

ISLINGTON *news*

The Journal of the Islington Society incorporating FOIL folio

Founder member honoured in New Year list

The Society is delighted to place on record the award in the new year's honours list of an M.B.E. to our founder member and Vice-President, Harley Sherlock. It has been awarded "for services to Architecture, Conservation, and to the Community in Islington, London"

Early years of architectural practice

Harley was a student at the Architectural Association from 1948 to 1952, when Le Corbusier's vision of tower blocks in parkland was seen as the way forward for social housing. Harley, with fellow student Malcolm Andrews, took as the theme for his final thesis four-storey housing built to the same density as the tower blocks (about 100 dwellings per acre) which, surprisingly to most people, is a similar density to London's nineteenth-century streets and squares.

On qualifying, Harley with Malcolm and others set up what would now be described as a live/work co-operative in Islington at 18/20 Canonbury Park North. The group had enough work to employ one person full-time, while the others obtained salaried jobs. Incomes were pooled and shared out equally. Gradually sufficient work came in to employ the whole group, and ultimately to take on assistants, to a peak of 40 people. Eventually, the group practice became known as Andrews Sherlock & Partners. To provide themselves with architectural work, the practice established a "home-made" client in the form of Kemlock Developments. Their wives and girlfriends were the directors, because architects were not allowed to be developers.

Beacon developments

During the 1960s and 70s, the practice put into effect their thesis on high-density low rise housing, epitomised by Blenheim Court east of Archway. The rehabilitation of Claremont Square, just south of Pentonville Road, and later Tibberton Square, close to Essex Road station won Government and Civic Trust commendations and they serve as a continuing reminder of how good conservation schemes provide good social housing and visual amenity to all. In each case, the lower two floors were treated as an ordinary house with a small private garden, while the upper floors became an "upside down" house, with the living room and 12-foot square roof garden on the top floor. Not only did this provide every dwelling with its own garden or roof-terrace, it also ensured that the lower dwelling's bedrooms were directly below a bedroom rather than a noisy living room as is more usually the case in such four-storey developments. The design also made

a virtue of the traditional half-basement.

A development at Southwood House Highgate won international recognition, and other awards followed for work in Wimbledon, Southwark and Lambeth.

Conservation

As well as the rehabilitation of Georgian squares, Harley was involved in numerous campaigns. Although Union Square, catalyst for forming the Islington Society, was lost, the current Packington redevelopment is going some way to restore the status quo ante of traditional streets. The "Save the Alwynes" campaign, to which Harley was architect adviser, was successful in the 1970s, as was a later campaign to bring rooms above shops back into use.

Islington

As well as this Society, Harley was a founder of the Canonbury Society and of the North London Line Committee in 1970. The Chairman is still using one of its beer mats "Support Your Local-Use your North Circular Railway". In 1980 it was the threat of motorways down the A1 and on stilts over the North London line that led Harley to found another group, Islington Alert. For seventeen years from 1982, Harley was co-opted to Islington Council's planning committee as an advisory member. He is currently on the Board of Trustees for Islington Museum, and vice-President of the Islington Pensioners' Forum as well as of this Society.

Rarely can anyone have done more to deserve recognition of this kind.

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Lisa's life celebrated in Edward Square

A celebration of the life of Lisa Pontecorvo was held in Edward Square on November 14th, coincidentally the day when the author of "A vision of Britain" became eligible for his freedom pass. Speakers and performers were introduced by Cllr. Paul Convery, who along with Rupert Perry and the Council's Greenspace department had organised the event. Around 150 people assembled in the specially erected marquee and were treated to many moving tributes. A song for Lisa had been specially written by Rob Inglis and he performed this with the massed choir of year six pupils from the two local schools, Blessed Sacrament and Copenhagen.

Later musical contributions included a solo *Hero* from Grace Fleury-Hollowel, representing the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson School choir, Handel's *Water Music* and *Music for the Royal Fireworks*, and the *Londonderry Air*, all performed by the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment. Their performance included opportunities for audience participation, which restored circulation to the extremities much needed even on a mild November day. The final item, *We Shall Overcome*, which had also been sung

at Lisa's funeral, was led by guitarist Alastair Murray.

Speakers recalled episodes from Lisa's life, and the campaigns that must continue in Lisa's memory. They included the headteacher of Copenhagen School, Lyndsey Jackson, and four of its pupils; Sadie Lambert who chairs FREDs, Johanna Gibbons, Ruth KirkWilson, Sabrina Chowdhury (EGA choir), Andrew Bosi, Asad Chowdhury (Islington Bangladeshi Association), Emily Thornberry M.P., and Cllr. Rupert Perry.

