

ISLINGTON *news*

The Journal of the Islington Society incorporating FOIL folio

Conservation Officer to retire

Many members will be sorry to learn of Alec Forshaw's decision to retire as the Borough Conservation Officer, a post he has held with distinction for twenty years. Alec is widely respected amongst his peers, and it is generally held that his standing was influential in the support which the Borough received from English Heritage.

Future of conservation in Islington

The committee was concerned that, as well as losing Alec's unique knowledge of the Borough, a future post-holder may not have the same degree of authority within the planning department. The Chairman was asked to raise this concern with Council leader James Kempton, who has replied that, while the matter of his replacement is for officers in the Environment and Regeneration Department, there is no intention to delete or downgrade the post. In the short term, the Society is marking Alec's twenty years - please turn to the Society page for further details.

We are also using this issue to examine in detail the future of planning and conservation more generally. In June Emily Thornberry addressed our A.G.M. and told us that, like Chris Smith before her, she had been forced to conclude that the overwhelming issue of concern to her constituents is housing. The numbers on the council waiting list, and the time that people wait have scaled new heights and the level of concealed homelessness (e.g. people sleeping on friends floors) and overcrowded/over-occupied properties is known only insofar as it too is higher than ever. These concerns remain despite the upbeat report we publish on page two.

More than numbers

As became clear in the debate that followed Emily's speech, there is more to this than numbers. Quality issues have to be addressed: the number of dwellings can be increased at the expense of the number of larger, family, dwellings. We have to be wary of schemes that put the affordable housing next to the railway lines or the refuse department and the luxury homes in the best connected sites. A cohesive community is essential to the quality of life and the

continued provision of local shops and services: this demands housing for those whose disposable income falls between that of luxury homes and social housing. The special character of Islington is its high density low rise provision and apart from the wind effects the main objection to tall buildings is the visual impact of the seventh to the twelfth storeys, not the floors above. The Mayor of London is criticised for not insisting on the 50% affordable rule on the King's Cross Railway Lands, and the scheme is under fire because so little housing is on the most attractive part of the site. Much of the intermediate housing planned will have become market housing before this massive redevelopment can be completed.

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Council house building resumes after 25 years

Executive Member for Housing & Communities, Councillor Terry Stacy, reports on housing developments in Islington over the last year, and tells us how the creation of affordable housing is balanced with retention of the special character of Islington.

More affordable homes

Last year 813 affordable homes were built in Islington. In the same period only 253 were built in Camden, 264 in Haringey, and 130 in Westminster. In the last two years there have been three affordable homes built in Islington for every one built in our neighbouring boroughs.

Since the Liberal Democrats took control of the Council in 2000 over three thousand new affordable homes have been built in Islington. Many of these have been as shared ownership or for key workers to help people get their first step on the housing ladder in an increasingly difficult housing market. And there is now a requirement for 50% of all new housing to be affordable, on sites providing more than ten homes.

Size and quality

To relieve overcrowding in Islington money has been put into extensions and conversions, and Housing Associations have been used to provide some much needed larger family units. We are also pro-actively regenerating housing estates around the borough, such as the Market Estate where a 1960s housing block will be returned to a traditional street layout offering more homes, and a more attractive living environment.

High densities and tall buildings

While we have been doing all this we have also been working to balance the need for more housing with preserving the special nature of Islington. We are continuing to fight against the demands of the Mayor of London to build even denser housing in Islington. Under the Mayor's current plan Islington is expected to build twice as many new homes in the next six years than larger neighbouring boroughs Camden and Haringey. We have also carefully identified areas where we believe tall buildings would be acceptable in Islington, but we continue to fight against plans for sky-scrapers in these areas.

I am also proud to announce that for the first time in 25 years the Council will be building new council housing in the borough. Plans are being drawn and a full report was presented to and endorsed by the Executive in the Autumn.

Third Sector Review Report

The final report of the joint Cabinet Office and Treasury review into the future role of the third sector in social and economic regeneration sets the framework for government working in partnership with the sector for

the next 10 years. The report announces major new commitments to boost the sector and its partnership with government, and sets out £515m funding over the next three years.

The importance of volunteers in strengthening communities, civil society and supporting others is recognised with a commitment by government to invest £117m funding in the youth volunteering organisation. The report also commits to developing the skills of the third sector's workforce. It announces that the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills will work with the Sector Skills Development Agency, the Office of the Third Sector, the devolved administrations and third sector workforce representatives to take forward the skills issues arising from the Third Sector Review. This will include a feasibility study on setting up a Workforce Development Council for the sector.

And, to build that all important evidence base about the sector and the contribution that it makes to national life, Government will establish a new centre to move the third sector research agenda on with investment from OTS.

A Summary and links to the full document can be found at the following website: http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/documents/public_spending_reporting/charity_third_sector_finance/psr_charity_thirdsector_consultationindex.cfm "

Conservative Social Justice Policy Group

The Conservative policy document published earlier in July also made recommendations for boosting the ability of the third sector to contribute to civil society and is likely to form the basis of a general election manifesto. The final 82 page chapter of the report Breakthrough Britain contains the party's ideas for reforming government policies relating to the voluntary sector.

