

ISLINGTON *news*

The Journal of the Islington Society incorporating FOIL folio

President becomes freeman of Islington

In a ceremony at the Town Hall on Tuesday November 16th, our President Lord Smith of Finsbury was elected freeman of the London Borough of Islington along with Father Jim Kennedy and Colonel Brian Kay.

Council honours three citizens

In an evening to dispel the impending gloom, Islington Council was able to honour three diverse people for their long time commitment to the Borough, made in their different ways.

Chris Smith's many achievements as Member of Parliament for over twenty years would require a full edition of Islington News to themselves, but one incident in particular made a lasting impression with both his proposer and seconder. This was the shameful incident in which a group of innocent youths had been beaten up by police officers in Holloway and there had been a subsequent cover-up to prevent the identity of the officers concerned being revealed.

It took a dogged campaign of more than two years to expose the miscreants, and to lift the suspicion that had fallen on the many innocent police officers on patrol on that day. Incidentally, no-one mentioned the television documentary made in the course of Chris' campaign, in which a stark contrast emerged between the Islington and Holloway forces' attitude.

When we consider also the defeat of the King's Cross Railway Bills, the installation of escalators at Angel, and the introduction of the right to roam, it is clear that Chris could be regarded as specialising in the long game.

Father Jim Kennedy

The granting of freedom of the Borough to Father Jim may require further explanation because his life-long commitment to Islington has been interrupted by a tour of duty in Cyprus. Father Jim had planned to be with us for the ceremony, but the Papal visit (to Cyprus, not England) meant that all leave was cancelled and we had to make do with a video from him. (There was also a postscript e-mail as he extended his list of thanks to those with whom he had worked!)

Father Jim worked in the parish of St. John the Evangelist, Duncan Terrace, before and after his ordination in 1980, but it has been during his time at Blessed Sacrament Copenhagen Street that his fame spread beyond the Catholic church into the wider community. Not just other faiths, through the faith forum, but in matters of general practical concern to those of limited means, Fr. Jim provided the cement that held the community together when tragedies or unexpected difficulties presented themselves. He was a popular choice as chair of the council's Standards Committee.

The present Archbishop of Westminster has finely honed political antennae not always given to his predecessors, but inevitably is less aware of local politics, and his decision to move Father Jim (and a great many other priests) came at a bad time for the Cally. In his video speech to the council, Fr. Jim recalled the contributions of Lisa Pontecorvo, Phil Jeffries and Ryan Kemp which also came to a premature end for different reasons.

Colonel Brian Kay, O.B.E.

Brian Kay was appointed Commanding Officer of the HAC in Islington in 1976 and in April 1993 Deputy Lieutenant to the L.B. Islington. This meant he became the Queen's Representative in Islington and in practical terms has given support to each of the seventeen mayors in office ever since. This has been well beyond the call of duty: he accompanies the Mayors on many occasions and these include the Citizenship Ceremonies which take place every week in the Town Hall.

Brian also chairs the Islington Chinese Association and a large number of committees mostly related to youth and cadet organisations in uniform in Islington.

We look forward to seeing all three of them grazing their sheep on Highbury Fields.

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Camden union set back

The last issue of Islington News reported on the possible appointment of a Chief Executive of both Camden & Islington Boroughs. This plan is no longer proceeding.

To the relief of some and disappointment of others, the plan to appoint a single individual to act as chief executive to both Camden and Islington is not now proceeding.

Whereas the Labour group in Islington has stamped its mark on the council by reaffirming the distinction between officer responsibility and member led decision making, the same progress has not been made in Camden where the Labour group appears to have been less optimistic about taking control and consequently less prepared. The chief executive of Camden may be more comfortable with the Camden model. However, the restriction on members' freedom to represent constituents and then vote in quasi-judicial matters, reported to the London Forum and in our last newsletter, will not exist for much longer if the present government has its way: see page 3.

There have been some fruits from the discussions between the two boroughs, however. Economies of scale are being achieved in the School Meal contracts and those for refuse collection.

Parking controversy

Faced with the prospect of massive cuts in services, the Council has understandably (in common with many others) chosen to raise more income from parking charges, which are a less regressive form of taxation than the Council tax. They have used the opportunity to introduce differential rates according to the level of pollution,

thereby tackling air pollution. So far so good.

However, in order to sweeten the pill, and provide a fillip to local shops, the restrictions on the number of vouchers that can be purchased have been removed, and a Roamer scheme is to be introduced whereby permit holders in Zone XX can park in any zone during the hours of 11 a.m. - 3 p.m. There are fears that the former will promote a black market in parking vouchers and that the latter will encourage short trips to be made by car instead of on foot or by bus. There is a campaign against the roamer scheme: to protest, contact <http://stoptheroamer.wordpress.com>

There are indications that the Council will review the effects of these changes and amend or withdraw the scheme if the worst prognosis is borne out.

EU consultation on VAT.

An opportunity has arisen to express concern about the way that VAT is levied on the cost of maintenance and repairs to historic buildings (but not on replacement or new builds) in response to the European Commission Green Paper: 'Towards a simpler, more robust and efficient VAT system'. The aim of the consultation is to launch a debate on the structure of the current VAT system, ways to make it more coherent within a single market and to reduce the cost of compliance. The deadline for comments is May 31st.

