

ISLINGTON *news*

The Journal of the Islington Society

New Chairman elected

After several months of deliberation, the Society Committee has unanimously chosen Peter Kilborn as our new Chairman , in succession to David Gibson.

Peter writes as follows. "I arrived in Islington in 1974 from the outer London suburbs where I grew up, buying - as many young people have done - a Day flat for what now seems a ludicrously small amount of money. After a decade I moved to Milner Square and, after I had met and married my wife, we bought the house in Bewdley Street where we have lived ever since and brought up our family. That was when we joined the Islington Society, because our next-door neighbour turned out to be Marion Harvey (then Chair of the Society) and she was insistent that we do.

"I was not an active member until in 2013, after I had retired from a long career in the book publishing industry, I responded to a note in the Society newsletter that a membership secretary was needed. Over time I became increasingly involved in other aspects of the Society's management, notably communication with members and the rescuing of a poorly functioning web site.

"I have loved Islington and wanted to live here ever since I first saw it in the 70s. Despite the many changes that have taken place (many of them for the better as living standards have risen) I still love its diversity, the beauty of its buildings and green space, and its indefinable but unmistakable ethos. I am very conscious and proud of the legacy I

have inherited in the Society, with its distinguished record of battles fought and successfully won, and I am confident that with the support of Andrew Clayton as vice-Chairman and our talented and versatile committee the Society will continue to thrive mightily."

As Peter wrote, Andrew Clayton has been elected vice-Chairman. With the difficulties now being experienced by the Archaeology & History Society, the Committee was anxious that we should do more to promote the historical side of Islington. Andrew's role in promoting the refresh of the local list uniquely qualifies him. In his position as Vice-Chair, Andrew Clayton hopes to continue the society's work on documenting and publicising the merits of Islington's locally listed buildings. He hopes to work with the Council to make it easier to introduce new buildings to the list and make sure the Council protects them properly. He also wants to continue working with the Islington town centres to ensure their economic well being, making them vigorous and attractive places to shop. This is particularly true of the Nag's Head and Angel town centres where the Society is represented on the management groups. He would also like to build the numbers of Society members, and if possible bring down the average age a bit.

Covid Saga - Chapter 5

When our Summer issue went to press, there were still hopes that a final stage of unlocking might occur in June but in the event it was delayed until July. Infection rates were rising again and were no lower when the lockdown restrictions were lifted. Islington, having dropped into the light blue on the map of infection rates, soared into amber with only red and puce above that.

As this issue goes to press, rates of infection remain high over the country but Islington, now yellow on the map, has the lowest rate in London and is in the lowest ten in the country. The coastal and rural areas, which previously had low rates, are now among the highest. "Staycations" in Cornwall have been

blamed but there are people taking Staycations in London. Islington's low rate initially was associated by some with our relatively young population, but the more recent wave has targeted younger people still awaiting full vaccination. Islington, and London, remain in the relegation zone when it comes to vaccination rates.

Infection rates remain high in the UK relative to mainland Europe, but the vaccination programme has reduced the severity of illness and the need for hospital admissions. Organisations, including ours, remain cautious about holding face to face meetings; work from home is here to stay and has changed retail and hospitality patterns - for good in the north of the Borough, for ill close to the city.

Islington Society News

It's sad to report that the Islington Archaeological and Historical Society, originally an offshoot of the Islington Society, is currently dormant. In its time it has been a vigorous and interesting society, publishing an excellent newsletter and attracting contributions to its Facebook page from far and wide. The retirement of key volunteers has meant that it has - at least for the time being - run out of road.

Its activities have not in recent years been in any kind of conflict with the Islington Society, which has concentrated on the present and future of Islington rather than its history. Coincidentally that has to an extent changed recently, notably because of our engagement with the Local List and Andrew Clayton's excellent series of walks (which are on the web site at Walking Guides | The Islington Society), and it has become ever clearer that the historical past is an important component of what goes on in Islington now.

We hope to continue to extend this aspect of the Society's activity in the future through events which focus on Islington's history and legacy, offering our members some of the functions and activities that IAHS has provided in the past, and that as a result members of IAHS might want to join us in our shared love for and appreciation of the borough. PK

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

The views expressed in the Islington Society's Journal are not necessarily those of the Editor or the Society's adopted policy.

Our web site is www.islingsontsociety.org.uk

Next Newsletter

Copy date for our next newsletter is February 6th, 2022. The views expressed in the journal are not necessarily those of the chair, the editor, or the Society's adopted policy.