Before leaving the Square, Sadie Lambert unveiled a plaque at the Copenhagen Street entrance commending Lisa's memory and her association with the Square. Nor is this the only lasting reminder of her: one of the Tolpuddle Martyrs depicted on the Copenhagen Street mural bears an uncanny resemblance to the campaigner of 175 years later. Finally, copious refreshments were served in the Church Hall: hot curry from the Bangladeshi Association, cold buffet from the Mitre Pub, hot and cold drinks from Father Jim.

OFFICERS OF THE ISLINGTON SOCIETY

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- 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 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 advisers to 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 and is a member of the Civic Trust

Islington loses another tireless campaigner

Phil Jeffries succumbs to cancer at the early age of 55.

As Lisa was the in-your-face (some say Rottweiler) campaigner around King's Cross, Phil Jeffries provided the perfect counter-balance. Equally tireless, though mostly *sotto voce*, Phil was an invaluable support to our now President when the brains of BR came up with the idea of a Channel Tunnel Rail Link via the "southern approach" that would have taken it under Clerkenwell and into the subsurface station we mostly still know as King's Cross Thameslink.

Phil could see that, far from offering the opportunity of links from King's Cross to the north of England, as many M.P.s wished, it would guarantee that high speed trains terminated south of the Euston Road, as BR preferred. Moreover, he could also see that the radius of curvature approaching the station called into question whether the scheme was achievable at all. He could also see the dangers of divide and rule in a scheme which involved two planning authorities, and a key strength of the King's Cross Railway Lands Group that he helped to form in 1987 was its cross-Borough representation.

Fortunately, Phil's advice enabled Chris Smith to block the Bill granting powers for this scheme long enough for Tory Ministers to perceive the need to retreat. Even then, there was a bizarre six month period in which officials sought to convince Camden that the southern approach was going ahead, while talking to Newham about the route we have now. Phil of course, had contacts in both councils.

Once the easterly approach was established, the route was planned to run along the North London line. Phil ensured that Parliament was bombarded with petitions against the detail of the scheme, mostly calling for a fully tunnelled option. Union Railways compromised, but wanted to emerge into daylight crossing Caledonian Road. Phil's evidence persuaded the Select Committee to recommend a fully tunnelled option, to the consternation of Ministers whose duplicity towards rival developers was thereby exposed. They forced the Committee to re-compromise.

The battle did not end with Royal Assent. Railtrack adopted a wholly disproportionate approach to construction, accommodating existing rail operators and ignoring the needs of local

residents supposedly safeguarded in the Act and accompanying regulations. The victims this time were on Camden's estates: Phil convinced a more pusillanimous council to oppose the detailed application and his evidence led to the Planning Inspector upholding tenants' rights.

Most recently, Phil played a leading part in the unsuccessful campaign for a realistic development on the "Triangle site", the small part of King's Cross Railway Lands that are (mostly) in Islington. Argent, whose development is now in doubt from the credit-crunch, had arrived to great optimism. There was an expectation that their development would bring benefits to the area, without the construction mayhem that had accompanied the CTRL. Sadly, the temptation to cram all the social housing on the least valuable land, and to over-provide offices on the part of the site further south, proved too compelling and this time Phil, the Cally Rail Group and others were unable to block planning permission for what some of us fear may become the sink estate of the 21st century. The economic downturn may deliver something better. The penalties for total non-delivery are too awesome for Argent to contemplate.

Phil did other things of course. He helped set up an oral history project, King's Cross Voices, recently celebrated on Radio 4, and with Lisa rescued it from bankruptcy. He campaigned for Nuclear free zones - another link with the North London Railway. Perhaps being born in the birthplace of the railways had its influence. His support for their football club, coupled with that of another Cally Rail Group member for Rotherham Town, did little to erase the notion that the Group was dedicated to lost causes.

For many years he lived with Diana Shelley, whom he met in 1976. Diana is an independent campaigning voice, chairing the Cally Rail Group in more recent times. They brought different skills to the campaigns and were remarkably professional in their approach to matters of community interest or concern. You never felt there was a block vote when difficult issues presented themselves.

Phil will be sorely missed. A celebration of his life will be held at the end of this month: for details, please send an e-mail to phil.memorial@btinternet.com. Andrew Bosi

Tolpuddle Martyrs' Story

Dick Muskett recalls events of which the 1¾ centenary is to be marked shortly - see enclosed leaflet and back page.
 A good many people have a rough idea of who the Tolpuddle Martyrs were and what they did but many more have absolutely no idea. Yet there is a particular Islington connection to the events that happened 175 years ago this spring, and it's a story that deserves to be more widely known.

