

# ISLINGTON *news*

*The Journal of the Islington Society incorporating FOIL folio*

## Chief Executive to stand down

A letter jointly signed by the Council Leader and Chief Executive early in January announced the latter's forthcoming departure for pastures new in the Summer. The letter was sent to allow stakeholders to learn the news directly rather than via the Press, in the (forlorn) hope of diminishing gossip and speculation. The announcement severs the last main link between the old Liberal regime and the new, and the long lead time to the appointment of her successor affords the opportunity to reappraise her or his role.

### Changing role of most senior paid officer

The role has already undergone change in the last thirty years. Eric Dear when he retired in 1996 was by far the longest serving London Chief Executive, having had a full career with the Borough and one of its predecessors. Yet historically his term of office was not exceptionally long. Since that time, chief executives have increasingly had a more political background, and of course since 1999 councillors have been remunerated so that the distinction between them and chief officers has inevitably become blurred, the more so as councillors are now divided into executive members and backbenchers.

### Turnover of senior officers

Press speculation has centred on the high turnover of other senior officers. Although it was noted at Alec Forshaw's retirement party that we have had only two chief conservation officers in forty years, Helen Bailey is the third senior officer resignation in as many months. Of the three, only Andy Jennings joined the council as long ago as the last Labour administration. However, planners seem to endure more than most: it has also been reported the rumours of the Chief Planners imminent departure, which have been circulating for nearly a year, have been greatly exaggerated. Beyond Islington, only four Chief Executives in London (out of 33) survived an eight year period to 2006.

### Standards board

The longest running and largely unsatisfactory standards board hearing overshadowed the relationship between members and the chief executive. The standards board largely exonerated councillors involved in the appointment of the chief executive without explaining

why the paid head-hunters had been over-ruled. However, by the time the Board reached its decision the council elections had taken place and the findings were more a matter of historical record than a service to local council tax payers.

### New era

A long hand-over period allows time to usher in a new era of councillor/officer relations. This is the first time that chief executive will have been appointed against a background of anticipated change in political power (since the chances of a 24-23-1 split next time are remote). The new chief executive will not be coming to a council with one party expected to dominate for the duration of her or his office. Equally all councillors can have a reasonable expectation of working with the next chief executive at some time in the next six years.

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## Architecture & Conservation Awards 2007

Alec Forshaw explained the thinking behind the decision of our panel when the bronze plaque was presented to Moorfields Children's unit in November. This is what he told us.

So, another year, another award, and another welcome chance to consider some of the good things that have been happening in Islington, completed over the last 12 months.

On a long summer evening in July we looked at seven schemes across the Borough, and unusually but perhaps encouragingly compared to previous years, four of these were public realm schemes.

At Finsbury Park we admired the new forecourt and canopy for the station where Tony Meadows' design has dramatically improved this busy public transport interchange, providing shelter and a visual focus where little existed before.

In the south of the Borough we were very pleased by several partnership schemes where the Council and EC1 New Deal for Communities have worked together with the local community, often with other funding agencies, to promote and implement significant public realm improvements.

We were impressed by the transformation of Spa Fields open space, previously a dreary and at times dangerous place. Now cleverly linked to Exmouth Market and radically re-landscaped, it now offers enjoyment and recreation for all sections of the local community, and a much enhanced setting for the Finsbury Health Centre and the Holy Redeemer Church.

We then looked at 2 repaving schemes. First the so-called Promenade of Light near Old Street Roundabout where the retail outlets now enjoy a much more generous and flexible pedestrian frontage under the canopy of mature plane trees.

And secondly, close by, the splendid work to Whitecross Street. Here in what is the oldest street market in Islington, if not London, the pavement and carriageway have been levelled and the market pitches set out in high quality materials, all part of a Heritage Economic Regeneration Scheme, funded by English Heritage, EC1 New Deal, TfL and the City Corporation which is already seeing the revitalisation of both the street market and the properties fronting it.

All these projects show that people really do respond to their local environment. Congratulations to all involved with developing and funding these public realm schemes, and may there be many more like them in coming years.

As for buildings we visited 3 schemes, all strikingly different in scale and purpose, and inevitably therefore quite difficult to compare.

We looked at the new Emirates Stadium, now just into its second season, a big new landmark for Islington which has been years in the planning, and, how

can I best put it, not without controversy.

Well, whatever one might think of the enabling development, or Arsenal Football Club, the Stadium itself, like some giant flying saucer, is mightily impressive, and one hopes that its setting won't be spoilt by high residential blocks close to it, yet to be built.

In complete contrast of scale we looked at Justin Bere's new eco-house in Prah Road, an ingeniously compact solution to an awkward wedge-shaped site at the end of a Victorian terrace, and apparently equally ingenious inside.

But finally we came to the scheme which proved to be our overwhelming choice for this year's award.

Moorfields Eye Hospital is of course one of Islington's finest institutions, with an international reputation for its expertise, research and clinical care. It occupies quite a cramped site in a conservation area on the south side of City Road in an amalgam of buildings of different styles and periods, some good pieces of architecture and some definitely not!

One of their old buildings, in Peerless Street, was a late 19th Century tenement, lately occupied as nurses accommodation, and rather like a typical Victorian Peabody building in appearance.