Among these are proposals: to put in legislation the principles of the Compact - including multi-year funding, prompt payment and full cost recovery; to reform the distribution of National Lottery Fund's good causes to ensure more money reaches smaller charities; to establish a third sector select committee to scrutinise the work of the Office of the Third Sector and give the Minister a Cabinet rank; to establish a third sector research institute equivalent to the Institute for Fiscal Studies; and to launch a 'v' card to incentivise young volunteers and introduce volunteering schemes in all schools.

Planning for a Sustainable Future

The London Forum of Amenity & Civic Societies response to the consultation on the White Paper - 'Planning for a Sustainable Future' follows. The Forum is very concerned about the effects the proposals could have on local democracy, communities and the environment.

As a federation of civic and amenity societies, we are a GLA stakeholder group and have participated in the preparation and the public examinations of the London Plan. Our members have been involved also in the compilation of Local Development Frameworks in their London borough. We believe that we know how sustainable development should be achieved and we see the proposals in the White Paper as a threat to that and to future planning controls and public participation.

Proposals of concern

- Put decisions on major infrastructure projects, such as roads, power stations, incinerators and airports in the hands of an independent panel of 'experts';
- Limit the public right to a say at public inquiries;
- Threaten local shops by making out-of-town developments easier;
- Introduce a 'presumption in favour of development';
- Significantly widen permitted development rights, even in Conservation Areas;
- Remove the need for Statements of Community Involvement to be examined at Public Inquiry.

Forum's preferences

- Any national statements on major infrastructure projects to consider all the alternatives, and properly involve local people;
- Decisions to be made by democratically accountable politicians, not an unelected commission;
- A legal right for local people to challenge projects at a public inquiry, and for the chance to reconsider the need for the infrastructure as part of this process;
- Natural and historic resources protected for future generations;
- A legal duty on all decision makers to promote sustainable development.

Presumption in favour of development

The Government is proposing to change the planning system to be more in favour of economic development. We have not seen constraints that need to be removed in the current planning processes at local or regional level, nor when conducted at the public inquiry level. We believe that there should be no presumption in favour of development, as that is contrary to the principle of sustainability, which seeks integration of policies and objectives and proposes that we live within environmental limits. The White Paper pays too little attention to environmental aims and fails to build upon the Government's own publications in the past ten years about placing emphasis on communities, their needs and their aspirations.

The commitment of the Prime Minister, Gordon

Brown, to tackling climate change is now in doubt. He has downgraded the key cabinet committee on the environment from a full cabinet committee chaired by the Prime Minister to a sub-committee chaired by the Chancellor. In addition a sub-committee which aimed to embed sustainable development in central government departments has been scrapped entirely.

The current planning system ensures that the interests of everyone involved can be taken into account and the potential harm that any proposed development may cause can be fully evaluated in planning law terms. The proposals in the White Paper would weaken those aspects of development control. The development of areas, facilities and infrastructure must remain an holistic process where development has to conform to requirements locally, not harm local sustainability on a site by site basis for short term economic considerations.

Local Development Frameworks

It is essential that local residents are engaged in the plan preparation stages, locally and (in the case of London) at regional level also. The Barker report proposed reducing that involvement and streamlining the process for the preparation of Local Development Frameworks. It would be unacceptable to fast-track such preparation of planning policies. The Government has established the use of Statements of Community Involvement, Sustainable Community Strategies and Area Action Plans and communities are participating now. They need to be encouraged and not made to feel that their views will not be marginalised. Their consultation at the issues and options stages is important and that should be retained and facilitated in any revised process definition. Residents should not be left to assess and comment on draft plans in which they have not been able to make a useful input.

We welcome the White Paper's proposal for extra funding for Planning Aid and the emphasis must be on training and guidance documentation that equips people to be involved in their local authority's processes. Statements of Community Involvement should continue to be formally examined if there are objections to their content.

Public Inquiries

The Government's proposals for public inquiries are unacceptable as they reduce the right of residents to be fully involved and their views properly taken into account. The inquiry process has been valuable in London and it has led to appeals being dismissed and planning permission refused by the First Secretary of State on Inspectors' recommendations when a poorly

designed scheme would have been allowed by a local authority but was opposed by residents and turned down by Councillors at committee.

Retail Development

We strongly oppose the replacement of the test on 'need' for retail development. That would threaten our town centres and local shopping areas by more shopping parks, with their associated encouragement of road usage.

Major Infrastructure Projects (MIPs)

The Forum objects to the implication in the White Paper that it is delay in the planning process that adversely affects MIPs. Major developments are often ill conceived and need careful evaluation and consideration of local impact. They cannot be assessed simply on conformance to stated Government requirements. The revised planning system for dealing with major infrastructure projects threatens the involvement of local communities and the proper consideration of environmental impacts. If the Government is intending to produce National Policy Statements (NPS) for MIPs with firm timescales it may make it easier to ensure that the country's needs are met but there must be credible community involvement, with the needs and alternatives fully examined and subject to sustainability assessment.

