

ISLINGTON *news*

The Journal of the Islington Society

High Street crisis

The Commercial Business Rate reassessment, deferred from 2015 and implemented this April, has given rise to a new crisis and threat to our high streets in Islington and across London.

The review was originally timed for just before the General Election when politicians are most vulnerable to the temptation to defer anything that will be unpopular in some quarters. Not doing something has certainly proved unpopular in the north of England, where a rate reduction was urgently needed and high streets have suffered from vacant properties as a result.

Seven years on from the last assessment, the changes are more stark. Transitional relief, announced in the March Budget, is short term and inadequate. The lack of a review a couple of years ago enabled landlords to raise rents and they are unlikely willingly to reduce them now.

Pubs have been given some additional protection but the conditions attached mean that it does not extend to most establishments in London. Even Wetherspoons, after years of expansion, have closed more pubs than they have opened in the last year. Those which have closed have been where Wetherspoons rented rather than owned outright. The Glassworks (rented) was better patronised than the Angel (owned outright).

Rather like "Fairer funding" of schools, there is no obvious correlation between Rate increases and prosperity. One can understand London rates rising relative to the rest of the country, because property prices have rocketed, but it is less understandable that small shops

have taken a big hit whereas Arsenal Football Club and the supermarkets seem to have come out unscathed or even better off. The rates paid by a top tier football club are dwarfed by their weekly wage bill. Supermarkets are able to sell alcohol at far lower prices than pubs, even though pubs promote sensible drinking. Cheap alcohol at home is unregulated and more likely to reach binge proportions.

Commercial business rates have historically made sense because evasion is difficult - you cannot hide a building. However, as in so many walks of life, modern technology has turned the economics on their head. Shops face competition from internet sales. Amazon, which seems to have an aversion to paying tax and a ready escape route through its global status, does not require premises which would attract Business Rates. It does result in a proliferation of white delivery vans, which a small increase in Class IV National Insurance contributions is unlikely to arrest. Congestion is back to pre-congestion charge levels. Government policy should be to support high streets for all sorts of public policy reasons. Home deliveries reduce personal activity and obesity is already predicted to be the biggest cause of premature death by 2028, ahead of depression which is also exacerbated by inactivity, and various illnesses made worse by poor air quality.

Possibly because of the unexpected General Election, there have been delays in calculating and paying the transitional relief.

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Islington Society News

Bill Manley pub crawl, June 23rd

Handpumps have been removed from the Joker so it has been removed from the pub crawl. It has been replaced by the Lexington, (formerly the Belvedere) which is our new starting point at 6 p.m. It is on the corner of Pentonville Road and Penton Street. We then move to the Craft Beer Company pub at the west end of White Lion Street, the Alma on Chapel Street at 8 p.m., then the Three Johns, the Castle and finally the Angel just before 11 p.m. If no real ale is available we move straight to the next pub.

Annual Dinner

This year's Annual Dinner for members and guests will be held on **Tuesday October 3rd**. The venue is St. John's Tavern and three courses without wine will cost £25.

Islington Society Visit to Woodberry Wetlands July 29th.

There will be an Islington Society visit to the Woodberry Wetlands, Stoke Newington, London N16 5HQ on 29th July 2017 starting at 2 pm. Meet at the entrance on the New River Path, reached from Lordship Road, which is 7 or 8 minutes walk from Manor House tube station. The Woodberry Wetlands is a nature reserve designated as of Metropolitan importance, especially for its birds. Managed by the London Wildlife Trust, it was opened by Sir David Attenborough on 1st May 2016. It is one of two reservoirs built in 1833 alongside the New River to hold water for London when the reservoirs at New River Head and Claremont Square in Islington became inadequate, and they still perform that function, though one is used for boating and other now as a nature reserve. We will be guided round the Nature Reserve by a guide from the London Wildlife Trust. The tour will take about an hour and will end at the Coal House Café, an attractive building dating from 1833 that overlooks the reservoir, where tea and other refreshments will be available.

This will be followed by a second optional, more architectural, part of the event. There will be a short walk to see - inside as well as outside if possible - the Woodberry Downs Health Centre (now called John Scott Health Centre), a fine Grade II-listed building of 1949, the first post-war Health Centre, of which the foundation stone was personally laid by Aneurin Bevan. There will then be a walk up Green Lanes and round an attractive secluded stretch of the New River to the

Woodberry Downs Estate, one of the LCC's largest housing estates built over about 25 years from 1946. This has been transferred by Hackney Council in its entirety to Berkeley Homes, who are redeveloping - or 'regenerating' - it piece by piece, including two 30-storey towers. Where there were 1980 homes, mostly social, there will now be 5,500, with less social than previously. There remain two eight-storey architecturally-impressive housing slabs built in 1946 to designs by AJForshaw, the wartime Chief Architect to the LCC and co-author of the 1942 County of London Plan. Some might feel that they too deserve listing. It is expected the tour will end before 4.30pm at the point of departure. To assess numbers (and possibly limit them), and it would be useful if those intending to come could e-mail James Dunnett on jidunnett@gmail.com, or telephone him on 020 7837 5001 or text 07759 303166. There will be a charge of approximately £5 per head (depending on numbers) collected at the start to pay for the London Wildlife Trust guide.