As part of an overall strategy for the hospital the case was made to demolish this block and replace it with a new Children's Eye Centre.

What we have now, thanks to the imagination and diligence of the architects Penoyre Prasad, and their clients, is a stunning new addition to Moorfields' portfolio of buildings (pictured opposite).

While this is a big new building it responds intelligently and sympathetically to its generally small customers, that is children. The use of colour, the positioning of windows and portholes at eye level for small people, and the friendly unforbidding entrance and circulation spaces are just a few examples of the care that has been taken to make people feel environmentally comfortable when of course they may be suffering from all sort of other discomforts and stress.

We on the judging panel were delighted by the attention to detail and the quality of the workmanship. As a piece of street architecture the glass fins and louvres give the whole street elevation an organic feel, reflecting light and constantly changing with the movement of the sun and clouds. The night-time illumination is fabulous.

We felt that this is truly outstanding new building, a tremendous addition to Islington, and very worthy winner in 2007. Well done indeed to all concerned with this fantastic project.

## Transport news round up

Since our last newsletter two stations have opened within walking distance of Islington, and the first wave of improvements made to the North London Line - and not just the cosmetic change to orange signage in place of the "sea-sick suffragette". A new bus route commenced on November 5th.

All Eurostar trains from Paris and Brussels were diverted from London Waterloo to St. Pancras International on November 14th. Less than a month later, a new station on the First Capital Connect Thameslink line opened beneath it, unfortunately closing the station on Pentonville Road which was more convenient for Islington residents. The Pentonville Road entrance remains open from Monday to Friday until 8 p.m. for access to the Victoria and Piccadilly lines and has been rebranded as an Underground station.

There have also been changes to bus routes in the area, with routes 45 and 63 picking up from outside St. Pancras station on Midland Road and route 59 extended from its former terminus at Euston to King's Cross. The stopping arrangements for this route have experienced some teething troubles, with some buses terminating at St. Pancras and some missing the stop opposite the British Library on the southbound journey. And despite the clutter of signs in differing colours and styles, there is no very clear indication of the entrance to the new Thameslink station. This is not helped by the operator (First) having an apparent aversion to the name Thameslink.

Elsewhere, new timetables are now in place on the London Overground. The new management had a bad start due to circumstances beyond their control: a major fire on the Olympics site close to Hackney Wick caused serious delays on the first weekday of operation. Less excuse though for the mix up over Christmas holiday services on the Barking-Gospel Oak line which resulted in fewer services and at different times than the TfL publicity had led us to expect.

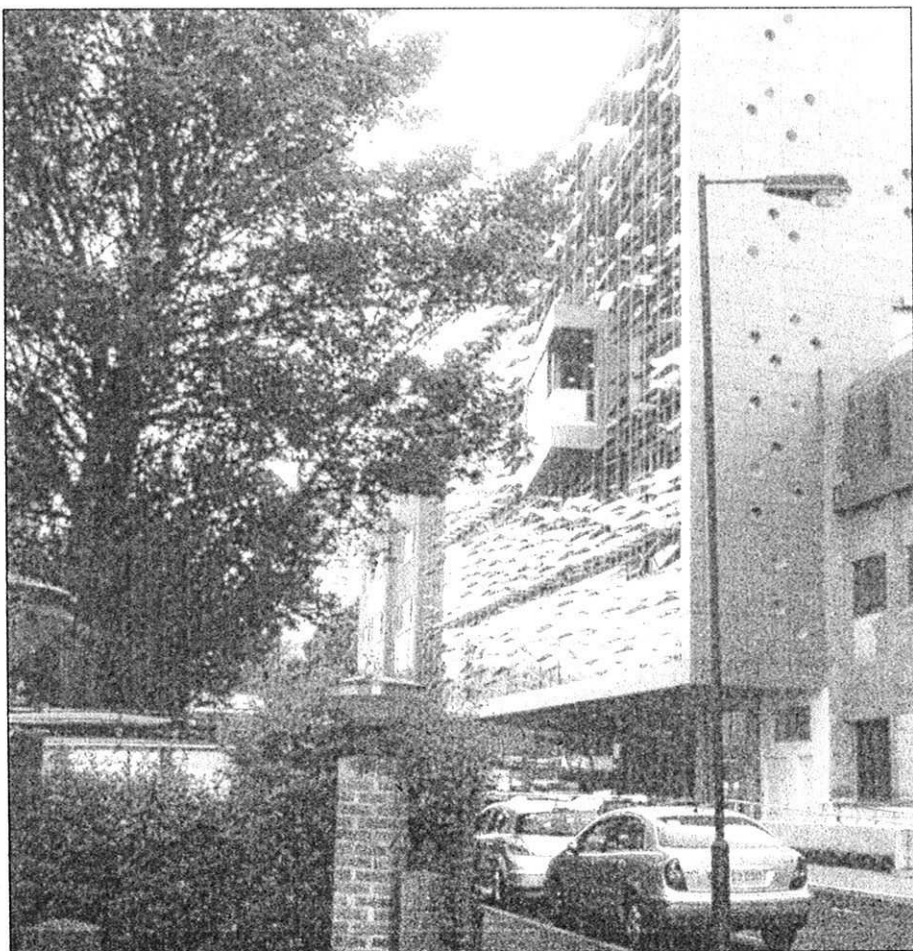
LBI has identified an £8m. scheme to bring Drayton Park station into use on match days.