The bare bones of the story are straightforward. In 1833 a group of farm labourers living in and around the village of Tolpuddle in Dorset formed a union to try to protect their wages. Unions were not long legalised and there were still many constraints on organising and so it proved in this case. Early in 1834, six farm workers were arrested and charged with conspiracy. Tried and convicted hastily, they were deported to Australia and by early April five of them were already at sea, on their way to New South Wales. George Loveless was too ill to sail with his comrades and was instead sent to Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania) in May.

Following the trial of the Tolpuddle men there was a public outcry. The growing number of trade unionists saw their conviction as the state seeking to erode the right to organise and the more progressive middle classes saw it as a straightforward travesty of justice. With surprising speed in an age before the penny post (let alone phones and e-mails), petitions calling for a pardon for the Tolpuddle men started to circulate and a protest rally and march was called for the 21st April 1834. The gathering point was to be Copenhagen Fields, a large area of open ground to the west of the Caledonian Road, and the aim was to present a grand petition to Parliament.

It is a measure of the degree of public outrage and what seems to have been a complete miscalculation by the Government, that in the weeks and days before the rally a whole raft of petitions were presented to Parliament, all of which were ignored. A week before the rally, a public meeting at an inn in the Strand attracted 3000 people who blocked the roads in all directions. The Government appears to have panicked. Eight battalions of infantry and cavalry detachments were brought into London to reinforce the Household Regiments permanently stationed in the capital, and 5000 special constables were sworn in.

The rally formed up from early in the morning and reports spoke of the respectable appearance of the protestors. At that time, union

membership was almost completely confined to skilled tradesmen and they had clearly determined to emphasise their standing as the backbone of society by turning out in their Sunday best. The march proceeded to King's Cross and Gray's Inn Lane, west to Oxford Street then down Tottenham Court Road to Whitehall. It was reported that the march was cheered by spectators along the way but the trade unionists in the procession were seen to urge calm and disciplined behaviour. In Whitehall Lord Melbourne, then Home Secretary, refused to accept the petition as it was 'delivered by a multitude', so the march continued past Parliament and eventually halted on Kennington Common. There had been no disorder, no incidents and the troops had been kept out of sight throughout.

Although it might be said that the march had failed in its purpose, the impact of such a number of people demonstrating on behalf of six poor agricultural workers played a major part in the continuing pressure on the Government to remedy the undoubted injustice that had been done. The agitation continued with protest meetings, further petitions and Parliamentary debates and eventually the Government's obduracy was eroded. On March 14th 1836, a full pardon was granted to all six.

When George Loveless was driven away from Dorchester Assizes after being sentenced, he is said to have thrown from the coach a hand written poem that included the verse

"God is our guide, no swords we draw,
 We kindle not war's battle fires,
 By reason, union, justice, law,
 We claim the birthright of our sires;
 We raise the watchword liberty
 We will, we will, we will be free."

Those words are now inscribed on a memorial to the Martyrs in Tolpuddle. Although there were those who attributed the authorship to Loveless, it seems they had been circulating amongst radicals for several years, but the sentiment is clear, and it is to the honour of those six men, what they believed in and stood up for, that even when facing the likelihood of never seeing their families again, they held to their principles. That is why the Tolpuddle Martyrs deserve to be remembered: George Loveless, James Loveless, James Hammett, Thomas Standfield, John Standfield and James Brine.

Blue Plaques in Islington 9: Charles William Bowerman 1851-1947

The latest blue plaque to be featured by Alan Turner is apposite in view of the forthcoming anniversary of the Tolpuddle Martyrs which features strongly in this issue. Tucked away behind Drayton Park it is not on a main route, but is only a short walk from Islington's Central Library.

Bowerman was a real Islingtonian in that he lived at 4 Battledean Road, Highbury for fifty six years - some of the blue plaques were for transient people who only stayed in the borough for very short periods. His claim to fame was with the trade union movement in which he played a prominent part; his record was very impressive as follows:

- General Secretary of the London Society of Compositors 1892-1906
- M.P. for Deptford, 1906-1931
- President of the T.U.C. 1901
- Secretary of the Parliamentary Committee of the T.U.C., 1911-1921
- General Secretary of the T.U.C., 1921-1923