Web Site

Recent years have seen an increasing number of people turning to the internet as a first point of call for information on matters great and small - and that includes our Society members. Unfortunately those who have attempted to keep up to date with Society activities via our web site have too often been frustrated by an absence of current information and too much out of date material.

This unsatisfactory situation is now in the process of being remedied. Our good friends at solicitors Colman Coyle - Robert Coyle is our Hon Treasurer - have undertaken to rebuild and maintain the web site for the future, simplifying its structure and making it much easier for us to keep it updated. For users the changes will be minimal: we are retaining the elegant appearance and broad outline of the content, and the web address www.islingtonssociety.org.uk will remain unchanged. What will disappear are the redundant elements and out of date news and events.

We hope members will welcome these developments and will turn in increasing numbers to the web site for current news of our events and activities. We shall of course continue to send out e-mail alerts from time to time and the newsletter will still be sent by post to all our members. PK

Islington Healthy Streets formed

David Harrison reports on Islington's response to a Mayoral initiative

We have a Vision of a Better Islington: a healthier, more equal, safer borough, with more attractive streets and public spaces.

The Council's planning documents intend that priority should be given to walking, cycling and public transport over private motor traffic. Shockingly, we are a long way from this, even though 76 % of households in Islington do not own a car (according to TfL's Technical Note 12), and even though 41% of trips are made by people walking, and only 17% in cars or motor bikes

More than a quarter of the land in Islington is used for transport-related purposes, mainly roads and railways. In contrast, less than 7% of the land is open space. The Council Transport's Strategy said in 2012: 'This lack of open space makes Islington's streets and public spaces even more important to the quality of life of its residents.'

Imagine an Islington where our streets really are organised for the benefit of the majority. We want Islington to be the best and healthiest borough in which to walk and cycle and enjoy public spaces. Imagine an Islington where there are quiet residential streets free of rat-running traffic in which

- ◆ children can walk or cycle along to school
- ◆ older people can keep active and avoid social isolation.
- ◆ quiet longer routes to allow residents to walk or cycle across the borough
- ◆ streets organised not as places to park cars, but as places where children can play and older people pass the time of day
- ◆ safe crossings on busy roads with plenty of time for people who walk more slowly to cross the road

Removal of obstacles which make life difficult for people with disabilities in wheel chairs or on mobility scooters, and for parents pushing buggies. This is the stated intention of Islington's Local plan, but other imperatives get in the way.

- ◆ fine public spaces which are neither roundabouts nor car parks

Much lower levels of air pollution

The main obstacle to achieving our Vision is the domination of our streets by motor vehicles. Not only do the great majority of households not own a car; even worse, much of the traffic on our streets comes from outside Islington, particularly commuters passing through. This results in:

road crashes (Islington's roads are dangerous, especially for pedestrians (31 killed or seriously injured [KSIs] in 2012) or cyclists (32 KSIs), and the position has got worse since 2012

high levels of air pollution: In 2015, a study by London's Kings College found about 9,500 people died in London each year due to long-term exposure to the pollution

a lack of activity because people are put off walking and cycling, leading to: obesity, diabetes, heart disease, cancer mental illness and many other conditions. 36% of 10-11 year old children in Islington are overweight or obese.

It is the best of times, the worst of times, to paraphrase Charles Dickens, who lived very near to Islington.

It is the worst of times for the reasons given above. But it is the best of times, because change is literally in the air. Sadiq Khan, the Mayor of London has made many statements about air pollution, asking Councils to close roads near schools. Cllr Claudia Webbe has called for a ban on diesel vehicles.

Sadiq Khan has also promised to implement 'Vision Zero' to reduce crashes and casualties.

TfL has set up a Healthy Streets Initiative which will be part of the forthcoming Mayor's Transport Strategy. The Strategy presents the opportunity for fundamental change. In the past, TfL and hence Islington Transport planners gave priority to traffic flow and Journey Reliability Time, which meant walking and cycling improvements took a back seat. This will no longer be the case.