Consultation has now ended on initial ideas for Highbury Corner. The Society, and Harley Sherlock in particular, have long championed an end to the traffic engineer's dream and pedestrians nightmare known as a gyratory. It seems that fifty years after the folly was created, some of Harley's suggestions might at last see the light of day. The anniversary falls in October this year and we hope to see a further consultation on refined proposals by that date.

Less satisfactory is the renewed threat to pedestrians on Essex Road. Unlike Upper Street, which is the responsibility of Transport for London, Essex Road is a Borough road and the majority group on the council as a whole, and on the West Area and South Area Committees, are all in favour of retaining the existing width of the pavement at its narrowest part and not allowing parked vehicles to encroach upon it. As long as elected members vote in line with their stated views, there should therefore be no problem.

The issue arose from proposals drawn up by W.S. Atkins and outlined in more detail in the Spring 2006 issue of *Islington News*.

Recent quinquennial reviews of bus services have resulted in few changes, but capacity on route 210 is being increased from February 16th by the introduction of double-decker buses. The 210 runs from Finsbury Park to Archway via Hanley Road, and goes on to Brent Cross.



## Reducing the need to travel- Stephen Joseph addresses Forum A.G.M.

The London Forum of Amenity & Civic Societies held its Annual General Meeting in October. Here is their report to members, written by Stephen Thornton and David Lewis. The Examination in Public of the Mayor's London Plan last summer saw London Forum join with what was then Transport 2000 to press the GLA to adopt planning policies that will reduce the need to travel, especially by car. This was also the theme of the talk on 9th October by Stephen Joseph, Director of what is now renamed the Campaign for Better Transport. Earlier in the day the Panel's report from the Examination in Public had appeared, backing our stand!

'The level and growth of traffic is a big problem, not just in terms of congestion and air quality,' Mr. Joseph pointed out, 'but also because of the sheer intrusiveness of traffic, which is underestimated by policy-makers. Over-reliance on the car also promotes social exclusion.' Climate change, the arrival of 'Peak Oil' and the fact that 95% of transport is oil-driven all reinforce the need to take action on a wide range of issues: promoting increased walking, cycling and use of public transport; demand management; re-allocation of road space and charging for parking and road use.

### Smarter choices

People should be encouraged to make smarter choices, for example through workplace travel plans. There is a Transport *for* London pilot study giving people information on travel choices. This approach applied in three pilot projects outside London had reduced traffic by up to 14% within two years. The link between land use and traffic is crucial, and has been largely ignored. A belated study into the effects of the Newbury by-pass found that traffic in the town had increased to pre-by-pass levels and casualties had not been reduced. This was because changes in land use promoted use of the car. Europe had a more integrated approach to land use and traffic management. New developments started with cycle ways and public transport, and limited parking space.

### Pram-pushing distance

In London, we should avoid locating most of the jobs and facilities in the centre. Mr. Joseph said he was attracted to the idea that all amenities should be within 'pram-pushing distance'. For example, Hampstead had relatively low car ownership because of easy access to facilities. In Leighton Buzzard, there

is a sustainable travel project in which 'shared streets' will promote walking and cycling and cars will be 'under sufferance'. Homes will be provided with screens showing the time of the next bus.

### Consistent with all policies

In conclusion, Mr. Joseph noted that the Panel's report said other London Plan policies should now be reviewed to ensure they are consistent with reducing the need to travel. He intended to put proposals forward to the Mayor's office under this heading. In response to a questioner who advocated carbon rationing, Mr. Joseph said more immediate interventions can entrench lower-carbon transport behaviour, for example greater use of car-sharing. There should be detailed planning so that traffic is not always given priority. Government departments should carry out a carbon audit of each of their policies, for example when planning health facilities. Specialist centres require increased travel by patients, which is a major cause of them missing appointments. However, if personal carbon trading is introduced, it will leave scope for individual choice.

Forum chair Peter Eversden thanked Mr Joseph for a stimulating talk and looked forward to future co-operation between London Forum and Campaign for Better Transport.

## Examination in Public: Panel findings

The fifth bullet point of Objective 5 in the 2004 Plan reads: "Minimise the need to travel and the growth of journey lengths". After considerable debate, led by the Campaign for Better Transport with support from the London Forum and others, the Inspectors recommended to the Mayor revised words devised by the Government Office for London, as follows.

"Reduce the need to travel, especially by car, and the growth of journey lengths".

The Mayor indicated that he would accept that change. The latest data from Transport *for* London indicates that Londoners of working age spend on average three hours a day in commuting from home to work.

## Fewer protected views of St. Paul's

Regional planning guidance note RPG3A is replaced by the SPG which describes four types of 26 designated views. Many readers will be aware of the strong objections that London Forum and its members made to the proposals, which reduce the width of protected viewing corridors towards St Paul's Cathedral, urging that there should be no reduction in these corridors. Despite lobbying of the Government Office for London, The Mayor ignored responses from societies, the Forum, the City of London and the Assembly. His changes were approved in July 2007. Tower blocks can be built now in Victoria and elsewhere within the previously protected corridor in a way that will 'blinker' the view of St Paul's Cathedral from Richmond, Hampstead and other historic viewing points.