Open space: protected by community empowerment or threatened by relaxed planning rules? See next report.



Localism Bill: summary of proposals

The long-awaited government Localism Bill has been published. The Bill had its formal first reading in the House of Commons on Monday 13th December 2010; M.P.s had their first chance to debate the principles of the Bill at its second reading last month. There are numerous summaries and commentaries on the proposals on the internet: <http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2010-11/localism.html> gives the "official" version. We are reproducing a summary published by London Councils, the umbrella group for the 33 London Boroughs. Clause numbers may change in the course of Parliamentary debate.

The Bill contains numerous provisions in relation to Local Government and is divided into eight parts. Part seven is specific to London. The purpose of the Bill is to devolve more powers to councils and neighbourhoods and gives local communities greater control over local decisions in areas like housing and planning.

London Councils will be lobbying on behalf of London's local authorities as the Bill is considered by Parliament. The London Forum of Civic & Amenity Societies will be doing this on our behalf.

Part 1: Local Government

The Bill provides local authorities with a general power of competence, so that they may do anything that an individual generally may do, other than that which is specifically prohibited. It also:

- sets out the boundaries of the power;
- provides the Secretary of State with order making power; and
- sets out the procedure to be followed for any orders made using those powers.

Other provisions in this part of the Bill include:

- allowing local authorities to return to the committee system, if they so choose;
- enabling the creation of directly elected mayors, subject to confirmatory referenda, in local authorities specified by order by the Secretary of State;
- clarifying the rules on bias and being closed to argument, to ensure that councillors can freely discuss issues and then speak or vote on them;
- the abolition of the Standards Board regime;
- a requirement for councils to prepare senior pay policy statements which will then be mandatory when setting senior pay.

The Bill also repeals the duties relating to the promotion of democracy, the provisions about petitions to local authorities and schemes to encourage domestic waste reduction by payments and charges.

Part 2: EU Fines

This part creates a power to recover funds from local authorities and other public authorities in England

in order to pay all, or part of, a European Court of Justice ("ECJ") financial sanction imposed for a failure of the United Kingdom to comply with an obligation under the EU treaties.

Part 3: Non-Domestic Rates

This Part contains four provisions in relation to business rates including changes to business rate supplements and non-domestic rates.

Part 4: Community Empowerment

The Bill gives local residents, councillors and councils the power to instigate a local referendum on any local issue. Although these referenda will be non-binding, local authorities and other public authorities will be required to take the outcomes into account in decision making.

- Residents will be able to approve or veto excessive council tax rises.
- Any local authority setting a council tax increase above a threshold proposed by the Secretary of State would trigger a referendum of all local registered electors.

Part 5: Planning

This Part makes provision for reforms to the planning system, including:

- the abolition of regional strategies;
- a new duty to cooperate for local planning authorities and other bodies;
- changes to the processes for adopting, examining and publishing development plan documents;
- limits the binding nature of Planning Inspectorate recommendations on Community Infrastructure Levy charging schedules;
- requires charging authorities to pass Community Infrastructure Levy funds to other bodies and clarifies the definition of infrastructure for the purposes of the Community Infrastructure Levy;
- creates neighbourhood development orders and plans;
- sets out how community right to build assets will be managed;
- provides for compulsory pre-application consultation for developments above certain thresholds; and

- will allow local authorities in England not to determine retrospective planning applications where enforcement action is being taken.

The Localism Bill will also abolish the Infrastructure Planning Commission.

Part 6: Housing

This Part makes provision for reforms to the way social housing is provided as well as the formal repeal of Home Information Packs.

Local housing authorities will have new powers to:

- determine who is eligible to be allocated housing;
- fully to discharge the main homelessness duty by arranging an offer of suitable accommodation from a private landlord, without requiring the applicant's agreement.

Local housing authority will also have a duty to publish a tenancy strategy and makes provision for local housing authorities and Private Registered Providers (social landlords) to offer flexible tenancies for new social tenants. The Bill also:

- introduces a new system of council housing finance through an end to the Housing Revenue Account Subsidy System and the introduction of a self-financing system which will allow councils to keep the rent received from their tenants;
- gives the social housing regulator the power to set a standard for registered providers in respect of assisting tenants with regard to mutual exchanges.

Part 7: London

This Part contains a number of provisions for London that provide the Mayor of London with additional housing and regeneration powers.

Chapter 1: Housing and Regeneration Functions

Clause 157 - *Removal of limitation on Authority's general power.* This clause removes an existing prohibition against housing expenditure in the GLA's general power of competence, and provides that the prohibition against expenditure on education services does not apply in relation to sponsorship of academies.

Clause 158 - *GLA's new housing and regeneration functions.* This amends Part 7A of the GLA Act 1999 (housing) including empowering the GLA compulsorily to acquire land and new rights over land for housing and regeneration purposes, subject to authorisation by the Secretary of State. This would use the standard procedural model for the extinguishment of private rights over land, with compensation to be paid.

Clause 159 - *London housing strategy.* This makes changes to the London housing strategy to reflect

that the GLA is responsible for exercising housing functions in Greater London rather than the HCA. Clause 161 - *Transfer of property of the HCA.* This empowers the Secretary of State to make schemes to provide for the transfer of property, rights and liabilities from the HCA or the Secretary of State to the GLA, a functional body, the Secretary of State, a London Borough or the Common Council of the City of London. The Secretary of State may also specify by order any other persons to whom the property, rights and liabilities may be transferred.