Obviously a very energetic and successful man, his beginnings were fairly humble. Born in Honiton, Devon, he moved to London as a youth and worked as a jeweller in Clerkenwell, later joining the staff of the Daily Telegraph in 1872 as a compositor. It seems to be his work in printing that first drew him to the trade union aspects of employment. In those days printing was not the clean and easy activity we know today where anyone with a computer can be a printer. Composing type was a laborious matter of physically fitting together lead type into wooden frames and was, no doubt, a heavy, dirty and probably badly paid job. It is easy to

imagine a man of his energy and convictions moving into trade union activities and seeking to improve working conditions. At the age of 41, in 1893, Bowerman joined the Fabian Society, (of which all subsequent labour prime ministers have been members) when it was a fairly new organization, with the primary objectives of "developing political ideas and public policy on the left of centre". He also had a great interest in the education of working people and was a founder of Ruskin College in 1899.

It seems that Bowerman was one of those hard-working good people who devote all or most of their life to the public good and, as such, he deserves his blue plaque. It also seems that he was largely unrecognised during his life; I have seen no mention of an O.B.E. or even an M.B.E. for "services to the community". I daresay it was his plebeian background that was responsible for this in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, or maybe in those far off principled days he turned down the offer. To-day he might even have received a knighthood.

Alan Turner

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 Archaeology & History Society

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



Transport News Round-up

Plans to park on the pavement revived. In 2005, a proposal to allow parking on the pavement in Essex Road (dressed up as "shared usage") aroused widespread criticism from Travelwatch, Living Streets local councillors ourselves and others.

More recently a further "consultation" has been conducted on the same proposals, by means of notices on lamp-posts in Essex Road. The consultation period included the Christmas break. There was no direct contact with this Society, or Living Streets. Officers have subsequently claimed that the Area Committees had approved the scheme, even though they are made up largely of the councillors who expressed opposition in 2005. Needless to say, none of the respondents to the original consultation were made aware of any Area Committee agenda item.

What makes this worse is that was conceived as a means of overcoming the delays associated with negotiating 58 feet long buses down narrow streets made narrower by parking. Now that the 38 route is to revert to normal length double deck buses the need to steal pavement space has gone. To argue that the increased volume of extra buses on the 38 will require the same theft is disingenuous. It is not the number of buses, but lack of manoeuvrability that is so greedy of road space.

Boris Johnson capitalised on the unpopularity of the bendy-bus in his election manifesto, but he does not seem to have analysed why they are unpopular. TfL in its analysis of the 38 and justification for the change has revised its estimate of the maximum capacity from 149 to 120. This is probably fair, given the reluctance of passengers to "pass further down the car" in the absence of a conductor to direct them, but it means that the passengers per square foot are fewer than on double-decker buses (reassessed as holding 85 despite an advertised capacity of 93) at all times.

Although the new contract for the 38 takes effect from July 2009, the change of vehicle type will be later than that to allow Arriva to purchase new vehicles and train additional drivers.

Roadworks cause major disruption around the Angel The greater capacity of articulated buses has been further undermined recently by the extensive queues around the Angel junction occasioned by its narrowing for significant

work to the gas main. The alternative of travelling down Caledonian Road is little better: extensive work by Thames Water has led to a long section of one way working from Caledonian Road & Barnsbury station to Richmond Avenue.

Extra buses on the 21; 263 extended. The extension of the 21 at its northern end from Moorgate to Newington Green has been a major success. Peak hour buses have filled up at the Green leaving passengers stranded on Mildmay Park. A further improvement in frequency has been agreed for later this year. The 263 from Barnet is extended from Archway to Nags Head, so there are again 4 routes on this section of Holloway Rd.

London Civic Forum organises consultation with TfL

A half day January conference organised by the London Civic Forum enabled voluntary groups to have direct access to Transport for London. There was some acknowledgement that parts of that large organisation had not yet adapted to the principles of open government. The papers were collated into a TfL folder (left) with a curious illustration. A car blocks the bus lane right at the bus stop by parking on a double red line. Cyclists give the bus lane a wide berth as they travel two abreast. There is no advance stop line for them. Dial-a-ride has also parked on a double red; the passenger is about to be escorted out into the oncoming traffic because the Underground station is protected by an excess of guard railing. The traffic lights are designed for traffic to take two routes forward, even though there is a no left turn sign and straight ahead would pitch you straight into the Thames! Finally, part of the embankment is curiously protected from the rays of the sun.

There was insufficient time to hear how all of this is to be corrected, but there was a useful presentation on the nine year business plan, and on the results of the Forum's user attitude survey.