The London Forum noted that the GLA London Plan team has tried to reassure it that some planning policies in section 4B of the London Plan could deal with such 'blinking' of the views. It felt the interpretation could be subjective and that adequate protection required retaining the original distance apart of the land points around the cathedral for viewing corridors. They cited recent concerns expressed by UNESCO about the harm that is being allowed to our World Heritage Sites (WHS), and the planning policy 'stress' if the London Plan policies for protection of heritage and views conflict with those that are used to ensure maximal use of land for housing.

If the concerns of UNESCO are to be reinforced by more adverse publicity about the harm that the narrowing of viewing corridors would bring, London would lose its reputation as a place to visit for its heritage and for the respect that the Government, the LCC, the GLC and the GLA have shown for that in the past.

The Mayor's intentions to achieve intensification of use of land around main line railway stations could diminish the very importance of St Paul's Cathedral that the wider LAA of RPG3A was designed to protect. London deserves the views protection that has been applied. To reduce it further now in the revised views management SPG is unacceptable. The Government's decision to over-rule the Inspector's recommendations after the Vauxhall Tower inquiry and grant permission for a building that would harm the setting of the WHS of the Palace of Westminster is not encouraging. The full support given by the Mayor to a large and ugly structure in the buffer zone of the WHS of the Royal Botanical Gardens at Kew (for which the developer's appeal against local authority refusal was dismissed) confirms the risk that exists now.

### London Assembly resolution

The Assembly strongly objects to the proposed narrowing of historic viewing corridors of St Paul's Cathedral and the Palace of Westminster from ten vantage points across London, as directed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government on 16th May

2007, and set out in the Mayor's draft London View Management Framework Supplementary Planning Guidance, due for publication in July 2007.

Such iconic views are an important part of London's unique heritage and the quality of life of Londoners, connecting historic landmarks to areas such as Richmond and Camden and maintaining a sustainable built environment. The revised directions will reduce the level of protection for these views against inappropriate development. The Assembly notes the strong representations against these proposals from local authorities, including Westminster, the City of London, Camden, Richmond and Islington, heritage societies and private individuals, and regrets that such informed submissions have not been taken into account. The Assembly therefore urges the Mayor and Secretary of State to urgently review these proposals, and to retain the existing viewing corridors as prescribed under Regional Planning Guidance: Supplementary Planning Guidance for London on the Protection of Strategic Views (RPG3A) 1991.

The Assembly further resolves to support the representations of those who campaign for a similar outcome.

The Mayor's guidance, a 388 page document, can be downloaded from [www.london.gov.uk/mayor/strategies/sds/spg-views.jsp](http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor/strategies/sds/spg-views.jsp)

**Will residents of the Marquess estate come to cherish their view of the Gherkin?**



## Alec Forshaw bids au revoir

We report below Alec Forshaw's speech to the Islington Society on 12th December 2007

I can't promise a "state of the nation" speech but I will say just a few words.

I was impressed the other day at the Design Award ceremony when Andrew described the Islington Society not so much as an "amenity society", which probably doesn't mean very much to people these days, but as Islington's main fan club. I too would very definitely count myself as a major Islington "fan", and indeed it is that which has kept me here for so long.

For those of you who don't know, and I suspect that's most of you, I arrived to work in Islington's Planning Department on Monday 2nd June 1975, having previously had brief spells working first in Kent and then with the London Borough of Harrow, where incidentally I helped designate their first conservation areas.

Many of you here tonight probably only know me as Islington's conservation officer, so I thought I'd tell you a little about what I did before then.

I worked first in Islington as an Urban Design officer, in what was then called the Local Plans team. One of the first projects I worked on was the Scott Estate, very close to where we are now - a thousand street properties which the Council had acquired from Lord Scott for about £1 million - which works out at about £1k per house! My job was to prepare the planning brief, working closely with Alf Head and others in the then powerful Borough Architects' Department.

At that time the Council, with a few exceptions such as Claremont Square, Tibberton Square and Milner Square, was still pursuing comprehensive redevelopment schemes for social housing. So perhaps it was a surprise that the brief recommended that the vast majority of these unlisted early Victorian terraces and villas should be kept and rehabilitated, with just a few pockets of new development and an expanded park which we now call Rosemary Gardens. We didn't think at that time that these streets were worth designating as a conservation area - but that of course came later - East Canonbury Conservation Area was not designated until 1989.

I also worked from 1976 to 1978 on the Smithfield Plan, a remarkable joint exercise for its time with the Corporation of London, which made the case to keep and improve the Meat Market, then under the threat of closure or relocation, and which the Corporation subsequently did refurbish at the then massive cost of £43 million. The Plan also developed new mixed use planning policies for the surrounding area. This was probably inspired by the writings and teachings of Jane Jacobs to which I owe a lot. I remember the disbelieving disdain, even amusement of some property developers at the time when we suggested that Smithfield and Clerkenwell could actually become an attractive place

to live, and that developments might include a mixture of different uses! Out of that eventually emerged our Special Area policies, and quite probably the birth of what everybody now accepts as a vibrant City Fringe. Out of it too emerged my first book, *Smithfield Past and Present*, which made a more personal case for inner city regeneration.