Clause 162 - *Abolition of the London Development Agency.* The Secretary of State is required to consult the Mayor about the contents of a transfer scheme, which could be to the GLA, a functional body, the Secretary of State, a London borough council, the Common Council of the City of London or any body specified by order of the Secretary of State.

Clause 163 - *Economic development strategy for London* This amends the GLA Act 1999 to require the Mayor to prepare and publish an Economic development strategy for London. Similar provision is made under which the LDA must prepare and publish an equivalent strategy under the supervision of the Mayor. In preparing the strategy, the Mayor is required to consult representatives of employers and employees in London. This clause empowers the Secretary of State to issue guidance about the scope of the strategy and empowers him to direct the Mayor to revise the strategy if it is inconsistent with national policies or has a detrimental effect on an area outside London.

Clause 164 - *General provision about transfer schemes*

General provision includes provision to be made in a transfer scheme to ensure no enactment regulating the use of commons, open spaces or allotments prevents or restricts the use, for Olympic purposes, of land transferred.

Chapter 2: Mayoral Development Corporations (MDCs)

Clauses 168 - 171 - *Establishment and areas* These allow the Mayor to designate any area, or parcel of land areas, in London, as a mayoral development area; provided he has consulted, where necessary, the individuals and bodies specified in the Bill. The Mayor could alter the boundaries of a mayoral development area to exclude any area of land, following consultation with the London Assembly and any other person the Mayor considers appropriate.

Clause 172 - *Object and main power* This provides that an MDC's object is to secure the regeneration

of its area. It may do anything appropriate for that or incidental purposes, and have specific powers for those purposes.

Clauses 173, 174, 175 and 176 - *Planning and infrastructure functions* These make provision for the MDC to become the LPA, for the purposes of plan-making, development control and neighbourhood planning. The MDC may make arrangements for the discharge of its development control functions in whole or part by the relevant council (s). The MDC may also seek assistance from the relevant council(s) in the discharge of its plan-making functions. An MDC may provide or facilitate the provision of infrastructure, by way of acquisition, construction, conversion, improvement or repair.

Clauses 177 - 181 - *Land functions* These enable an MDC to carry out or facilitate a range of specified activities including the regeneration or development of land and bringing about the effective use of land, and provide that an MDC can acquire land within its area or elsewhere by agreement. With the authorisation of the Secretary of State, and the prior consent of the Mayor, an MDC can acquire compulsorily land or new rights over land within its area or elsewhere within London.

Mayoral freedom within an MDC would include powers to override easements and extinguish public rights of way, and powers in relation to burial grounds and consecrated land. An MDC will not be permitted to dispose of land for less than best consideration, unless the Mayor consents, but this does not apply to granting or assigning a short tenancy of seven years or less.

Clauses 182 - 185 - *Other functions* These provide that if street works in an MDC area are needed and involve a private street, the MDC can serve an adoption notice on the street works authority - making the street (or part of it) a highway maintainable at public expense. The authority may appeal against a notice and ask the Secretary of State to decide how to proceed.

Clauses 186 - 188 - *Dissolution* These provide that the Mayor must review, from time to time, the continuing existence of an MDC. The Mayor may transfer any MDC property, rights or liabilities to: the Greater London Authority; a functional body of the Greater London Authority other than the MDC; to a London borough or the City of London, or any other body - with their agreement. The Mayor

would be able to ask the Secretary of State to revoke the order that established the MDC, provided it has no property, rights or liabilities.

Clauses 189 - 193 - *General* These set out general provisions for the transfer of property, rights or liabilities (including in relation to a contract of employment) under a transfer scheme. Following consultation, they allow the Mayor to provide guidance, directions and consent to MDCs.

Chapter 3 - Greater London Authority Governance

Clauses 194 - 200 - *Greater London Authority Governance* This Chapter gives Government Ministers the power to delegate certain functions to the Mayor of London, where the functions do not consist of a power to make regulations or other instruments of a legislative character, or a power to set fees or charges and which the Secretary of State considers can appropriately be exercised by the Mayor. It also repeals the duty on the Mayor to publish quadrennial reports on the state of environment in London, and consolidates the six current environmental strategies which the Mayor must publish into a single strategy known as "the London Environment Strategy". The Secretary of State may give guidance to the Mayor on the content and preparation that strategy and may give the Mayor a direction as to its content. Mayoral strategies must have regard to EU and other obligations as well as national policies.

They remove the Mayoral duty to carry out a two-stage consultation process in relation to each of his statutory strategies, by removing the obligation to consult the Assembly and functional bodies first, before conducting a wider public consultation. However, the London Assembly may reject any of the Mayor's statutory strategies if a two-thirds majority of members vote against publication.

Part 8: General

This Part makes general provisions about orders, regulations and commencement of the Bill.

Financial Implications

The Bill's explanatory notes acknowledge that the Bill will place new and/or extended duties on local authorities. The government estimated cost to local authorities for these new duties is £21 million a year, which will be funded through the spending review 2010. The Notes also state that 'this Bill will not represent a significant change to public service manpower'.