Lucy Saunders of TfL gave a talk about Healthy Streets Initiatives in the Town Hall in December 2016. Following the meeting several of us from a variety of groups in Islington decided to form Islington Healthy Streets to press for major improvements to our streets.

Mission Statement

We aim to bring together as many people and organisations in Islington as possible campaign for improvements to our streets. This includes parents, tenants and residents, disability groups, clinicians, play associations, amenity societies and walking and cycling groups.

A key focus is the health benefits of improving streets and public spaces, and reducing motor vehicle domination.

We will engage with Islington Council and support groups campaigning to:

- ◆ reduce air pollution and traffic near schools
- ◆ scrutinise transport spending to ensure it is used to promote health and the environment
- ◆ help the Council apply for TfL funds such as the Liveable Neighbourhood Fund
- ◆ close rat runs, especially those used by commuters

Islington and the Industrial Revolution

Islington's links with one of the key figures of the Industrial Revolution were marked on May 16th, when the Mayor unveiled a plaque in Northampton Square recording the residency there of Henry Bessemer (later Sir Henry) as a young newly-married man-on-the-make in 1833, in the presence of his great-great-grandson and of other family members. He is principally famous for the invention of the Bessemer Converter, patented in 1856, which for the first time enabled steel to be produced from pig iron cheaply and in huge quantities, in turn making possible the mass-production of railway track, steel ships, structural steel - and armaments. There is a small exhibition of his life and work in the newly-constructed foyer space of City University. Indeed it was a discovery made during excavations for this construction that prompted these celebratory events - the uncovering of the foundations of the former No. 15 Northampton Square, Bessemer's home, under the new entrance to the University, and of documentary evidence that he lived there. The association suits the University's technological remit perfectly. Although Bessemer is primarily associated with steel, and was in fact based in Sheffield for much of his life, he was actually an inventor in many fields, in characteristic Victorian fashion, making his first fortune with a patented gold paint manufactured in a house under what is now the approach to St Pancras Station. He went to great lengths to protect the secrecy of his processes.

The event enabled City University to show off its new entrance, lecture room, and foyer, completed two months previously. Though construction of these has involved the destruction of a considerable amount of the original design in that area, it also signals that the wider masterplan agreed between the University and Planning Department, that would have been destructive in a wider sense, is not to be followed in full. The Student Union block, the central Pavilion in the University's northern Spencer Street frontage, an extended exercise in rough-shuttered 'Brutalist' concrete that was going to have been removed, has instead been attractively refurbished. Let us hope this indicates a positive re-evaluation of the original architecture of the University, designed by Sir Richard Sheppard, Robson and Partners, architects of the contemporary Grade 1-listed Churchill College, Cambridge.



New mayor elected

Islington's new Mayor is Una O'Halloran, a life long resident of Clerkenwell in what will be an important year for the former Borough, on which her father was also a councillor. She was elected at the council meeting on May 11th, which mercifully was not curtailed by "purdah". The election campaign had taken the Shadow Foreign Secretary to foreign parts north of the capital, but happily Jeremy Corbyn was allowed time to attend.

Una represents Caledonian Ward, which meant that she had the benefit of being proposed for Mayor by the veteran councillor and orator, Paul Convery. Paul did not stint in his praise of Una, whose husband Ray will be joining her on the social circuit as Mayor's Consort; and nor was Claudia Webbe's seconding speech merely perfunctory.

Una's charity is the Angel Shed Theatre, a group promoting children's drama in a Borough famed for it.

Educating Islington

The media obsession with Brexit, and the constant stream of stories about crises in the NHS have conspired to keep the education service from the front pages. Yet if the government seriously believes it can reduce education, it must reduce reliance on talent from overseas, and the only way of achieving that would be to educate the indigenous population to meet the employment needs of the 21st century.

There has been a quiet revolution within Islington schools since Blair uttered the mantra Education, education, education. Although health soon replaced it as the number one government priority, and some of the expenditure was frittered on tinkering measures which no government seems able to resist, there has been a considerable upsurge in the performance of London schools in general, and those in Islington in particular. These have seen Islington rise from the relegation zone of the league tables to a place within the top twenty local authorities in the country.

So while the improvement every year in numbers reaching the pass grades at GCSE and A level was tainted by political involvement (at one time there was a fixed number who passed each year, the pass mark adjusted to reflect that. It was assumed that intelligence levels were constant and any variation was down to a slightly easier or marginally more difficult exam paper.), an improvement in relative position could only reflect well on the authority and the schools involved.

After decades in which governors met each year to consider how to apply budget cuts, they were able to consider how additional expenditure could best be used to improve attainment. For all the technological innovation, almost always the answer was to increase the human resources available.