I worked on numerous other planning briefs, fighting the GLC who still had large tracts of Clerkenwell "zoned" for demolition for school expansion or new public open space. We fought them and won at the Lands Tribunal, without which for example the whole north side of Clerkenwell Green and much of Clerkenwell Close might have disappeared!

I worked with housing officers on the new Housing Action Areas, a massive programme whereby the Council acquired and rehabilitated, mainly from negligent private landlords, vast numbers of street properties. We carried out some of the first public realm street improvements.

We repaved Exmouth Market, which in the early 1980s through population decrease and closure of local industry, had declined to a dismal state. We encouraged the landlords to think about converting the vacant and derelict upper floors above shops to flats. We thought, rather hopefully at the time, that Exmouth Market might even attract restaurants as well as shops.

These then are just a few examples of what I was up to when I was more of a backroom boy and before I became conservation officer in the late 1980s.

As conservation officer I think I have been very lucky. When I first got the job, there was a recession in full swing, which gave me breathing space to work on designating some new conservation areas and introducing a strong policy framework for our conservation areas. The last 15 years, having climbed out of the property depression of the late 80s and early 90s, have been a very good period for Islington. It has been a good time to have been a conservation officer.

By encouraging good modern design we have seen many excellent new buildings in the Borough - Sadlers Wells, a Glass House in Canonbury, new Sixth Form Colleges, the N1 Centre and most recently the Richard Desmond Children's Eye Centre at Moorfields, to name just a few.

But we've also seen the renovation of dozens of historic buildings for new uses - St. Luke's Old Street, New River Head, the Coronet Cinema, the Crouch Hill Dairy, the Union Chapel and the Regents Quarter in Kings Cross - all buildings which at one time might have been swept away. Their retention and imaginative re-use have been a major factor in regenerating the Borough.

We've even seen the transformation of our Highways department! Instead of digging up and throwing away yorkstone, as we used to, we now keep it, and even put it back down, and even as we speak right outside the Municipal Offices in Upper Street!

Islington has, I think, successfully out-competed, in what is a very competitive world, other parts of London. We have through preserving and enhancing the qualities of Islington persuaded people to invest in the Borough.

I, in a very modest way, was one of those investors. Two year after I arrived in Islington I bought a house, my first property acquisition, in Windsor Road near the Nags Head - it was still affordable then - and put down some roots.

It seemed clear to me then, despite the clientele of some of Holloway's pubs on Friday and Saturday nights, that of all places, Islington was the best part of London both to live and work. Most of you in this room hopefully think it still is.

All I think I've done since then, in a very small way, is help Islington make the best of what it already had. What drew me to Islington in 1975 is what essentially we still have, and from a purely selfish point of view I've enjoyed that.

So why leave now? Well, everybody has to go sometime. And there are other things I want to do, particularly playing music, writing and some green travelling, which I ought to do while I still have a reasonably supple mind and body - things that I can't really do while I'm on the office treadmill.

I don't particularly believe in a legacy, or even a sense of closure. Treadmills tend to keep going round when just one person gets off!

There are still things undone. It would be nice if the Conservation Advisory Committee were re-established. Perhaps it will be, as part of the new "listening agenda". There is a huge challenge ahead to put historic buildings at the forefront of green issues. There is no reason why historic buildings cannot become, and be shown to be, the "greenest" of all buildings.

There will no doubt be challenges ahead as the Council faces proposals for "super-densities" in a borough which is already super-dense.

Above all, we do, somehow, need to move away from an ethos or assumption of continual growth, with its inherent booms and busts, to one of non-growth and stability, where we travel less extravagantly and do everything on a more local basis. Islington can show other places how that can be done.

Islington certainly won't fall apart without me. There is a good team of young committed conservation and design officers in the Planning Department, and of course there are you, and all the other residents and business of Islington who I'm sure will want to make sure

that we do not kill the goose, or geese, that lay the golden eggs.

Finally I would like to thank all of you and all the other Amenity Societies in Islington who have provided so much support and friendship to me over the years. You have all helped me do my job far better than I could have possibly done otherwise, and above all you have made it fun and enjoyable.

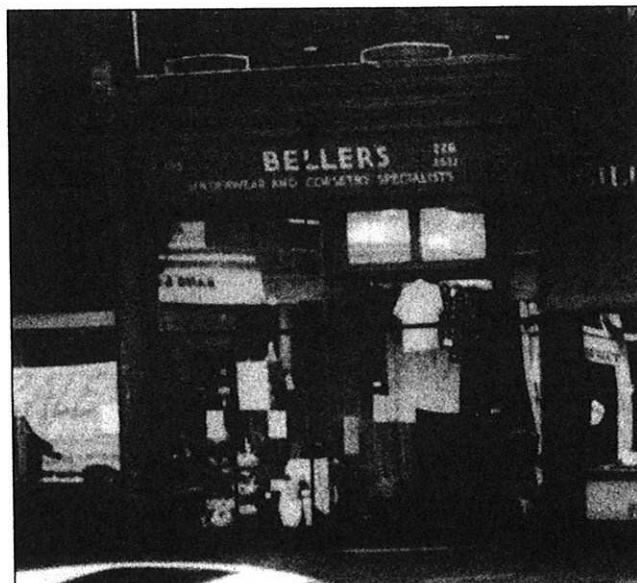
I will most definitely stay in touch. I will still be living just down the road - OK it's just over the border in Camden - but I will continue to have many friends and contacts in Islington, so I expect you will still see me around and about. Thank you all for this evening and for such a memorable send-off. Perhaps to finish I could propose a toast, to which I would ask you now to raise your glasses, to the Islington Society, the fan club indeed of Islington.