Transport News Round-up

Work continues on London Overground

Trains on the East London line should be running to Highbury & Islington from May 2011. As with the service to Dalston last year, there are likely to be trains in service ahead of the official launch date. A full scale blockade over Christmas coincided with heavy snow, and passengers may have benefited from the existence of a replacement bus service. Another quirk of the replacement service is that during the blockades the Sunday service is more frequent than when closures are just every Sunday, so that ironically the two quietest Sundays of the year (there was no service at all on Boxing Day) had the best service. The next and final blockade is scheduled for 19th-27th February.

Once trains are running, the services to Highbury & Islington will be from Crystal Palace and New Cross, so that passengers for the West Croydon line or for stations on the South London line towards Clapham Junction will have to change. There will be through trains to Clapham Junction via the West London line all day and not just at peak periods as now.

This good news story is only spoilt by the removal of some of the details of the planned improvements from the Mayor's Transport Plan (as compared with the draft Spatial Development Plan), and the complete absence of any reference to the Overground in the otherwise triumphal reporting of the outcome of the Comprehensive Spending Review.

Rolling stock cascade

The 313 stock displaced by the new 378 trains is being redeployed elsewhere on the network, and the first set thus cascaded is in service on first Capital Connect services through Drayton Park and Essex Road to Moorgate.

Bendy bus replacement

The 18 reverted to double-deckers in November and the 73 is planned to follow suit in November 2011, when there should be an increase in frequency to compensate for the reduced capacity. There has been no announcement yet about reinstating bus stopping arrangements at the Angel and Tottenham Court Road. Passengers have been inconvenienced by changes which were necessitated because the old stops closer to road junctions (i.e. where most people want to board) could not be accessed by a bus 57 feet long.

Delays caused by roadworks to widen the

A406 North Circular have resulted in the 141 bus route being curtailed at Wood Green for the next twelve months, doubling the cost of a journey to Palmers Green.

Fare increases

Fares increased by more than inflation, but by far the most serious blow was occasioned by the withdrawal of the out of zone 1 day travelcard. This increased the cost from £5.10 to £8. It also creates some anomalies. It is cheaper to go from Highbury to Mile End via Stratford if all you are doing in the day is going there and back. But if you need to make a subsequent bus journey, it would have paid you to travel via zone 1 (and is usually quicker). There will be occasions when Oyster does not give you the cheapest option, even if you have touched an Oyster validator on the way. One of the selling points of Oyster was that it took the thinking out of determining the cheapest option: now you have to think harder and further than ever.

Highbury Corner

An announcement confirming the traffic scheme and creation of a pedestrian square outside the station was thought to be imminent as we went to press. This involves removal of the temporary sixty year old building housing the Post Office. Unfortunately the future of the Post Office remains in doubt. The solution on which the scheme was predicated is to move across Highbury Corner. The Post Office is now contemplating a merging of this outlet and the one at 116, Upper Street, i.e. yet another closure. That would require public consultation and provoke further wrath: nearby sub-Post Offices have been closed on the basis that a Crown Office existed nearby. Discussions between the Council and the Post Office continue.

Holloway Road

Safety improvements for cyclists and pedestrians have been agreed for funding at Madras Place, the scene of the fatal accident to Lisa Pontecorvo. Two other schemes further north in Holloway Road have also been approved, involving the loss of some pavement space.

The Angel

There is now an excellent facility for pedestrians crossing Upper Street at the foot of Islington Green. Some unwanted railings have gone south of Angel station. But still the work goes on, with seemingly minimal return and continuing disruption to both pedestrian and vehicular movements. AB

Bill Manley Memorial Pub crawl to the magic three figures

The Bill Manley pub crawl in 2010 continued its crawl towards the target of 100 pubs, with three first time visits. The total number has now passed sixty, and although pubs close at an alarming rate, they occasionally re-open or restore real ale hand pumps and thus become eligible for inclusion.

The last crawl began at The Green, Clerkenwell Green, which for many years was known as the French Horn. Despite the decline in pub numbers, there are a good number of pubs within easy walking distance, including the Betsy Trotwood, the Bowler, the Surprise, the Horseshoe and the City Pride, all of which have been included in past crawls. This time we headed north to take in the Three Kings, which had hitherto escaped our attention for no very good reason. After that, it was on to two old favourites, the Crown back on the Clerkenwell Green and the Seckforde Arms in

Seckforde Street. Finally it was to the Peasant, venue of our Annual Dinner in 2009 but not previously featured on the pub crawl.

Close to the Peasant, to the west, the Apple Tree, the Exmouth Arms, O'Hanlons, the Harlequin and finally the Old Red Lion have provided a neat route in the past, with another two routes across Finsbury, two in St. Peter's Ward, one based on Upper Street, one on Mildmay Park/Southgate Road, one across Canonbury and two in the north of the borough. The very first crawl, led by Bill Manley himself, began at the Marquess Tavern and moved west and north to the Railway Arms close to Caledonian Road & Barnsbury Station and sadly no longer a pub.

The 2011 event will take place on Midsummer's Day, June 24th.