New station at Woolwich. More than a year after the closure of North Woolwich, but six weeks ahead of schedule, the DLR extension to Woolwich Arsenal opened on January 12th. But the planned diversion of North London trains into Stratford High Level has been postponed *sine die*. And Network Rail have seen fit to demolish Primrose Hill station buildings, just as the campaign to reopen the station was gaining momentum from the temporary service reported in the last *News*.

From the Society (see also page 2)

Future Society events

Annual Dinner

This annual event is this year to be held at The Peasant, St. John Street, on **March 31st**. Our President, Lord Smith of Finsbury will address us. An application form is enclosed. This year we are keeping down costs by offering a buffet meal with the option of a dessert and coffee which must be ordered in advance. The Peasant which is locally listed and is a prominent landmark opposite the Finsbury Library / Islington Museum has undergone restoration. Several members have reported favourably on the quality of the food. We will have the upstairs to ourselves although I regret that there is no wheelchair access.

Memorial event in Edward Square to celebrate and commemorate the life of Lisa Pontecorvo. (see page 2). The Society is paying its own tribute to Lisa Pontecorvo with a walk on April 21st, commencing at 4.30 p.m. April 21st is the 175th anniversary of the arrest of the Tolpuddle Martyrs and we have decided to link our "Lisa Walk" to one of the events being organised to mark that anniversary. The walk will commence at the "P & O" site at York Way, and will proceed via Wharfdale Road and up Caledonian Road as far as Richmond Avenue. We then enter Bramwell Mews to admire the Matilda Street chimney, before concluding the walk at the Tolpuddle Martyrs mural at Edward Square.

Annual Bill Manley Memorial pub crawl

This will be held this year on Friday, June 26th, commencing at 6 p.m. A return to the north of the Borough after several years sees us start at the Swimmer, formerly Grafton Arms, 12 Eburne Street (formerly Grafton Street). 7 p.m. sees us at the North Nineteen, formerly the Enterprise, 194 Sussex Way. At 8 p.m. we reach the Landseer, formerly the Stanley Arms, Landseer Road, and then the Black Horse, Wedmore Street at 9 o'clock. The final pub is St. John's at 91, Junction Road. All five are scheduled to make their first appearance on the Bill Manley crawl.

Our monthly **Meet the Officers** events continue at the Marquess Tavern on the first Tuesday of each month, from 9 p.m.

Other Events in or around Islington:

Archaeology & History Society (meetings at 8.0 p.m. in Islington Town Hall)

Tuesday 18th March: "Thomas Lord and the pleasure gardens of Islington" Glenys Williams.

Wednesday 15th April: "Islington and the Princess Alice Disaster", Joan Lock

Wednesday 20th May: "Supporting Community Architecture", Suzie Thomas.

Estorick Collection of Modern Italian Art,
39a Canonbury Square.

Thursday 19th February 7.0-10.30 p.m: Futurist Extravaganza party to celebrate the centenary of the founding Manifesto of Futurism.

Now to Sunday 19th April: "Futurism 100! Unique Forms: The Drawing and Sculpture of Umberto Boccioni" exhibition.

29th April to 21st June: "Architecture and Photography in Italy 1930 - 1960" exhibition.

Exhibitions open Wednesday to Saturday 11 a.m. - 6 p.m. (8 p.m. Thursdays), Sunday 12 noon - 5 p.m.

Tolpuddle Martyrs events, April 18th-25th

21st, 7.30 p.m.: "Comrades" at the Screen on the Green (tbc)

tbc: Comedy Night at the Mitre, Copenhagen St.

25th: Parade assembles Caledonian Park 1 p.m.; stalls and music at Edward Square from 2.15 p.m.

Almeida Theatre, Almeida Street, N.1

Monday - Saturday 7.30 p.m, Saturday also 3.0 p.m.

To 14th March: "Duet for One" Tom Kempinski.

19th March - 9th May: "Parlour Song" Jez Butterworth.

14th May - 4th June: "When the Rain Stops Falling" Andrew Bovell. *European premiere.*

Islington Gardeners

Sunday 26th April 2.0 - 4.0 p.m: Plant Sale at 36 St. Mary's Grove, N.1. Tea and cakes for sale. Bee-keeping demonstration.

End May: Final date for submitting entries for Islington in Bloom 2009.

Haydn Chamber Orchestra

Saturday 21st March 8.0 p.m: Concert (Beethoven, Haydn, Mendelssohn) at Christ Church, Highbury Grove, N.5.

City of London festival

Monday June 22nd "London's Lost Rivers" talk by Iain Sinclair, at Barnard Inn Hall, Holborn, 6.0 p.m.
www.gresham.ac.uk for more details.