Number two in our series on bygone shops of Islington

## **Bellers Drapers, 193, Upper Street.**

Bellers was established in the 1930's by Miss Kitty Bellers and was taken over by Alan Shaw in the late 1950's. He ran the shop for over forty years until it closed down on 29th August 2003. He described his business as mainly providing corsets, bloomers and suspenders for the older woman although he did also sell male underwear and accessories. Fashion designers and students would visit the shop to study the style of the traditional garments. Both the Islington Gazette of 4th July 2003 and the High & I of 18th July 2003 carried articles about the closure and how sad Alan Shaw found it that Upper Street, once full of small useful independent shops, was now mainly restaurants and up-market chain stores.

Several weeks after putting up the closing down notice he had second thoughts but alas it was too late to renew the lease. The shop is now called 'Labour of Love' and the owners have uncovered an older name on the shop fascia of 'Berwick', which predates the name of Bellers. S.W.



## William Caslon 1692-1766

In this issue, we come to number 7 in our series on the Blue Plaques of Islington, compiled by our vice-chairman Alan Turner.

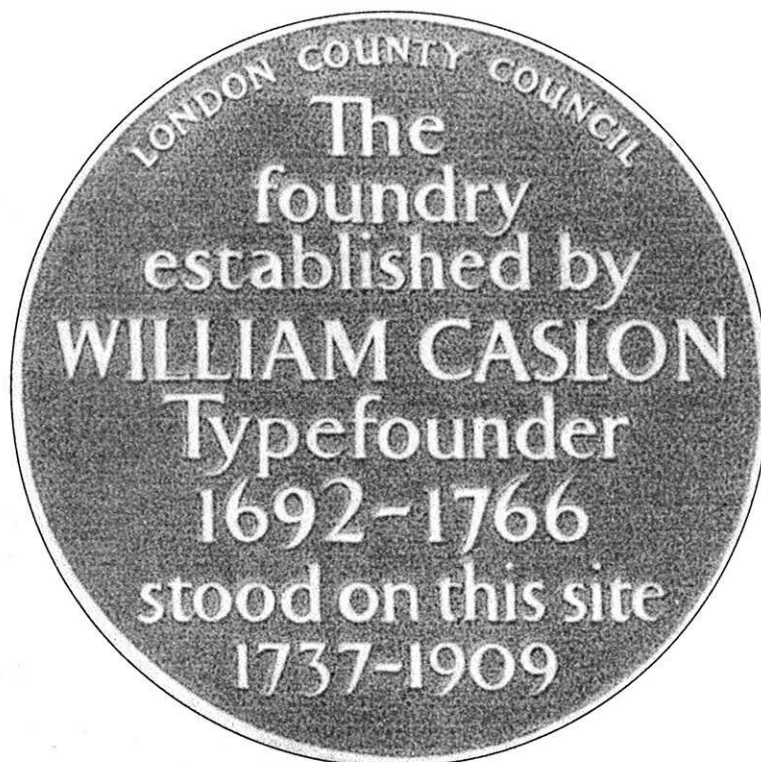
At 21 Chiswell Street there is a plaque that identifies the site of Caslon's type foundry which stood there from 1737 to 1909. Now at the entrance to a vast office block, the plaque is a variation on the usual Blue Plaque theme which identifies where a person lived - this one identifies where he worked. William Caslon was born in Cradley, Worcestershire and moved to London in 1716. He was essentially a craftsman working in metal and his first business was as an engraver of gun locks and barrels. He soon began to move into other spheres including the production of tools for bookbinders. His connection with the book trade led to his being asked to design and make typefaces and in this he was encouraged by William Bowyer, a distinguished printer of the day who among other things was the printer for the Houses of Parliament and the Royal Society. Caslon's typefaces were immediately popular and soon spread to Europe and the American Colonies - one of his fonts was used to print the Declaration of Independence. Caslon influenced a great many typefaces including those of John Baskerville, but in the 19th Century they fell out of favour. Modern books showing different typefaces usually include some Caslon fonts - an American compilation I was looking at has a dozen references to Caslon.

The business set up by Caslon became the leading type foundry in the country in the 18th and 19th

centuries and had a long history, lasting under different names but run by members of the family until modern times. The founder, William Caslon I, died in 1766 and is said to be buried in the churchyard at St Luke's, Old Street. I went to find his grave but the lettering on the few tombs left in the churchyard is illegible and I was unsuccessful. The family had the habit, still used in the USA, of numbering successive sons and there were four in all. The last one, William Caslon IV sold Caslon and Son to a Sheffield foundry in 1837, which operated until 1874, but family members kept the Caslon business going for many years on another site in Salisbury Square, near Fleet Street. The plaque says that a foundry was on the Islington site until 1909, but this does not mean that it was still used by the Caslons - it might have become derelict or used by other firms. The sources that I have found give a variety of conflicting dates and one of them claims that the Salisbury Square site was in use until 1937. Whether this is true or not, the Caslon firm was certainly a most important force in printing and lettering in London.