Society publications

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

The Story of Day Flats in and around Islington, by Andrew Bosi, photographs from C.F. Day Limited and Oliver Craxton, £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

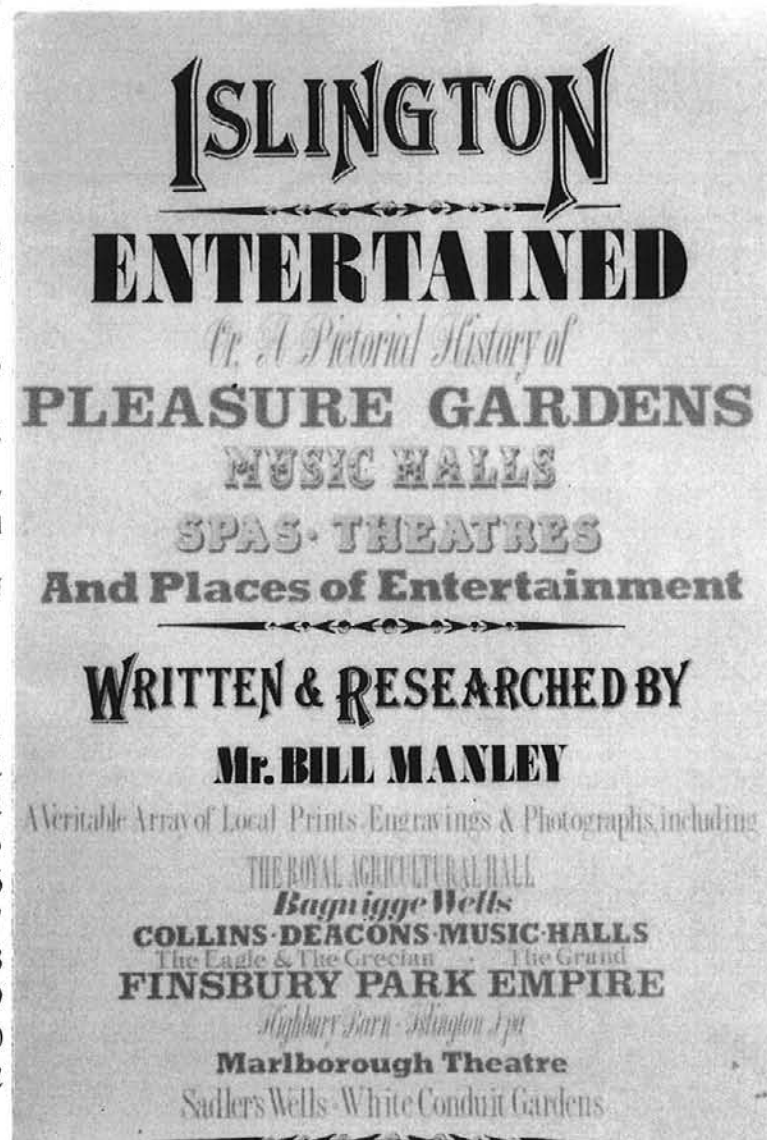
53 Cross Street - the biography of an historic house by Mary Cosh & Martin King, photographs by Pauline Lord, published by the Islington Archaeology & History Society

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

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The Magnum Opus of Bill Manley - still available from Islington Libraries



*Book review***Spas, Wells & Pleasure Gardens of London**

The title refers to London but in fact a sizable chunk of this work, more than half, relates the social history of Islington and its close environs from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries. It is almost literally a lifetime's work on the part of the author, Professor Curl, having been conceived in the then Empress of Russia P.H. in St. John Street more than forty years ago.

We are told that the preface has not been written for reviewers, but it is here that we learn of the author's regret at the passing of such establishments as the Empress, and more controversially of the carcinogenic substances that once adorned or compromised their ambience. There is a huge bibliography, including Bill Manley's *Islington Entertained* and Mary Cosh's *History of Islington*, but this is the first attempt to draw all the material covered by this wide ranging title into a single volume and to support it with more copious illustrations than its predecessors have mustered. The long gestation period has ensured that errors of fact which may have crept into previous works are now corrected.

Readers will learn of the origins of street names as well as watering holes. No detail is too small - there is even a reminder of the popularity of that wonderful ballad, the *Death of Nelson*. Doggerel which might not have survived, but which gives clues as to the kind of entertainment on offer at the establishments of the day serves to illustrate the narrative as well as the maps and drawings.