The implication is unacceptable that an NPS could anticipate all development implications some time ahead and that a developer's eventual conformance to the specified need would lead to approval. Developers should have to do more than demonstrate that their "main aims (are) consistent with the relevant national policy statement". The "local consequences" that the White Paper assumes might be taken into consideration are too restricted.

Public consultation is conducted now for development proposals by the local authority. The Forum is concerned that community consultation by a developer of a MIP might not be adequate, nor properly interpreted and reported to the Infrastructure Planning Commission (IPC). The proposed IPC must be democratically accountable and not a group of unelected people appointed by Government. It must allow proper public engagement, conduct robust testing of evidence, and have environmental and planning expertise. It should be able to take into account evidence on the need, scale and design of a MIP, particularly if the NPS is not recent.

Permitted Development Rights

The Forum is opposed to the Government's proposals to relax the need for planning permission for any householder changes which are acceptable to neighbours. It would be wrong to relax development control and permit inappropriate or badly-designed 'minor' development, even in Conservation Areas. There would be a huge clamour by communities for Article 4 Directions to protect their local historic assets, their public realm and the value of their properties. At present,

residents and community groups can comment upon significant householder developments through the planning process and find it satisfactory that way.

Long Serving MP attacks planning reforms

Michael Meacher, MP for Oldham with a political past distinguished by commitment to environmental causes, accused the proposals in the Planning White Paper of being 'dangerous for local democracy' at a fringe meeting during the Labour Party Conference, the Oldham Advertiser reported.

Mr Meacher attacked the proposed reforms, saying that the public would have 'no trust' in the planning process if its role was reduced.

'I accept that the planning process is not working as well as it ought but I think the deregulation of the current planning system by prioritising the growth of the economic and social criteria is a serious mistake,' he said.

He criticised the plans to introduce an Infrastructure Commission to make policy decisions on Major Infrastructure Projects (MIPs) with little or no involvement or input from local quarters.

'On major infrastructure projects the community consultation will be carried out by the developer - as if a development promoter will fairly examine other options,' Mr Meacher said.

The Planning Disaster campaign, a coalition of 17 environmental and civic organisations, has introduced a function to 'e-mail your MP' about the planning reforms via its website. Visit <http://www.planningdisaster.co.uk> for the latest. The Civic Trust has raised similar concerns in its response.

New Guidance on Tall Buildings

Updated joint Guidance on tall buildings from The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment CABI and English Heritage is endorsed by government departments CLG and DCMS and is capable of being a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

The document, updated from 2003 to reflect changes in the planning system and Government planning guidance, reinforces the latest government planning guidance which advocates pro-active spatial planning leading to less ad-hoc decision-making, more clarity for developers and tall buildings in the right places. For the first time, the document calls for proposals to exceed the latest regulations for minimising energy and reducing carbon emissions over the lifetime of the development.

CABI and English Heritage now accept that in exceptional circumstances, the principle of a tall building may be acceptable at outline planning consent as part of a robust and credible long term masterplan (such as regenerating the large King's Cross site and the Olympics site in East London), provided it is subject to

Environmental Impact Assessment. In addition, World Heritage Site protection is clarified. The Guidance reflects the obligation for World Heritage Sites to have management plans, which will ideally include a policy framework to define and protect the local setting. Tall buildings must address their effect on World Heritage Sites as part of the wider historic context.

Download the Guidance on tall buildings from <http://www.cabe.org.uk/default.aspx?contentitemid=2000>

CABE commends Edward Square

Earlier this year CABE (the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment) published "*It's our space*", a guide for community groups working to improve public space. The guide contains various examples of recent good practice including Edward Square in south Islington.

The guide breaks down the process into five stages: preparation, design, construction and use and it is in the design section that Edward Square is commended for the close involvement of the local community and its continuing work through FREDS (Friends of Edward Square). Edward Square won the Green Flag Award in 2005 and retained it last year.

It's our space, ISB Number 184633-013-0, is available from CABE at 1, Kember Street, London W.C.2 or via its web-site.

English Heritage Launches Buildings at Risk Register 2007

The annual B@R Register brings together information on all Grade I and II* listed buildings, and Scheduled Ancient Monuments (structures rather than earthworks), known to English Heritage to be 'at risk' through neglect and decay, or vulnerable to becoming so. In addition, Grade II listed buildings at risk in London are included.

The 2007 Register contains 1,235 entries. Over the past year 88 entries have been removed and 52 have been added continuing an overall downwards trend. But year on year, Chief Executive Simon Thurley pointed out 'we are left with the hard rump of buildings which need large amounts of public subsidy. The total subsidy needed to bring all the buildings on the Register into repair remains, as it did in 1999, at around £400 million, but £65 million of that total relates to the entries we have highlighted today'. What makes these buildings expensive and difficult to revive is a combination of factors such as their vast scale, the fact that part of the site is often a structure which can only be preserved but will never have a beneficial use.

'While the rising property market is making some buildings economic to repair', he continued, 'the outlook for historic buildings where the cost of repair is more than their value once repaired, is increasingly bleak. This

is what we call the conservation deficit. Even though many of these buildings are capable of being restored to some form of beneficial use, including housing, it does not necessarily make them economic propositions for developers, organisations or individuals.