AT

The plaque at 21 Chiswell Street. This caption is printed in Baskerville Old Face.





## E.J.W. (Bill) Bayliss, 1917-2007

The death of Bill Bayliss a week before last year's Remembrance Day celebrations brought a flurry of tributes in the local press. Andrew Bosi attempts to provide a balanced account of a controversial career.

From a family well known for generations in Islington, Bill Bayliss was a consummate politician who chose to dominate the Islington stage rather than ply his trade in County Hall or the Palace of Westminster. And dominate he did, as Councillor or Alderman from 1953 to 1982, as a Labour Party member from 1935 to 1981 and Secretary of his Ward Branch for almost all that time, and as a local school-teacher and magistrate. In retirement he continued to organise Remembrance Day in Islington on behalf of the British Legion.

### Behind the scenes

Bill was never council leader or Party chairman, but wielded far more authority from behind the scenes. He had some successes for which we can be thankful. His opposition to residential tower blocks, when they were flavour of the month in the 1960s, meant that Council tenants were spared the problems of the 1980s as tower blocks were confined to the old Borough of Finsbury or to LCC developments in Islington. Although not as outspoken as Harry Brack, he was on the right side of the Packington debate. He was a respected teacher of mathematics, first at Pitfield Street and later at Highbury Grove, and pupils went on to vote for him as a result. However, the zeal with which he held council staff to account, annually checking that no-one had bunked off early at 4.30 on Christmas Eve, gave rise to resentment and ironically a housing department that became increasingly defiant of councillors' wishes. It was thought by some that the lowest non-white tenancy of council properties of any ward and his representation of it were more than coincidental.

### Old old Labour

Now that the term "Old Labour" has become a badge of honour, it is easy to forget that in the 1960s old Labour in London was right wing, and a one-party state. In 1968 elections coincided with the height of Wilson government unpopularity and Labour lost councils in London which had hitherto had no opposition. Bayliss survived, but when Labour returned in 1971 a new generation of councillors emerged to give a very different style of politics. Yet it was not all based on just principle,

and Bayliss would take some satisfaction from the fact that it was found necessary to gerrymander boundary changes in 1976 with a view to breaking up his power-base. Like all gerrymandering, it failed completely and Bayliss was again a dominant force from 1978. His Canonbury Ward, split into two, was now represented by himself in the East and by his wife Audrey in the West.

### 1981-82

Bill's final year was the most dramatic. Old Labour councillors defected to the newly formed SDP in two waves so that there was a period of newer Labour rule followed by the first SDP run Council in the country. However, this SDP rule was short-lived, the new party splitting again with the result that three proposals for the 1982 Rate were each defeated at a bad tempered council meeting. The Bayliss group stood as "[Local Ward] SDP" against the official party and Labour took 51 of the 52 seats. Although Bill never returned to the Council Chamber, his intervention in two by-elections and two full elections played a significant part in the outcome to Labour's benefit. Despite the party label, he never had much enthusiasm for the SDP concept and nor was he attracted to the Liberals.

### Making his point

Bill continued to take a stand whenever he felt the issue demanded it. He was prepared to endorse George Cunningham, but not the SDP/Liberal Alliance, so his diamond shaped poster was cut down to a triangle before it went on display. When his views on the new war memorial on the Green were traduced by Council officers hell bent on something modern, he continued to organise the Remembrance Day event but refused to take his place next to the thing he detested.

### Declining years

Bill's last years were endured without Audrey and he cut a sad figure on his daily walks, though he maintained his involvement with St. Mary's Church and with the British Legion to the end. He is survived by his son Robert and grand-daughter Holly.

## Massive support for public libraries but buildings not fit for purpose

The definitive annual library statistics, published by CIPFA (Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy) paint a picture of changing trends in public library usage. With nearly 300 million visits to England's public libraries last year alone, over 10 million new books added to the stock, increased spending, and more outlets, many of the myths surrounding the country's public libraries are buried by statistics published in January.

The MLA Partnership, Government's agency for museums, galleries, libraries and archives said the figures highlighted the massive popularity of public libraries and their success in adapting to change in many places. However it also emphasised that what the figures didn't show was the nature of the building stock and the fact that many library buildings were not built with the needs of modern users in mind.

## British Architectural Library: free public access at last

The British Architectural Library at the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) welcomed the New Year with the announcement that members of the public will be able to access the library completely free of charge from 2nd January 2008.

The largest and most comprehensive resource in Europe for research and information on all aspects of architecture, the British Architectural Library was established in 1834 alongside the RIBA. The library collections now number close to four million objects: books, periodicals, manuscripts, archives, drawings, photographs, models, paintings, medals and artefacts. Books, periodicals and photographs are located at the RIBA headquarters, 66 Portland Place, London. Drawings and archives are located at the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A), under the V&A+RIBA Architecture Partnership. As part of opening up the collection to the widest possible audience RIBApix was launched in 2006. It is now possible to view up to 16,000 photographs, drawings and etchings online.