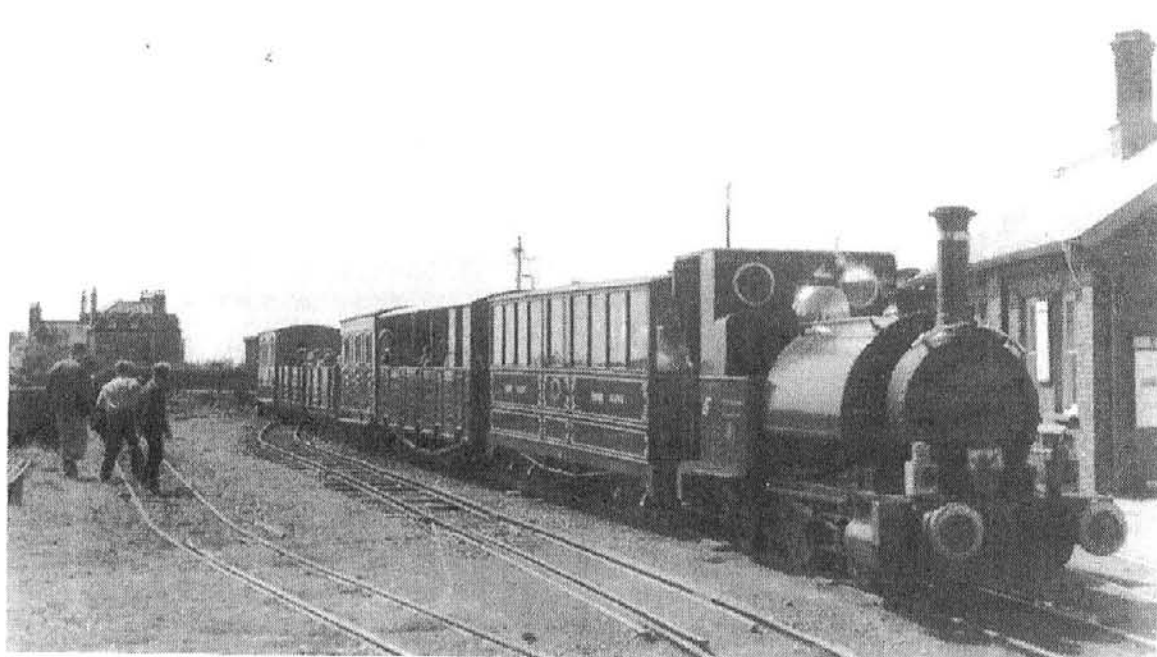
This is a work without which any library of Islington's past would not be complete. The story is brought up-to-date with a brief epilogue or postscript to each chapter.

Spas, Wells & Pleasure Gardens of London with 280 pages and 194 illustrations, by Professor James S. Curl, is published by Historical Publications (32 Ellington Street, London, N.7) at £25, ISBNNumber 978-1-905286-34-8. It is distributed by www.countrysidebooks.co.uk.

Complete London Map of Transport

With the last free all London bus map now more than ten years old, Quickmap have stepped into the void with this magnificent publication which really does give you everything you need to make maximal use of an Oyster card, including walking times in central London. The print is necessarily small, but all the detail is clear. There are separate maps for day and night services. At a glance you can see which mode is quickest. Fare zones are identified by colour coding the station rather than adding a boundary line. The whole thing folds easily into the pocket. ISBN 095532377-0, £4.95

Engine number 1 *Talylyn* and train at Towyn Wharf in the 1960s. The leading carriage began life on the nearby Corris Railway.



Railway Preservation celebrates its diamond jubilee

Life Member of the TRPS Andrew Bosi reports on another milestone in the Amenity Society movement

Although the conservation movement was revived in the 1960s and 1970s, it was ten years before the Islington Society was born that the Railway preservation movement began life. Almost all railways had been absorbed into British Railways in 1948. Although closures of standard gauge lines were not far behind (the line to Alexandra Palace for example was closed in 1954), the first line to be threatened was one considered so insignificant as to be excluded from the Nationalised system. This was the narrow gauge line opened on July 5th, 1865 between Towyn (as it was then spelt) and Nant Gwernol for the purpose of bringing slate to the coast, but which also operated passenger services from Abergynolwyn just short of the terminus.

The owner Sir Henry Haydn Jones was determined that the line should continue to run throughout his life-time, and equally determined to spend as little as possible to this end. The slate quarries closed in 1947. He died in 1950 and his last train ran on October 6th. Five days later, a group of enthusiasts met in Birmingham and formed the Talylyn Railway Preservation Society.

The Society took control of the Railway on February 8th, 1951 and ran their first train on May 14th. This was no mean achievement, for as well as the line being overgrown the two locomotives were in serious need of repair. Although the nearby Corris Railway had been built to the same gauge (2' 3") and its two locomotives were available for purchase, they proved unusable in the short term and it was only by coaxing life out of number 2 *Dolgoch* that the Society was able to maintain the boast, the line that never closed.

The early trials and tribulations gave rise to the story line in a popular film *The Titfield Thunderbolt*. Later, the railway became the inspiration for the Reverend W. Awdry's *Thomas the Tank engine* series. Thomas was based on *Edward Thomas*, one of the ex-Corris engines, while its partner *Sir Haydn* (named after the long-time owner) and a later acquisition *Douglas* were recast as Sir Handel and Duncan. Coincidentally, this year is also the centenary of the Rev. Awdry's birth.

Once the early difficulties had been overcome, the railway was able to expand beyond its four original passenger carriages and brake van, although like the original engines these continue to see annual service. In the sixties and early seventies

the preservation society was building new carriages as well as acquiring stock from elsewhere. As well as the five steam engines referred to above, there were plans to rebuild a 3' gauge engine from the Irish Peat district (*Irish Pete*). There are also three diesel locomotives.

Trains had operated only as far inland as Abergynolwyn, but in the early seventies the trackbed to Nant Gwernol was renewed and passenger services to the old quarry terminus commenced in 1976. This project was part funded by the Wales Tourist Board.

Passenger numbers peaked in 1973 and since then there has been a decline in numbers, with the growth of foreign holidays. The Mid-Wales tourist board is not the most proactive in Wales but the railway survived a major threat to its big brother (broad gauge) neighbour, the Cambrian Coast line of British Rail, currently operated by Arriva Trains Wales.