Urban areas benefited most from the funding increases and inevitably those in the shires have cried foul and urged the present government, whose MPs represent most of those areas, to review the funding formula. A new formula was expected to be applied from April 2017, but the change of government last year put this back by twelve months. Now revised proposals have emerged, with the threat of a 10% reduction in funding for most London schools. That amounts to something like a quarter of a million pounds for a two form entry primary school, perhaps

£600,000 for a secondary.

Many independent commentators would say that the improved results across London fully justify the increase in expenditure. Rather than redistribute the existing pot, these results suggest that expenditure might be increased elsewhere. But of course, that runs into competition with health, social care, infrastructure and a continued wish to reduce taxes.

Moreover, the appetite for further administrative change has not been dimmed. Although the expense of converting every local authority school to an academy is no longer compulsory, the government wishes to see further administrative change in the form of a return to grammar schools. Grammar schools are popular with those parents who can get their children into them. The reverse of the coin is that non-grammar schools, which used to be called Secondary Modern schools, are no longer suitable for the modern pattern of employment. The proportion of low skilled jobs as a total of the employment market has slumped since the 1960s.

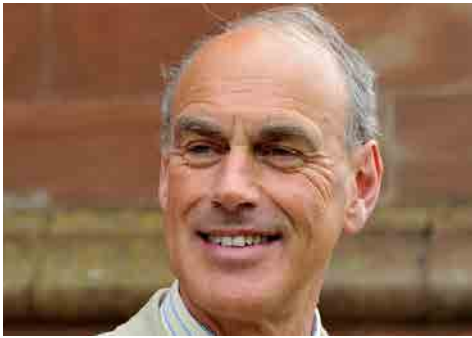
It is to be hoped that a change of personnel in government and Parliament will bring a rethink. AB



Crouch Hill bridge (see page 10)

The State of Planning – A System Under Strain

This article was first published by the Archaeology & History Society last year.



It is nine years since I left Islington Planning Department, where I had worked as urban design and conservation officer for thirty-two years. Since my departure Islington Council, like all local authorities, has been subject to severe Government spending cuts. The capacity of its planning departments, like others across the country, has been put under increasing pressure. The burden placed on local planning departments to fulfill their statutory duties has increased while resources to do the job have reduced.

The sad fact is that many local authority planning departments now have little time to do any more than development control. Old-fashioned 'planning', particularly the preparation of master-plans for large and complicated sites is now often done by firms of consultants. This was the case, for example, on the King's Cross Railway Land site across the border in Camden. Here the master-plan was produced by the architectural firm Allies and Morrison, and more significantly was commissioned and paid for by the developer, Argent.

The involvement of external consultants is ever widespread in the planning process. Planning applications for all but the smallest site now have to be accompanied by a wealth of documents and statements, covering design, heritage, sustainability, environmental impact, daylight and sunlight, travel plans, and in the case of housing, viability. The flaw in the system is that these statements are commissioned and paid for by the

applicant. There is no guarantee whatsoever of impartiality.

My own experience, post-Islington, of working on various controversial schemes, such as Smithfield Market, on behalf of SAVE Britain's Heritage and the Victorian Society, has been both revealing and depressing. It has shown that developers are prepared to pay huge sums to supposedly reputable consultants to say what suits them. In the heritage world one of the consequences of cuts in the public sector is that many people who once worked in local government or English Heritage now work in the private sector where, of course, they have to make a living. It is axiomatic that he who pays the piper calls the tune.

As local authority planning departments have been whittled down, so their ability and capacity to judge the veracity of applicants' documents is also eroded. Even places such as the City Corporation have been hoodwinked. The wind impact analysis submitted by the developer of 20 Fenchurch Street (the 'Walkie' Talkie) claimed that street level conditions would be 'normal'. Following completion of this exceptionally ugly building it has sometimes proved hard to stand up on the surrounding pavements on windy days, and mitigating measures are now required.

Perhaps the most invidious topic has been that of viability statements submitted by developers accompanying schemes which include, or were supposed to include, affordable housing. The widespread suspicion that the figures were often cooked to justify or excuse low levels of affordable provision has, thankfully, now attracted the attention of the new London Mayor, and his Deputy responsible for housing, James Murray. I wish them the best of luck.

It would be a far better and fairer system if the developer/applicant were required to pay an adequate fee to the local planning authority so that it could make its own assessment, either by being able to employ its own in-house experts, or by commissioning its own external advice. After all, it is the local planning authority that needs to evaluate and ultimately judge the planning application, not the applicant.