Government funding for English Heritage has reduced and the purchasing power of its grants has shrunk by £19.6 million over the past six years. Last year English Heritage offered £4.4 million to buildings at risk but this covered only 1.3% of the estimated total conservation deficit of all the buildings on the Register. Meanwhile building costs rose by approximately 4.4%.

Simon Thurley called on Government 'and especially the new Secretary of State, to work with us to convince public funding bodies of the value of the nation's heritage and that buildings like the ones we have identified today deserve a second chance. If we fail to act today, the cost of saving these buildings will continue to rise and their decay advance.

IHBC calls for reform of VAT provisions that cause buildings to be at risk

The UK's professional body for building conservation, the Institute of Historic Building Conservation, was 'saddened and frustrated' by the content of new Register.

Institute Chairman, Dave Chetwyn, says 'The most effective way to tackle Buildings at Risk is to ensure that their repair is economically viable. We would urge the Treasury to deal with the problem of VAT being charged on building repairs. This could save many of the vulnerable buildings across the UK, deliver much needed regeneration and encourage more sustainable forms of development.'

IHBC notes the current regime where VAT is charged at 17.5% on repairs but new build is zero rated. This means it is often more economic to erect new buildings than it is to repair old ones. This system makes it more difficult to secure repairs to many of the vulnerable listed buildings across England. Heritage Link has been instrumental in the preparation of a VAT grant scheme proposal, which if adopted, would allow the refunding of VAT on repairs to listed buildings that are owned by charitable bodies.

Top historic theatre buildings at risk

As English Heritage announces the new Buildings at Risk Register, the Theatres Trust voiced its particular concern for the lack of awareness of the risks facing historic

theatres in England through demolition, lack of funding and insensitive redevelopment.

In light of recent demolitions such as Dalston Theatre in February this year, Mhora Samuel, Director of The Theatres Trust expected to see a number of significant theatre buildings highlighted in the report, not least Wilton's Music Hall. 'Historic theatre buildings across the UK face ongoing risk, whether through sale or change of ownership, difficulty in meeting the high costs of necessary physical works, the loss of theatres through change of use, the threats of vandalism to a vacant building, developments demolishing theatre sites or insensitive development surrounding these historic buildings. The Theatres Trust keeps a watching brief over UK theatres and its own register includes more than 66 sites which have been identified as at risk'.

The Theatres Trust lists the Top Ten Historic Theatre Buildings at Risk. The only London entry is Wilton's Music Hall, (Grade II*).

Our Heritage, Our Future - Heritage Lottery Fund reveals vision for future

The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) sets out the organisation's strategic framework from April 2008 to 2013. The document also serves to reassure the sector that while competition for funds may increase, HLF will remain the biggest funder of heritage in the UK with £1.9 billion to distribute over the next 12 years.

HLF has reviewed its funding in light of its own approach to committing funding in advance as well as the impact of Lottery funding for the 2012 Olympics. Our Heritage our Future confirms that all main funding programmes will continue and HLF's application and assessment process will be made simpler and quicker, with decisions given earlier in the development of projects and more help available to applicants. Where appropriate, HLF will offer a mentoring service provided by specialist advisors to reduce risks in project development, improve the overall quality of projects and provide inexperienced applicants with extra help. New approaches favour innovative thinking and developing practice on sustainable use of resources, better

approaches to maintenance. HLF will also introduce support for full cost recovery and to celebrate the volunteers, launch an annual awards scheme giving the public a chance to nominate their local 'heritage hero'.

While HLF remains the largest funder of heritage in the UK, funding will drop from £220m in 2008-9 to £180 million per annum from 2009-2013. A table sets out where the cuts will bite: by £7m in grants of up to £50,000, by £2m in the repair grants for Places of Worship, by £2m in the Parks for People programme. The main difference will affect grants in the £1m-£5m bracket. The 2008-9 budget of £112m is reduced by £27m but separated into two categories from 2009-13. During this period £40m of the annual budget will be awarded in grants from £1m-£5m and £45m specifically allocated to smaller grants from £50,000-£1m.

The new applications materials will be introduced in April 2008 with the first round of decisions in December 2008. The document contains further details of transitional timings for HLF's individual programmes.

Copies of *Our Heritage Our Future* can be downloaded from www.hlf.org.uk or ordered from 020 7591 6042

OH BOY!

On Tuesday 9th September 1958 the first rehearsal for ATV's new rock and roll music show 'Oh Boy' was held at the Four Provinces of Ireland Club at 13, Canonbury Lane, Islington.

Young performers would travel up from the legendary 2 i's coffee bar at 59, Old Compton Street, Soho for daytime rehearsals at 13, Canonbury Lane.

Filming of the 'Oh Boy' show took place at the Hackney Empire which earlier in the 1950's had been acquired by ATV and which became Britain's first commercial television studio where popular shows of the day such as *Emergency Ward 10* and *Take Your Pick* were filmed.

With dramatic camera work and lighting and non stop music the show was a great success and although it only ran 1958-1959 many of the performers went on to great success and the show is fondly remembered by people of a certain age.

Society publications

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

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

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

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

Report on the 5th Annual Church Crawl, 4 July 2007

The Annual Church crawl is now a regular feature of the Society's calendar. A report on the last one was given on page 3 of our Autumn 2006 issue.

