will be like being inside a huge tree. A young architectural practice based in Old Street, Amin Taha Associates, which has won several awards, took over the supervision of achieving the whole concept with superb surface materials for the town space, columns surrounding it, balconies of the flats and the foyer which will be at 15 and 16 Islington Green.

Tolent Construction Limited have been working on the site since May 23rd last year and have stuck to every part of the planning agreement (of which I have a full copy). The theatre shell, three stories underground, is finished and work on the crescent of flats is starting. Tolent will be competing with other companies for fitting out of the theatre to start on February 12th next year and estimated to take 36 weeks, so, my long-time prediction of first performance at Christmas 2007 may very well come true.

Ivan Hodgson, the site engineer, is offering tours of the site and Frances Balfour, who was the secretary of AYCG arranged a tour for the Islington Society committee and I was invited to join them. We saw the area which will be the enormous new town space, at the moment housing materials for the flats. Underneath it the shell of the three-floor theatre is already constructed, Level 3 being 22 metres below ground, thirty or so workers being on the site most days. Because Crossrail plans to have two tunnels under the site by 2012, great care had to be exercised to insulate the theatre from any sound transfer, and there

will be bidding to fit out the theatre to start on February 12th next year and take 36 weeks. We looked down into the 'hole' which will be the spiral staircase entrance to the three levels (there will also be lifts and attention paid to services for the disabled) and Ivan Hodgson hinted that there were to be some amazing features in the foyer, including restored indestructible Collins rivetted metal beams. The space in the corners of the three floors will house dressing rooms, a rehearsal room, offices and foyers.

There seem to be some rather out-of-date perceptions (which is not surprising since one cannot go on informing people during a nine year break!), and I'd like to clarify some things. A name has yet to be decided and because a Collins Trust was set up to administer the business, this does not mean the theatre will necessarily be called Collins. Every site to be developed is required to have an archaeological study. It was discovered that the Gaskin Street side of the site had contained a Victorian graveyard behind what, until quite recently, was a little Baptist chapel which had been turned into a tiny garden centre. While it was not anything so hysterically exciting as a 'plague pit' (perhaps imagined by those who did not take part in the campaign) it contained graves piled on top of one another because the minister had sold them over and over to make a huge profit. All the bones were removed ethically and hygienically and buried in a graveyard outside London. This did not apply to the theatre part of the site and in fact 10,000 cubic metres of prime London clay were removed by Tolent by sometimes eighty lorries per day, without finding any further archaeological relics.

The Angel area has been a place of entertainment for at least 200 years and yes, there are

Taken from inside the site in the course of the Islington Society visit, this photograph looks towards Islington Green with the protected façade on the right and the east side of the Green enjoying the last of the evening sunshine.

other theatres here. Particularly over the last ten years, we have become known as the place to eat, particularly for young city workers. No matter how many restaurants there are (around sixty from all over the world), they are full even on a Monday night and public transport is excellent. All this was rightly regarded as an indication of potential audiences.

There is one pledge in the planning agreement which particularly interests me having been an educationalist for thirty years and one convinced of the power of the use of the arts in education. This is that all youth in Islington will be entitled to ten free performances, ten free drama lessons and ten free technical lessons annually. This means that the theatre building will be used during the day as well as for evening performances. At last, Islington youth (particularly boys) will have something other than football to be involved in, which will be equally, if not more, exciting and will open up new worlds for them. I know Sally Greene's record as a theatre impresario and we should get an exciting and varied programme to suit all tastes. Not all will be equally successful, there will be ups and downs as there are with planning! The Old Vic, which Sally owns, has a well-established record of youth involvement and I have attended matinées packed with schoolchildren. At the moment I am listing my huge collection of theatre programmes, starting in 1949 which I will donate as an educational tool.

Much is a matter of goodwill and a desire that this will be a success, something I have steadfastly held to for seventeen years. I do hope members of the Society and many others in Islington, especially long-suffering AYCG members, will become Friends.



## *From the Society*

### *P & O wins Conservation Award*

The second Architecture & Conservation award of the millennium went to the P & O development at King's Cross. The panel which considered the short listed sites was unanimously impressed with this development. Its sympathetic treatment of historic buildings, and its ability to put them to a use appropriate to the 21st century, were key to its success. The outcome is particularly satisfying to local members who campaigned against the first scheme put forward by P & O, culminating in a picket of the English Heritage launch of its "Sense of Place" initiative. It is to the developer's credit that they responded positively to local opposition, though this was not a factor in the decision of the panel.

Two other schemes were commended by the Panel. There was some disquiet that it is very difficult to compare major schemes like P & O with small scale developments (one of the commended schemes, 13, Morton Road, is a single dwelling on the site of three former garages), and the Committee has been asked to review the criteria by which schemes are judged.

### *Our last newsletter*

The Summer 2006 issue of the newsletter stated in an article that the outcome of the investigation by the Standards Board into five Liberal Democrat councillors was "inconclusive". We are happy to clarify that in fact the hearing of the tribunal of the Adjudication Panel which heard the case, stated unambiguously that none of the five councillors had breached the code of conduct for councillors. The point that the article sought to make was that the outcome was perceived to have been inconclusive, and that this perception may have had an impact on the results in the local elections.

### *Future events*

Officers of the Society continue to meet for an informal chat in the Marquess Tavern, at 9 p.m. on the

first Tuesday of each month. The Marquess is at the north end of Canonbury Street. All members are welcome to join us.

On Tuesday, January 30th, Council leader James Kempton will address us at the Town Hall on **Listening to Islington**. Come and hear!

### *What else do we do*

- we support conservation planning work to preserve the borough's historic fabric and individual buildings of distinction
- we campaign for a high standard of design in new buildings
- we encourage best practice through awards for good architecture in new or refurbished buildings
- we organise a varied programme of events including talks, walks and site visits
- we campaign for better public transport and for priority for people travelling on foot or by bike
- we produce publications that celebrate Islington's architectural history and its social and cultural diversity
- we publish neighbourhood walking trails to foster exploration awareness and pride of place
- we build links between residents officials and councillors
- we publish a regular newsletter
- we send representatives to advise Council groups dealing with development, the environment and transport
- we are represented on the London Forum of Civic & Amenity Societies, which takes up cross-borough issues of concern and is a member of the Civic Trust

### **Future format of the newsletter**

The newsletter has been in this A4 size for many years. However, recent changes in postal rates have created a strong financial incentive for change. The Committee have decided that this issue should remain in A4 format, but folded into a C5 envelope to avoid the 60% increase in postal costs. The C5 envelopes also represent a considerable saving over their C4 counterparts. The alternative of going to an A5 format was not supported in committee, because the reduced page size would reduce the maximum number of words on a page and constrain scope for photographs and illustrations. It would also mean that future issues would sit less neatly on the bookshelf next to past editions, and would require a one-off reformatting of the newsletter. However, it would enable us to send out the newsletter unfolded. Many other organisations have made this change already: the Camden Society, the Friends of Union Chapel, and the New River Action Group/Friends of the New River. We would welcome your views. The Committee has agreed to review its decision if members urge us to do so.