Without the necessary resources of time and expertise within planning departments the process of dealing with applications can become little more than a box-ticking exercise. At present the fees required to make an application are tiny compared to the costs incurred by the Council in dealing with them, and something urgently needs to be done about this. Moreover this needs to be without 'strings attached'. The idea that developers might pay more for priority treatment does not sit well in a system that should be fair for all.

While there is now a murmur of challenge within the government against the previously prevailing policies of austerity, there is as yet little sign of this actually being reversed within local government planning departments. The latest information from the Institute of Historic Building

Conservation is that, across England, there are 38% fewer conservation officers working in local authorities than in 2008. A worrying number of local authorities, including some London boroughs, now have no conservation specialists.

One of the consequences of financial uncertainty and constraint has been the tendency in local government planning department to hire temporary staff (often from Australia, New Zealand and South Africa) or to offer only short-term contracts. This results in a high rate of turn-over in personnel which does not help the process. Developers can be understandably frustrated when applications are dealt with by a succession of case officers. It is inefficient and prone to error.

'Knowing your patch' was always one of the most important aspects of working in a local planning department. When I first started at Islington in 1975 I learnt a huge amount from more senior colleagues, and in turn I attempted to pass this on to others when I had junior staff to nurture. The value of such accumulated knowledge cannot be underestimated. Sadly, the days when many people would spend most of their career in one Borough have largely gone. Those few who still do so should be applauded and rewarded for their commitment and dedication.

Cutbacks in resources mean that planning departments have had to give priority to their statutory duties, such as dealing with planning applications and producing the statutory Local Plan and Supplementary Guidance. Pro-active work is a luxury that can no longer be afforded. For example, until 2008 Islington had a dedicated Buildings-at-Risk Officer within the Conservation Team whose job was to take action against negligent owners and secure solutions for problematic historic buildings. There was also a large grants programme, operated by two full-time officers, which helped owners and tenants in several commercial conservation areas to improve shop fronts and building façades, and

enhanced the public realm. The results of this good work can still be enjoyed in Chapel Market, Caledonian Road, Whitecross Street, Junction Road Holloway Road. That scheme too was cut, with the kind of result illustrated below.

Meanwhile, among the national media and some government politicians, planners and conservation officers still carry the can for supposedly causing delays, raising 'unnecessary barriers' to development and to stultifying economic growth. They have been completely unfairly blamed for the housing crisis in London and the South-East, when in reality there are numerous schemes with planning permission, potentially creating hundreds of thousands of homes, which developers are simply sitting on. Those are often the very same developers who are pressing the government to relax planning controls even further.

Ever since the first introduction of the Town and Country Planning Act there has been an overwhelming case for a strong and fair planning system. The case is even stronger today, but it has to be a system that is democratically led and accountable, and properly funded. Reduction of controls and privatisation of the system is not the answer. These are the personal thoughts of the author, and in no way represent any official view of any organisation.



Clerkenwell Green

As mentioned in the book review and the report on this year's Mayor making, 2017/18 is set to be an important year for Clerkenwell and for the iconic Clerkenwell Green in particular.

We had hoped to report on Council led proposals for the Green, which has played such a part in the history of St. James' church, and of radical politics through the ages. Readers may have seen complaints from one of the long standing local restaurateurs in the local press that the plans were still "secret".

The council has set up a stakeholders group, presumably including other businesses around the Green, and it is meeting again on June 19th, after which we hope the plans will be public and the subject of a future report.

After the Reformation monasteries were turned into aristocratic houses. The 16th century hall built at the Charterhouse survives nearby. Part of the nunnery became a parish church, but the cloister a house, later Newcastle House. On the south of the Green was Challoner House, owned by a favourite of James I. Interestingly, these mansions were not far from the brothels and criminals of Turnmill St referred to by Shakespeare.

By 1700, the area was changing. Nearby Charterhouse Square was described as 'thoroughly bourgeois. Circa 1720 Red Lion (now Britton) Street was laid out over gardens with 'very regular and beautiful' buildings; a number of the houses survive. The last aristocrat in the area, the 'Mad Duchess', daughter of the Duke of Newcastle, died in 1734; her house was then occupied by a cabinet-maker. Residents also included clockmakers, jewellers, shopkeepers and tradesmen.

In the late 18th century, the splendid Sessions House was erected, St James's church rebuilt and Newcastle House demolished to be replaced by Newcastle Row, two house of which survive in Clerkenwell Close. In the 19th century, taverns and coffee houses on the Green, such as Lunts, attracted radicals. In 1826 Cobbett spoke against the Corn Laws to a large crowd; Chartist meetings became regular events. In the 1860s the Reform League held mass meetings and in 1887 William Morris addressed 5,000 and led a procession towards Trafalgar Square which was attacked by police in the first 'Bloody Sunday'. The economic character of the Green changed. A description in 1871 gives an impression of a bustling, working-class place. The area became a centre of printing, and at No.37A Lenin famously prepared Iskra in 1902-03. He is

reputed to have drunk at the Crown.