The rain falls on the just and the unjust, but happily it didn't fall on us on the evening of the 5th annual Church Crawl in a very wet July. As usual we were out to look at landmark buildings inside and out, and to learn a bit about their history and their place in Islington today. This year we were in Highbury.

S. Joan of Arc R.C.

St. Joan of Arc Church has been described by Alec Forshaw as 'one of Islington's most striking 1960s buildings'. The church, school, presbytery and offices were all designed in the early 60s to replace a small building from 1920 in Kelross Road. Described as 'modernised Gothic', the near triangular shape of the front of the church and its slender tower are familiar to passers-by. Father Gerard King showed us around the spacious and light interior, notable for the parabolic arches that span the nave. The Lady Chapel, soon to be refurbished, has good details and rich colour. In a side chapel is a fine marble relief, and near the entrance is a Perspex statue of St Joan. And that small building in Kelross Road was replaced just last year with a handsome new church hall. The facilities are all well used for worship (by the Congolese Catholic community as well as the local parish), a youth programme, a programme for mothers and toddlers, and other caring services.

Christ Church C of E.

Christ Church was our next stop, a ragstone building of 1847-8 in Decorated Gothic style. We were greeted there not only by the vicar, Jonathan Brewster, but also by the architect of more recent remodelling, Maurice Taylor. The building had been extended in 1872 as the population grew; in 1989 that extension was divided off to form a well-used community centre. Pevsner's guide to buildings of North London notes the remarkable way the church fits its awkward site, as well as details of stone work

and trusses inside. It's a fine setting for concerts, and well used also for education and community purposes.

Harecourt URC

From there it was down the hill and into St. Paul's Road to Harecourt United Reformed Church. Readers may remember the octagonal 1855 Congregational Church on the site, which burned in December 1981. The rather picturesque ruins remained until 1991, when the new church was built. This recalls the octagonal shape of the old church, but the major spaces are the rectangular church hall on the ground floor and the worship space above, brilliantly illuminated by a round stained glass window by Gerard Laverty. Our host, Lay Pastor Adrian West, had arranged a display of photographs and other memorabilia of the old church, which drew the avid attention of members of our group.

S. Paul's Steiner Project

Then it was a short walk to the former St Paul's Church of 1826-8, one of three churches in Islington designed by Charles Barry. Its Perpendicular Gothic tower marks the top of Essex Road. Sadly, after the church was declared redundant it remained empty for too many years and suffered much from vandalism. Over the last ten years the St. Paul's Steiner Project as resurrected the Grade 2* listed building, gradually converting it into a Steiner school. Christopher Libby, architect for the project, was our host and showed us through the very welcoming classrooms, as well as taking us up into the tower just in time for the newly installed bell to strike nine. All thanks to the Steiner Project for their work on the repair and reuse of this building!

Bob O'Dell

Books from our President and Vice-President

Suicide of the West, by Richard Koch & Chris Smith, £14.99 and available on Amazon, ISBN 0-8264 9023-9.
A History of Islington, by Mary Cosh, published by Historical Publications at £18.95, ISBN 0-948667-974 and coming soon...

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

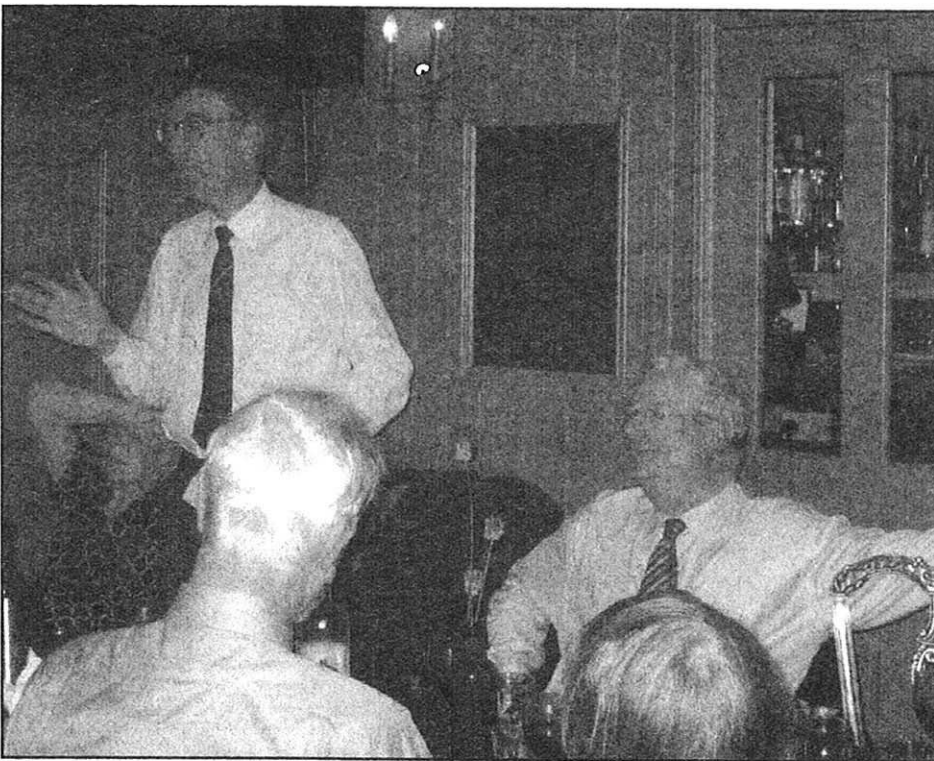
Annual Dinner

The Islington Society's Annual Dinner was held this year on Thursday 5th July. As is the tradition, your Committee's dedicated team had inspected and savoured the delights of several restaurants recommended for the Dinner. Quality and price are always key factors; in addition the selected restaurant has to be able to serve 50 people and to have access for the disabled.