Since 2005 the Library has been recognised as having outstanding national and international importance under the Designation Scheme by The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA). The British Architectural Library is part of the RIBA Trust - the UK's national architecture centre that focuses on education, public outreach and the role of architecture in culture.

See <http://www.architecture.com/NewsAndPress/News/RIBANews/Press/2008/BritishArchitecturalLibraryfreeopening.aspx>

## Channel 4 seeks quirky buildings facing residential conversion

Tiger Aspect productions, an independent television production company working on a restoration series for Channel 4, is looking to locate a number of properties of unique historical or architectural significance that are to be restored this year.

The project hopes to include buildings from follies, windmills, lighthouses, post offices to water towers, and signal boxes etc that have been recently acquired and are to be restored for use as a residence. Ideally the owners would already have secured planning permission for such a renovation. The producers are looking to start this project as soon as possible and hope to follow and film the renovation process from start to finish over approximately a six month period.

If you know of any buildings that fit the bill, please contact Rhodri Jones on 0207 434 6910 or email [rhodrijones@tigeraspect.co.uk](mailto:rhodrijones@tigeraspect.co.uk)

## Regeneration schemes top London Planning Awards

The London Planning Awards, on 16th January at City Hall, saw both Brent Cross Cricklewood and Kings Cross Central schemes win awards for their part in contributing to the regeneration of run-down quarters of the capital. Unlike last year's winners, which included the iconic Arsenal Emirates Stadium, this year's focus centred on schemes emphasising regeneration and affordable housing. The overall Mayor's Award for Excellence in Planning was presented to the Kings Cross Central development, submitted by Argent (King's Cross) Ltd. It was praised for creating a new gateway to the capital, providing nearly 2000 new homes, along with offices, shops and leisure and medical facilities. Ken Livingstone, Mayor of London, said 'The winner of my personal award is a project which will transform an area that has suffered for years from uncertainty, blight and decay. Rapid change is now afoot at King's Cross, and last year saw the first concrete manifestation of this with the opening of the stunning new St Pancras International terminus alongside a new and dramatically improved Thameslink station. The scale of the proposals for King's Cross is huge, with 50 new buildings, 20 new squares and 20 new streets, all designed to unify an area that has been disjointed for 150 years by the mass of railway lines, yards and warehouses. 'I very much look forward to the continued transformation of King's Cross, and to its becoming a vibrant and thriving destination for Londoners and visitors for generations to come.' No mention of 50% affordable housing though.

From the Society, continued from back page.



The first of the second generation plaques, awarded to the P & O site at King's Cross

### ***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

### ***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]

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

*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

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

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

## *From the Society*

### *Future events*

The Annual Dinner will take place on Wednesday, April 2nd, at 7.0 p.m. for 7.30. The venue is to be the Cruse 9 Restaurant, 62 Halliford Street, London, N.1. A booking form is enclosed with this newsletter. The Cruse 9 is a new restaurant at the Essex Road end of Halliford Street and the most convenient transport links are the Essex Road station or buses 38, 56, 73, 341 or 476.

A second enclosure relates to an event in support of the Mayor's charity. This takes place on Thursday April 24th and there is a special offer for Islington Society members.

The Bill Manley Memorial Pub Crawl will be held on Friday, June 20th, commencing at 6 p.m.

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

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## *Architecture & Conservation Award 2008*

The Society's Architecture and Conservation Award is presented annually to the best building or landscape project completed in Islington during the previous year. The Society campaigns for a high standard of design in new buildings and supports conservation planning to improve the environment in the borough. The winning scheme for 2007 was the new Richard Desmond Children's Eye Centre at Moorfields Hospital (see page two).

The award is a bronze plaque to affix to the building (see over) and the 2007 issue was presented to the chairman of the hospital, Sir Thomas Boyd-Carpenter, by Jack Morris, chairman of the Business Design Centre who is the sponsor of the award. The architects of the building are Penoyre Prasad who were presented with a certificate.

It is usually difficult to decide on the best project and a panel has been set up to consider carefully the merits of each short listed scheme. The members at present are two members of the Society's committee - Mary Cosh and myself; Jack Morris; David Gibson, who represents the Society on the Council's Conservation and Design Advisory Panel; Alec Forshaw who has recently retired as Conservation Officer and who for many years has been a very valuable link with Islington Council, and Ruth Gribble who was the sponsor of the previous Geoffrey Gribble Conservation award, administered by the Society. Nominations are now sought for the 2008 award.

During the process of judging, several other projects were commended for their design as shown below. The architects' or designers' names are in parenthesis:

- The new entrance canopy at Finsbury Park station. (Tony Meadows Architects)
- The Whitecross Street Improvement project (Muf Architecture Art)
- The Spa Fields Improvement Project. (Parklife Ltd)
- The Promenade of Light, Old Street. (Tonkin Liu)

The process for making an award in 2008 begins now. Any building whose construction or refurbishment was completed in 2007 is eligible for consideration, and members are invited to make nominations.

Alan Turner

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