The biggest change since the Reformation was the Metropolitan Board of Works' decision to smash a new road, completed in 1878, through the centre of Clerkenwell. Clerkenwell Road cut St John's Square in half, demolishing the Jacobean Burnet House, and destroyed the north end of Britton Street, including the original Jerusalem Tavern and 18th century houses. Buildings were erected along the new road; among the most interesting was the stables for the Great Northern Railway, later Turnmills nightclub, sadly replaced by the current nondescript building in 2011.

The unpopular Metropolitan Board of Works was replaced by London County Council in 1889; the Sessions House became redundant and was eventually sold in 1926 since when it has had numerous uses, and is currently being restored as a hotel. During the 20th century historic houses were demolished. The great threat came in the 1960s when London County Council planned to demolish the northern side of the Green, initiating years of planning blight with 'rubbish-strewn vacant sites'. Fortunately, the scheme was finally dropped and the Green designated a Conservation Area, encouraging its economic regeneration.

However, for many years it has been recognised that the Green's state is unsatisfactory. Developments, including the planned statue of that remarkable feminist, radical and anti-colonialist, Sylvia Pankhurst, and the opening of the Elizabeth Line, mean that improvements are essential. So the Council's proposals for the Green, due this summer, are eagerly awaited. We must hope they put an end to the use of the Green as a car park and rat-run for traffic, and create a fine space for Islington's residents and workers to enjoy. Other plans are being prepared for a Clerkenwell Road Boulevard: how marvellous if they could include the recreation of St John's Square.
DH



Book Review: A history of the Church of St. James Clerkenwell

Nicholas Riddell has produced a detailed and thoroughly researched history of St. James Clerkenwell, from its origins as a Benedictine nunnery in the early twelfth century to the present day.

Its survival from the dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII to become the Parish Church for the whole of Clerkenwell; its subsequent daughter churches as the population of Clerkenwell grew; the role of the Vestry as the precursor of to-day's local government; and how it adapted to the subsequent decline in Protestant worship are all covered in great detail.

The book is a welcome addition to any library of the history of the present London Borough of Islington. Islington has hitherto received better coverage than Finsbury; within Clerkenwell, St. James has been overshadowed by St. John's; and Anglican churches were outside the scope of the marvellous tome *Islington Chapels* produced by the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England which Islington is privileged to have had.

The position of St. James as the Established church meant that the election of its Ministers was intensely political. Riddell debates whether the "Tory Party at prayer" should have been more "Christian Socialist" in addressing the poverty that pervaded throughout Clerkenwell for so long. He concludes that there is a limit to the extent to which the norms of to-day can be applied to the past.

The establishment of new churches in the boom years is equally political, but the financial impact of the changes is of greater concern than any

tension between High and Low church traditions. St. James remains staunchly Low church and Evangelical throughout. There is little scope for false ecumenism, even after the Emancipation Act of 1829.

The final chapter at first reading seems to have little connection with the rest of the book, being an apologia for the incumbent Minister and the transformed use of the building. However, for Society members whose first interest is in conservation, it concludes a theme that runs through the book, namely how old listed buildings can be adapted to changing circumstances. In many cases, there has been a formal change of use, e.g. office/light industrial to residential. No formal planning alteration applies to St. James, but it has gone from contemplative place of worship to community centre with significant changes in worship in between. All of these changes have involved a re-ordering of the building. For many valued buildings the interior is as important as the appearance to those who merely pass by. Being part of the establishment has led to more scrutiny of proposed changes than other churches have enjoyed. The history of how those changes were considered should be essential reading for anyone contemplating modification to similar buildings in future.

The book retails at £18 on Amazon, but those with the energy for a less sedentary life-style can enjoy considerable savings by making their purchase at the church itself, or in the basement of Finsbury Library at the museum entrance. The ISBN number is 978-163587972-8.

Robin Charles Mabey 1935-2017

Members will have been shocked and saddened to learn of the death of Robin Mabey, a regular contributor to this journal and an active member of the Society to the end.

Robin was by profession a civil servant, but he also served as a councillor in the 1970s when a younger and more open generation of Labour Party members assumed control. He worked closely with Margaret Hodge when she chaired the housing committee which bought up Victorian terraces at what would now be seen as bargain basement prices. After leaving the council, Robin became a director of a housing association.