The Albion in Thornhill Road, Barnsbury was selected this year, a gastronomic restaurant with wheelchair access. The seating was comfortable and members enjoyed an excellent 3-course meal with good quality wines. The photo shows the Chairman giving a vote of thanks to the President, the Rt. Hon. Lord Smith of Finsbury for an apt and amusing after-dinner speech.

Next year's Dinner will be held in the first week of April at a venue still to be decided. It is now over ten years since the Society's first Annual Dinner. Venues have been both in the south and the north of Islington, for example at the Old Dairy, Landseers, Shillibeers and the Sultan Ahmet. Suggestions are invited from members for suitable restaurants for 2008.

FH



Smithfield: present, past and future

The Public Inquiry into the 'called in' applications for the demolition and redevelopment of the Smithfield General Market Building will begin on Tuesday 6th November, at 10am in Bankside House, 24 Sumner Street Southwark London, SE1 9JA. Updates will be posted on the website:

<http://www.persona.uk.com/smithfield/index.htm>

From 9th October to 2nd November English Heritage will mount an exhibition on the future of Smithfield and how it could move with the times without losing its unique character. This exhibition investigates what makes the area special, drawing partly on new ideas from the architect, masterplanner and 'blue-sky thinker' Sir Terry Farrell. The exhibition Market Values will be held at the Gallery, 75 Cowcross Street, London EC1M 6EL, from 10-4 on Tuesdays and 2.30-5.30 on Friday afternoons.

From slave boy to African National hero

This is the title of the latest exhibition at the Islington Local History Centre, which chronicles the life work and legacy of Samuel Ajayi Crowther. Inspired by the bicentenary of the abolition of the Slave Trade, the exhibition opened at the start of Black History Month and runs to the end of the 2007. The Library is open late (to 8 p.m.) on Monday and Thursday evenings, to 5 p.m. on Tuesdays and Saturdays, and to 1 p.m. on Fridays.

Islington's Cultural Landmarks: The Estorick Collection

Frank Hopkins reviews the first of many of Islington's cultural landmarks.

Many Islington Society members will have admired the handsome Georgian houses of Canonbury Square. One of these - Northampton Lodge at no. 39A - has the enhanced attraction of housing a "hidden gem", the Estorick Collection of Modern Italian Art. It was the subject of a Society visit in February 2002, and has been described as the finest private collection of Italian Futurist painting outside Italy. The story behind the collection unfolds as follows:

The Estoricks

Eric Estorick was born in 1913 in New York. He and his wife Salome moved to England in the late 1940s and travelled frequently to Italy over the next ten years collecting works of art. Referring to a visit to Mario Sironi's studio in Milan, Eric Estorick wrote: I bought "hundreds and hundreds of drawings and as many paintings as I could get into my Packard Convertible Roadster". A series of exhibitions of their Italian collection followed, notably one at the Tate in 1956.

Futurism

Futurist Art had a special appeal for Eric Estorick, in particular for its focus on modern life, technology, speed and the machine. He attributed this affinity with Futurist Art to his New York upbringing which had made him aware of the urban rhythms that the Futurists sought to capture in their works. As he wrote later: "a boyhood life in New York was Futurism in action". By 1950 Futurism had become the main object of their collecting. The Collection holds masterpieces by Gino Severini and Luigi Russolo amongst other leading Futurists.

Estorick Foundation

Following the deaths of Eric and Salome, the decision was taken to establish the Estorick Foundation in England to hold their Italian works of art. These comprised both Futurist paintings and also figurative art and sculpture from 1890 to the 1950s. Eric Estorick's son, Michael, is Chairman of the Foundation's Board of Trustees.

Northampton Lodge

In 1994 the Foundation's Trustees bought Northampton Lodge, Canonbury Square (see photo) to house the permanent collection and to mount a changing programme of temporary exhibitions. Imaginative refurbishment created six stylish galleries on three floors. The top floor also holds an Art Library with 2,000 books donated by Michael Estorick and his sister Isobel. A shop and a licensed café are on the ground floor with outside seating in the garden.

Activities

A range of activities includes guided tours of the exhibitions, talks and educational programmes for teachers and for children. The galleries and the garden can be hired for functions or entertainment.

Opening times are 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Wednesday to Saturday and 12 noon to 5 p.m. Sunday.

The Foundation receives no public funding, so relies on subscriptions, sponsorship of exhibitions, admission charges and charitable trusts. Membership plays a vital role in helping to support the Collection. The annual subscription gives free entry to exhibitions and other benefits.