On the other hand, the season has extended with more people visiting in the Spring and Autumn half-term weeks. Eventually the sixth steam engine entered service bearing the name of the Society's founder, *Tom Rolt*. The facetiousness of the previous name was thought to have militated against progress towards the engine's introduction in the face of competing maintenance projects.

Tom Rolt is the author of *Red for Danger*. The Great Little Trains of Wales are subject to the same safety regime as those on Network Rail tracks, and improved standards of safety have seen visual changes to both signalling and the engines themselves.

The Society is marking each of the anniversary dates with special trains, exhibitions and church services. The Rev. Awdry centenary will be marked on the day itself (June 15th) and at the following weekend with a children's day. The Society has an active Young Members Group and the railway continues to provide opportunities for volunteering while also being dependent on a small team of paid staff. I was pleased to see Cllr. Wally Burgess sporting his TRPS tie at the recent Freeman of the Borough ceremony (see page 1).

More information can be obtained from Rheilffordd Talylyn Railway, Wharf Station, Tywyn, LL36 9EY, telephone 01654 710472 or of course the web site www.talylyn.co.uk. AB

ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR 2010

This annual report brings to an end the period of eleven years during which I have had the privilege of chairing this society. I am sorry that the revolution planned at last year's A.G.M. has so far got off to a slow start, due to difficulties that could not have been envisaged when we last met. I am sure though that with a new enthusiastic chairman in place events will once again move forward more quickly.

One area in which progress has been made has been the creation of a web-site in our name. Some members have said it could be better and of course, anything could always be better. It is a significant step forward that we have something on which to improve.

The year for the Society

The first event of the year was our A.G.M. in December. Some volunteers came forward and I agreed to see out the fiftieth year of the Society's existence on the understanding that David Gibson would thereafter take on the chairmanship. This will happen at the 2010 A.G.M..

The newsletters have continued to appear on the due date. The supply of material for them has varied, and I am all the more grateful to those who have provided copy. Sadly, Alan Turner lost his battle with cancer in April. His wise counsel as Vice-chairman, his contributions to the newsletter and his organisation of the annual Architecture & Conservation Award were lost to us.

Despite the recession or economic downturn, there were still a good number of candidates for the Award for 2010 and the Panel convened to view the shortlisted candidates. Highbury Stadium housing was the winner, and a presentation will be happening soon.

We were happy to support the Islington in Bloom competition by sponsoring the Best Forgotten Corner Award. The winner was Elia Street. Its proximity to the Charles Lamb should ensure that no-one with a taste for the best beer brewed in Brighton or for good food will forget it again.

The Bill Manley memorial pub crawl in June took us back to Clerkenwell. I believe we have now visited 66 pubs over nearly twenty years, starting with the crawl led by Bill Manley himself and described as a tour of pubs of historical interest.

Last month the joint meeting with the Archaeology & History Society took place at the Town Hall. David Heath spoke about the work of

the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, which he chairs. He showed us how the aims and ideals of William Morris more than 130 years ago are relevant to-day. He made a powerful case against façadism.

Architecture & Conservation Award

It may be helpful to give the full list of winners to date: 1 City & Islington College, Blackstock Road (former Jack Ashley building); 2 Regents Quarter, King's Cross; 3 Moorfields Eye Hospital Children's Ward; 4 King's Place off York Way; 5 Duncan Terrace Gardens; 6. Highbury Stadium housing.

Links with other Societies

A group of Societies led by the Upper Street Association came together more than twelve months ago to co-ordinate opposition from an amenity stand point to the proposed overdevelopment of the former Fords car showroom site behind Union Chapel. We were represented by a strong legal team at the recent appeal against refusal, having persuaded the then West Area committee unanimously to reject the scheme. We also worked with the local school. The outcome is still awaited but thanks are due to Charles Wood who put in an enormous amount of time co-ordinating our responses.

Arising from this experience, the Angel Association and Duncan Terrace Association convened a meeting of 26 societies in Islington, following which a web group has been established. The idea is that if a street association is confronted with an unwanted plan to move a bus stop they can let everyone know and those who have fought a similar battle elsewhere might provide advice.

Several societies have been involved in the campaign to save Finsbury Health Centre which has reason for cautious optimism. The Health Authorities complain that costs continue to rise so that a stand-still budget involves costs, but Islington has a relatively low proportion of over 70s and almost the highest proportion of 20-34 year olds anywhere in the country. Since it is people living longer that is the main cause of health-inflation, we should be better placed to weather the financial crisis, but only if we look after our buildings and our residents. They are better served if we continue to provide services close to home and friends.

Events in Islington

Three important buildings have been under attack in the last year. As well as the encouraging news for Finsbury Health Centre, there has been much better news for the Sobell Centre with the Council

announcing a reprieve and with a subsequent "green plaque ceremony to mark the generous benefactor whose generosity was nearly so contumeliously rewarded. Sadly, the governors of Ashmount School seem likely to be rewarded for their poor stewardship of the building with a new school on what was Metropolitan Open Land. By the time it is built the current pupils will be asking what happened to their local youth club.