His first foot on the property ladder personally was a "Day" flat in Bewdley Street. Robin and Christine brought up their family in Highbury

Place before retiring to a new development within Highbury that could almost have been named after him.

After his council service, both Robin and Christine remained active members of the Labour Party. Initially they were in Islington Central, represented by the late John Grant, and were sorry at his defection to the SDP. With the boundary changes Highbury moved to Islington North. Though not Corbynistas of the Momentum mould, they were supportive of Jeremy over more than thirty years.

Robin took a keen interest in transport matters, as an active member of Living Streets. He strongly supported Ken Livingstone's pre-Hendy routemaster policy.

We hope to publish a fuller tribute next time.

Transport News Round-up

Central London Bus changes go ahead

In an announcement rushed out ahead of *purdah*, which follows the call of a General Election, Transport for London is going ahead with changes to buses in central London. That the announcement was rushed is clear from the absence of any rebuttal of the arguments advanced in opposition to some of the changes.

Islington Council had objected to curtailing the 73 at Oxford Circus. The Mayor wants to reduce or even eliminate buses from Oxford Street, although it is difficult to see how a comprehensive bus service could be provided without Oxford Street. Although its predominantly pedestrian nature results in accidents, it is difficult to believe that use of parallel roads not designed for traffic would be safer.

The original impetus for cutting buses from Oxford Street was the number of empty buses, but terminating at Oxford Circus reduces the load of passengers. If the new routes are set up to fail it will reduce the opposition to total pedestrianisation. More recently, use of buses in zone 1 has gone into decline, almost certainly because of the growth in construction work has led to diversion and delay.

HS2 has Royal assent

HS2 Ltd. now has authority to proceed with its White Elephant railway, even though it has no agreed means of reaching Euston, no plan for the redevelopment of Euston station, no prospect of a link to HS1, and seemingly no limit on its cost.

Our neighbours the Camden Society have been holding events to celebrate St. James' Gardens while they are still there. They remain hopeful that a change of personnel at the Treasury and the Department of Transport will bring a rethink. The odds on new personnel are shorter than those on any of the political parties winning.

Mayor's transport plan delayed

The much awaited draft Mayors Transport Strategy had to be postponed under the rules of *purdah*, once a General Election was called. The rules seem to get a stricter interpretation with every election, which is a recipe for putting off decision making.

Consultations already in progress continue. Bizarrely, an information desk about the proposals for trains in the south-east was cancelled (without notice). Eventually an extension of the consultation period was announced.

Barking/Gospel Oak

There was no rush to beat *purdah* with an announcement of when work on electrification would resume. Rumour has it that all skilled

personnel are already booked for the foreseeable future. Delays to Crossrail would not be politically acceptable.

There is no suggestion that the work so far undertaken would be abandoned, but the outgoing government has gone cold on electrification, aside from HS2. Many insiders believe the enthusiasm for bi-modal trains is misplaced. These new passenger trains carry the weight of diesel equipment even when they are taking power from overhead wires. Their use does nothing for freight, which is a heavy user of the Gospel Oak line.

Purdah notwithstanding, a series of Sunday closures in June and weekend closures in July has been announced. But the major work, requiring closure of the Crouch Hill and diversion of the W7 bus, will take longer both to plan and to undertake. One of the many oversights Network Rail made was of the need to close the road bridge (pictured on page five).

Water main repairs

The road network, and in particular bus services have been thrown into chaos by the work to the water mains. The intention is laudable enough, to prevent an unplanned closure and much damage besides by reinforcing the main against untimely breach. But the timing, when the diversionary route for buses is via Highbury Corner constricted by its bridge works, and the inadequacy of the remaining southbound lane in Upper Street, has meant more empty buses and frustrated would be travellers.

During the course of the work, there was another burst south of the Angel, affecting homes and businesses in St. John Street, Clerkenwell. Schools were forced to close for a day as they were left without water.

Last D stock train retired

The "D" stock trains introduced to the District line in 1979 have now all been retired from service. All trains are now of the articulated variety which enable passengers to walk through to the next carriage without opening doors. The private firm Vivarail is trying to convert the D stock trains for use on National Rail tracks. Their last run did not attract anything like the interest shown in the last Routemaster buses. Of more interest will be the 1938 stock which continues to operate on the Isle of Wight, but which is more than life expired. Islanders fear they could lose the service altogether when the trains become too old to operate reliably.