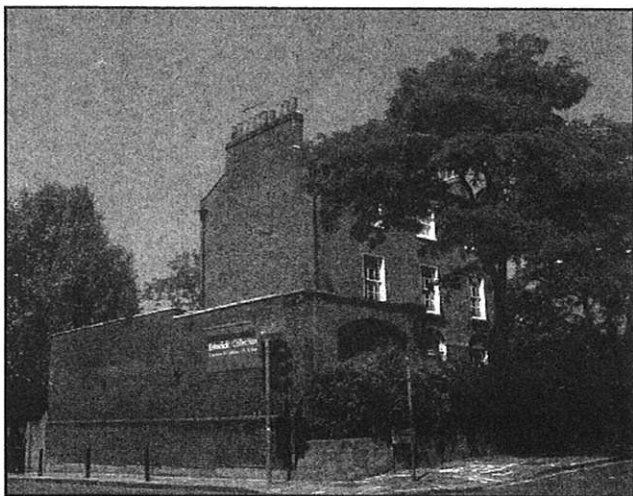
www.estorickcollection.com is the Collection's web site.

Current Exhibition

The exhibition "Piety and Pragmatism: Spiritualism in Futurist Art" runs from Wednesday 26 September to Sunday 23 December and traces Futurism's stance on spirituality or "arte sacra futurista". It includes 45 works by such artists as Giacomo Balla, Gerardo Dottori and Fillia.

How fortunate we are in Islington to have such an outstanding cultural landmark, aptly described by its Director Roberta Cremoncini as a "fitting tribute to a passionate and generous collector, who provided the British public with access to a magnificent collection of modern Italian art."

FH



Thomas Britton, c1650-1714

In this issue, we come to number 6 in our series on the Blue Plaques of Islington, compiled by our vice-chairman Alan Turner. This plaque is in fact green.

The Enlightenment of the eighteenth century, when intellectual interest in philosophy, culture and the arts and sciences flourished, really began with the Age of Reason in the seventeenth century. Thomas Britton was an outstanding example of an ordinary man, not a scholar nor an artist, who was inspired by the new ideas circulating in the late sixteen hundreds. His origins were fairly humble, having been born in a village in Northamptonshire. He moved to London as a young man and apprenticed himself to a small coal-man (a charcoal vendor) in order to earn a living. His main interests, however, were in other spheres usually the preserve of people of a higher social class. He was a virtuoso singer with a splendid bass voice; he collected a library and met with other book dealers and collectors to discuss literature; he studied chemistry and is believed to have constructed a mobile laboratory for Theophilus Garencieres a neighbour and a notable physician of the day. Even more extraordinary for someone of his background he created a small concert room at his house in Jerusalem Passage, Clerkenwell where he organised concerts which were apparently extremely popular. A quotation ascribed by Wikipedia to Ralph Thoresby, the distinguished diarist and Fellow of the Royal Society is as follows: "In our way home called at Mr Britton's, the noted small-coal man, where we heard a noble concert of music, vocal and instrumental, the best in town, which for many years past he has had weekly for his own

entertainment, and of the gentry, &c., gratis, to which most foreigners of distinction, for the fancy of it, occasionally resort." At first these concerts were free, but eventually Britton began to charge a subscription of ten shillings per year, a sum easily afforded by the foreigners of distinction.

It seems that he attracted some of the best musicians in London including Johann Christoph Pepusch (1667-1752) who played the harpsichord (said to be one of the finest in Europe) that Britton installed in his concert room. Pepusch is on record as having composed a trio sonata entitled "Smallcoal", but by far the most distinguished player was Georg Friedrich Handel who "played the organ which had only five stops". It is also on record that Britton the entrepreneur and manager "frequently played the viol da gamba in his own concert". He certainly fitted the contemporary description of a man of many parts. It is an interesting comment on London society in the seventeenth century that a small trader could, through the medium of music, be accepted by people who would doubtless have thought themselves to be his social superiors. AT

The plaque is at the north-east corner of Jerusalem Passage and gives the date of birth as 1644. Other references give 1654 and c1650 and the latter is probably as near as we can get.



Transport news round up

The announcement we have been promised so many times was finally made at the start of this month: CrossRail is to go ahead following agreement on its funding.

The building of CrossRail will transform access to the very south of the borough. Combined with an upgraded Thameslink (TL2000) Farringdon station will become the hub of the transport network and arguably the centre of the capital. It will be the single point from which there will be direct access by rail to Luton, Stansted, Heathrow and Gatwick airports. Add to this King's Cross St. Pancras, Euston Square, Paddington, Liverpool Street and London Bridge and you have a conference centre or meeting point to rival anywhere in the world.

The East-West CrossRail route was safeguarded, along with that of the Chelsea Hackney line (now called CrossRail 2) as long ago as 1989. At that time there were three major schemes on the drawing board. Crossrail2 was the most needed, CrossRail the most difficult to do with the cost likely to rise disproportionately because of the value of the land through which it passed, but the government went ahead with the Jubilee line extension because there was allegedly private sector funding for that project. The private sector involvement in CrossRail1 looks rather more robust than that of Olympia & York, whose money never materialised.