The Council election saw a return to majority Labour government just as Labour was giving way to the other two parties in the three party system that abounds at Westminster. We lost our Green Councillor just as the first Green M.P. was elected. More surprisingly, the coalition partners of central government were unseated in Camden four years after taking over from Labour. The coincidence of local elections and the General Election increased turn out which was good for Labour and for the Conservative share of the vote, but bad for the Green Party, which also found itself defending the ward with the most mobility in the last four years, because of the change of use of a large site in Avenell Road.

However, it would be misleading to suggest that the influence of the General Election was overwhelming. Before 2006 it was usual for Wards to return all candidates from the same party. On this occasion there was a remarkable degree of split voting, so that although only one ward is without a majority party councillor (as was the case in 1990) there is a decent sized opposition group of 13 (three in 1990).

The Council is faced with significant cuts in expenditure. Although the present government talks about localism and the Big Society, like all its predecessors facing difficult decisions, it finds it easier to cut locally funded services than those funded centrally. It seeks to convince us that the cuts are fair. The Council seized this agenda before they did, and has established a Fairness Commission.

The housing shortage and the extremes of poverty and wealth cheek by jowl are the main concerns of the Commission, but an issue close to the Islington Society is also under consideration.

This is the dilemma of local shops (friendly, handy, but more expensive) versus supermarkets.

Transport issues in Islington

The main events this year have been the lengthening of train on the North London Line (four carriages instead of three), new trains on the Barking-Gospel Oak line, and the opening of the East London line from Dalston Junction. Increased capacity on the North London lines is most welcome, but such was the level of suppressed demand occasioned by the crammed trains that overcrowding remains. The Dalston line was supposed to offer a cheaper way of getting to south London, by taking people out of overcrowded zone 1, but the late decision to put Shoreditch into zone 1 (apparently as a condition of funding for phase 2 of the scheme) means it is the same price as the more familiar route through zone 1. If you hold a freedom pass, there is plenty of space on the new trains, but changing to South-eastern services at New Cross in the rush hour is a nightmare, and most users will prefer a few minutes discomfort on the tube in return for the chance of a seat at Charing Cross or Victoria.

Future Society events

I am pleased to report a number of impending events. The award of the fifth Architecture & Conservation Award in the present series will be open to all members and will take place later this month at the former Highbury Stadium housing development.

We have obtained discounted rate tickets for "Utopia London" which is at the gallery in Cowcross Street on December 14th.

Because the formal bits of the A.G.M. will be held before the dinner, the opportunity for members to raise concerns will not exist at that time. Therefore, we will hold a members general meeting early in the new year. The opportunity to meet officers of the Society on the first Tuesday of every month continues at the Canonbury Tavern.

We are planning to produce a memento of the first fifty years of the Society early in the fifty-first.

Andrew Bosi

November 2010

From the Society

CURRENT OFFICERS

President : Lord Smith of Finsbury

Vice Presidents: Mary Cosh, Harley Sherlock

Chairman: David Gibson,

35, Britannia Row, London, N.1

☎ 020 7-226 2207; e✉mail@dgibarch.com

Secretary: David Trillo

45, Ellington Street, London, N.7

☎ 020 7-607 9325; e✉david@trillo.net

Treasurer: Stan Westwood,

262, Upper Street, London, N.1 2UQ

☎ 020 7-226 4166; e✉preppres@aol.com

Membership Secretary: Jenni Chan,

35, Britannia Row, London, N.1 8QH

☎ 020 7-226 2207; e✉jennichan@fsmail.net

Newsletter: Andrew Bosi,

The Croft, Wall Street, London, N.1 000

☎ 020 7-354 8514; e✉AndrewBosi@aol.com

What 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 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 Civic Voice

We gave evidence to the Islington Fairness Commission on the role of local shops in addressing poverty. The Commission reports in April - more details next issue.

Future Society events

Our monthly Meet the Officers meetings continue at the Canonbury Tavern, Canonbury Place on the first Tuesday each month at 9.0 p.m., on Tuesdays 1st March, 5th April, 3rd May and 7th June. The Bill Manley pub crawl will be held on June 24th.

Other Events in or around Islington:

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

16th March 2011 "The Library Collections: union history in the Holloway Road". Speaker Christine Coates MA MCLIP

20th April 2011 "Insanity in Islington: treatment and records"
Speaker Dr. Cathy Chater.

18th May 2011 Inaugural Address from the President of the Society.
Rt Hon Lord Smith of Finsbury.

Estorick Collection of Modern Italian Art,
39a Canonbury Square

12th January - 3rd April 2011 Exhibition "From Morandi to Guttuso" - Masterpieces from the Alberto Della Ragione Collection.

13th April - 12th June 2011 Exhibition "Double Portrait: Ida Barbarigo and Zoran Music".

Almeida Theatre, Almeida Street, N.1 0207 7-359 4404

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

13th January - 5th March 2011 "Becky Shaw" by Gina Giofriddo, UK Premiere.

10th March - 30th April 2011 "The Knot of the Heart" by David Eldridge World Premiere.

London's Little Opera House @ King's Head Theatre, 115 Upper Street, N.1 0207 7-226 1916

7.15 p.m. every day; Saturday matinée 3.0 p.m.
Cinderella (ends February 25th); Madam Butterfly; the Barber of Seville; Pagliacci; La Bohème; H.M.S. Pinafore (opens March 26th).