AB

Islington Society: 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 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 publish a regular newsletter
- Our web site is **www.islingtonociety.org.uk**

CURRENT OFFICERS

President : Lord Smith of Finsbury

Vice President: Mary Cosh

Chairman: David Gibson, 020 7-226 2207; e-mail@dgibarch.co.uk

Secretary: David Trillo 45, Ellington Street, London, N.7 020 7-607 9325; e-mail david@trillo.net

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Events Secretary: Andrew Clayton andrew.clayton@blueyonder.co.uk

Society mail: Resource Centre, 356, Holloway Road, London, N.7

Future Society events

The Society gives reminders by e-mail of meetings about a week before they are held. Please let the Secretary have your e-mail address if you are not on the existing mailing list.

Friday June 23rd: the Bill Manley Memorial Pub Crawl continues to explore different pubs of Islington. After two years in the north of the Borough this year we return to the Angel area. We aim to start at the Alma in Chapel Street, at 6 p.m.. As the sixth pub is still short of the Angel station it can be seen that there is not much crawling. The Joker (former Salmon & Compass), The Craft Beer Company (former Lord Wolsey), The Three Johns, the Castle (former Criterion, and where the Hatton Garden jewel robbery was plotted) and the Angel are provisionally the stops we will make at hourly intervals.

Saturday July 29th Visit to Woodberry Wetlands, 2 p.m. (see page two)



Annual Dinner: Tuesday October 3rd (see page 2).

Society publications

[available from the Society at Resource for London, 356 Holloway Rd., London, N.7 or local bookshops]

Next Newsletter

Copy date for our next newsletter is October 1st, 2017. The views expressed in the newsletter are not necessarily those of the chair, the editor, or the Society's adopted policy.

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

Books from our President and Vice-President

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

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

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

June 26th Mayor's Transport Strategy
September 11th Mayor's housing strategy
October 12th AGM and annual awards
November 28th The London Plan

Islington Museum & Local History Centre
245, St. John Street. tel. 7-527 2837

May 6th - June 24th. Exhibition "Islington in the Spanish Civil War".

Estorick Collection of Modern Italian Art, 39a Canonbury Square

Opening hours Wed. to Sat. 11 a.m.- 6 p.m.,
Sunday 12 noon-5 p.m.

5th July to 10th September: "Franco Grignani, Art as Design 1950-1990.

Almeida Theatre,

Almeida Street, N.1 0207 359 4404

Monday-Saturday 7.30 p.m., Saturday matinée 2.30 p.m.

Friday 9th June to 2nd September. "Hamlet" by William Shakespeare, directed by Robert Icke.

Islington University of the Third Age (U3A)
Monthly Meetings at 10.30 am, The Resource Centre, 356 Holloway Road: details and membership www.IslingtonU3A.org.

Islington U3A has about 500 members with many special interest groups, mostly meeting in members' homes. The annual Clues Trail takes place on August 23rd; there is a visit to the Park Theatre, Finsbury Park on September 7th for Joe Orton's black comedy "Loot", fifty years after his death. The group is holding an open day on Monday October 2nd.

Rosemary Branch

2, Shepperton Road, N.1 0207704 6665

Upstairs at the Gatehouse

North Road/ Hampstead Lane, N.6 0208 340 3488

24th June - 2nd July: Kindertransport

5th-15th July: The Ladykillers

21st July - 6th August: Treating Odette

1st-27th August: Camden Fringe Festival

30th August -1st October: 9 to 5

Old Red Lion Theatre

418, St. John Street, E.C.1

May 23rd- July 2nd: Brick Lane Theatre festival

Other Events in or around Islington:

Archaeology & History Society (7.30 p.m. Islington Town Hall)

Non-IA&HS members welcome, donation invited. Further information in the web site.

Wednesday 21st June. AGM followed by Dr. Cathy Ross and Maggie Elliott speaking on Five hundred years of Richard Cloudesley's Charity.

Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings

Autumn series of lectures on November Thursdays, 2nd, 9th, 16th, 23rd. £11 each of four for £40, which includes refreshments. Details and booking form from www.spab.org.uk

Sadler's Wells Theatre, The Peacock and Lilian Baylis Studio

Rosebery Avenue, E.C.1. Website for details: "www.sadlerswells.com/whats-on/list."

23rd - 27th June, "elixir festival"

18th to 23rd July. "English National Ballet" at the Peacock Theatre.

20th to 23rd September. "English National Ballet" at Sadler's Wells.

King's Head Theatre

Opera: Tosca 27th September - 8th October

Drama: Incident at Vichy, 7th-25th June.

London Forum of Civic & Amenity Societies

020 7993 5754

All meetings at The Gallery, 77 Cowcross Street, at 6 p.m. for 6.30. The schedule below is subject to draft consultation documents being published prior to the planned date. Please check with the Forum if in doubt.