The intervening eighteen years have seen more than just a completely new logo and a change of emphasis from internal London transport to the National network. The numerous reviews dreamed up by the Treasury in a vain attempt to find something cheaper that would achieve a quarter as much have enabled a better scheme to be developed. Detailed plans have been refined to the benefit of local communities - including those in Tower Hamlets, despite the rather curmudgeonly response of George Galloway.

The opening date is now 2017. The Hackney-Chelsea line was at one time planned for completion by 2013 and would have provided a suitable replacement for the routemaster on Essex Road. There is talk of the government stealing the Tory's most popular tax plan, (catching non-domiciled Britons who are unlikely to vote, to reduce taxes for others) and Ken Livingstone would do well to emulate them. Scarcely had Islington resident Boris Johnson declared war on the Bendy bus than another one bit the dust. Mercifully it caught fire before entering service and once again no-one was injured. Although a fatality occurred a week later, it is not so much the safety problems that makes these buses so unpopular (Emily Thornberry's campaign to design lorries so that drivers can see cyclists is more pertinent in

this regard). The perception of fare evasion, the scope for theft of personal goods, and the repositioning of bus stops to the inconvenience of intending passengers are the principal causes of their unpopularity.

Most bus routes continue to show modest improvements. The 393, first announced exclusively to the Islington Society five years ago, has been extended to Chalk Farm, although regrettably and inexplicably Morrisons turns out to be Morrisons petrol station rather than Morrisons supermarket. The frequency has improved as well, and more people are using it as a result.

Another route to be extended is the 205 which mirrors George Shillibeer's first bus route along the A501 and now is extended to Mile End. Again however, it is slightly disappointing that the last stop is one stop before Mile End, reducing its attraction as a means of interchange with the tube or other buses.

Better news comes on the fares front. Not only has the last increase in bus fares been halved for Oystercard users, the end is in sight for the irksome business of having to abandon pay-as-you-go Oyster whenever you need to use the big train. Our own local ex-BR line comes under the auspices of Transport for London next month. Oyster will then be available, and another anomaly will end when Hampsted Heath is restored to the zone which surrounds it, zone 2.

TfL has great plans for the North London Lines. Gates ticket machines and Oyster readers are already appearing in readiness, and those annoying gaps in the Saturday service on the Gospel Oak-Barking line will disappear from December. In the longer term frequencies will be much improved, trains will be longer though probably still overcrowded. Anyone needing a seat may be disappointed unless they bring their own, and possibly even then. Trains are so crowded that it is difficult to see a wheelchair user finding space even if the stations had level access. It is our belief that TfL have under-estimated just how attractive the new service will be. So anxious are they to make the trains on the East London Line extension look like tube trains that they have failed to take advantage of the customer research that led to the excellent design of trains on the Hayes line - a rare parallel to the North London lines in that it operates wholly within Greater London. It was the altered contractual arrangement that exercised the rail unions, not the change in appearance!

A minor change which will benefit some but annoy others is that North London line trains to Stratford will soon be terminating at the High Level station instead of the platforms beside the Jubilee line. A more serious change for Islingtonians is that, once the Channel Tunnel Rail Link comes to St. Pancras, Thameslink services will cease to serve the station convenient to us in Pentonville Road. The new station under St. Pancras is scheduled to open on December 9th.

From the Society

Future events

To mark the retirement of Islington's Conservation Officer Alec Forshaw (see page one), the Society is holding a party in his honour at Finsbury Town Hall, Rosebery Avenue, now the home of the Urdang Dance Company. The venue will be the former Council Chamber, now brought into contemporary use as Studio 1, and a splendid example of the many achievements of Alec on our behalf.

The Party will take place on Wednesday December 12th, from 6 p.m. until 8. All Society members are invited but you are asked to e-mail the Chairman (address opposite) if you wish to attend. Please bring this copy of the newsletter (photocopies will not be accepted) with you - we will not be issuing tickets.

Our monthly **Meet the Officers** events continue at the Marquess Tavern on the first Tuesday of every month, from 9.0 p.m.

Conservation Award 2007

The winner of the 2007 award is the Children's Centre at Moorfields Hospital; highly commended certificates were awarded to Finsbury Park Station Canopy, Whitecross Street Paving Improvements and Spa Fields Improvements. A commended certificate was awarded to the Old Street Promenade of Light.

What else do we do

- we support conservation planning work to preserve the borough's historic fabric and individual buildings of distinction
- we campaign for a high standard of design in new buildings
- we encourage best practice through awards for good architecture in new or refurbished buildings
- we organise a varied programme of events including talks, walks and site visits
- we campaign for better public transport and for priority for people travelling on foot or by bike

- we produce publications that celebrate Islington's architectural history and its social and cultural diversity
- we publish neighbourhood walking trails to foster exploration awareness and pride of place
- we build links between residents officials and councillors
- we publish a regular newsletter
- we send representatives to advise Council groups dealing with development, the environment and transport
- we are represented on the London Forum of Civic & Amenity Societies, which takes up cross-borough issues of concern and is a member of the Civic Trust

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