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Residents fight Regent Quarter Development

Albion Yard, Regent Quarter

Local residents are organising resistance against new proposals for the redevelopment of Regent Quarter in King's Cross. The Islington Society is supporting their campaign and has outlined its objections in advance of the council planning committee review of the developers' proposals. The area was first redeveloped in the early 2000s and is widely regarded as a successful example of how to renovate and renew urban industrial areas. Albion Yard in particular retains its Victorian atmosphere and is an attractive place to live and visit. Varnishers Yard, to the south of the proposed redevelopment, houses popular restaurants and bars. The developers wish to get more value out of the area by raising the height of

some existing buildings and increasing the amount of space available for retailers.

The Islington Society believes the developers' proposals will destroy the spirit of the existing Regent Quarter and threaten already successful areas like Albion Yard and Varnishers Yard. Many of the buildings are local listed and the society believes the extra height and mass of the developers' proposals would threaten their integrity. This is particularly true of Albion Yard and the row of buildings facing King's Cross station at the southern end of York Way.

The Islington Society will continue to support local residents in their opposition to the new development.

AC



No. 156 Junction Road, during demolition in July.

Historic former station master's house demolished

Demolition has been completed of the former station master's house on Junction Road. The Better Archway Forum, The Islington Society and others have fought to save it, but the most recent application to demolish the building and redevelop the site has been approved by Islington Council.

No. 156 Junction Road was not locally listed, or in a Conservation Area and was therefore unprotected and vulnerable. An application to Historic England for national Grade II listing was turned down last year. In the end the council had no choice but to approve the application by the developers, in spite of the architectural merits of the building and its historic importance. The processes for adding the

building to the Islington Register of Locally Listed Buildings, or of extending the St. John's Conservation Area to include it, proved to be too cumbersome in this case.

Historic England recognised the architectural qualities of the building, noting that the "careful grouping of classical features, notably the round-headed arch and sash window, and the cornice with moulded eaves give the house a pleasing villa-like appearance". Historically it was the last surviving remnant of the old Junction Road station and a fine example of Victorian railway architecture. It was also a well-known landmark at the western end of Junction Road, and will be sorely missed.

AC

Something Ratty Down Graham Street

The Graham Arms was one of several establishments selling alcoholic drinks on what is now Graham Street, N1 (a few minutes' walk from Angel Station and City Road). It is listed as a beer retailer in various commercial directories between 1848 and 1944. There would have been a large potential clientele from the wharves and workplaces on and around City Road Basin and Wenlock Basin and from the dense housing in the immediate area. The Graham Arms was originally at no 18, but when in 1879 the name Graham Street was given also to the continuation down to City Road, previously Macclesfield Street North, the Graham Arms was renumbered as 103. At no 65 stood The Duke of Bridgewater pub (later The Fallen Angel, and now converted to residential use) and The Prince of Wales stood at 139 (now the Plaquemine Lock). The Ordnance Survey maps, from 1871, would suggest that the Graham Arms was little wider than the adjoining terraced houses. A photo exists of nos. 105 and 107, and a door to no 103, which shows the modest nature of the terrace. In due course the houses were all condemned for redevelopment and Jessop Court now stands on the site.



In 1835, and then extended in 1849 by an 'Act for the more effectual Prevention of Cruelty to Animals', the 'fighting or baiting [of] any bull, bear, badger, dog, cock, or other kind of animal, whether of domestic or wild nature' was banned. As a result, some in society lost the entertainment and associated gambling they enjoyed pursuing and watching these so-called 'sports'. But a blind eye was turned to one form of such 'fighting or baiting', which arose as a substitute for the better-known versions. Rats, while clearly animals within the meaning of the Act, did not in practice receive the protection of the law.

During the period that Mr J Ferriman ran the Graham Arms, in the 1850s and 1860s, customers came from much further afield than just the local

neighbourhood. For this was, for a time, the home of 'ratting' or 'rat-baiting', matches in which dogs were pitted against rats, not to see who won - the dogs always won - but to see how many rats the dogs could kill in a set time.¹ Rats no doubt were in plentiful supply in the area and the rat-catcher adapted his skills to collect rats alive rather than dead. Just how plentiful the supply was becomes clear in the advertising for the ratting matches. A 'pit', a small enclosed arena built to hold a dog and rats, was constructed for the battles to be played out in, and the sport not only gave the opportunity for the dog owner to win a prize but also spectators could bet on the outcome, bets being placed on either the number of rats that a dog could kill in a set time or the time it needed to kill a specific number. Dogs would also compete against one another to see which was most effective in killing rats. In addition there was a market in prize ratting dogs and their offspring. The nature of the location and some indication of the nature of the sport can be seen in the engraving below. Quite what the neighbours made of it (and there were many in the multi-occupied houses in the terrace) is not known.



Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle regularly announced match nights and provided match reports. On 16 December 1860 the journal announced: 'The great rat match for Mr Brown's bitch Jenny to destroy 100 large barn rats in eight minutes, for £20 a side will come off at J Ferriman's, Graham Arms, Graham-street, Macclesfield-street North, City-road tomorrow (Monday) commencing at eight o'clock. On this occasion 300 rats will be destroyed. The sparring takes place every Wednesday evening, under the able management of Jemmy Shaw and a host of talent.' The regulation of these events is clear with the frequent references to 'The printed ratting rules' which 'can be had gratis.' Admission to the events was by ticket, and a ticket for Jenny's match on 17th December 1860 survives:



©East Sussex Brighton & Hove Record Office AMS 5575/4/58/7

On the rear of the ticket, the further 'attraction' of Captain taking on the challenge of 30 rats in two minutes 'for £10 aside' was advertised. The report for this match appeared on 23 December 1860 in the Chronicle. Jenny dispatched the 100 rats with 45 seconds to spare. The evening continued, and 'The dog Captain belonging to the same gentleman, Mr Brown, destroyed thirty large rats under [sic] two minutes. Numerous other dogs of the small kind took their turn to the amusement of a large muster. Upwards of 300 rats were destroyed during the evening'. A further match report, published in the Chronicle on 5 May 1866, describes a similar match to that of Jenny's: 'On Monday evening last there was a good attendance at the Graham Arms . to witness the match in which Mr J Ferriman's dog Sam had to destroy 100 rats in 8 minutes. It will be remembered that Sam was matched to destroy the same number of rats in 7 min on Feb 26 but lost by several seconds, owing to be out of condition. All

being in readiness Sam commenced his task (being cleverly handled by his owner). In the first minute he had destroyed almost 20 rats, and when three minutes was called he had placed half the rats hors de combat: he continued his work in gallant style and completed his task in 7 min 5 sec, thus having 55 sec to spare.¹ Sam therefore killed the rats at an average rate of one every 4.25 seconds. The evening finished with some 'light entertainment': 'An excellent evening's sport was brought to a conclusion with an amusing exhibition of ratting with the mongoose - which of itself is worth a visit - ferrets and small dogs' The following Monday not only Mr George's dog Smoker and Mr Cocker's dog Billy were set to perform, but 'also the mongoose is matched to destroy six rats against a ferret's six'. The Graham Arms was not the only London venue for ratting, but to it came the honour of putting on 'the great All-England Ratting Sweepstakes, for two solid silver prizes: first prize a sterling silver snuff-box, second a sterling silver dog collar' on Monday 14th January 1867. The article promoting the sweepstakes also advertised that Mr Ferriman's 'large stud of dogs can be seen at any time'. Mr Ferriman had developed what seems to have been a lucrative source of income, not only attracting customers to his beer retailing business, but making money from the wagers, charging admission to the events as well as making money from breeding fighting dogs. GE

1 For some further information about ratting see <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rat-baiting> and <http://www.staffordmall.com/stoutheart-rats.htm>

Society publications

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

A walk up Essex Road, from Islington Green to Balls Pond Road

This walk takes us down what was once Lower Road to the junction with Balls Pond Road. Much of this route was through open fields until the mid 1800s, with settlements at the south at Islington and at the north at Balls Pond. The walk continues Andrew Clayton's series based on the updated version of Islington's register of Locally Listed Buildings, recently completed by the Islington Society.

Essex Road contains a distinguished patchwork of Historic England Grade II listed buildings and a sequence of locally listed buildings which add to the mix. Starting at the junction with St. Peter's Street, Alfredo's Snack Bar is on the right, part of a terrace of nationally listed early 19th century buildings. The 1949 exterior of Alfredo's is relatively untouched, using materials like Formica and Vitrolite which were new at the time. Others in the sequence of shopfronts are locally listed. The best is on the corner with Colebrook Row. It retains most of its original features, including the leaded, multi-paned frosted glass above the transom.

Essex Road has an extraordinary number of pubs, almost all on street corners. The best, nationally listed, is at No. 44, The Queen's Head. Rebuilt in the 1830s, the tiling was added around 1900, when many of London's pubs were tiled on the ground floor. The Queen's Head is magnificent outside, and even better inside, with an early 17th century plaster ceiling and fireplace from the original building on this site.



The Queen's Head, Essex Road

Further along, Nos.. 66 and 68 Essex Road would have been among the first houses to be built along this section of what was then Lower Street, when the area round Popham Street and Britannia Row was developed. They are plain Georgian terrace houses, though as fashions changed in the mid-1800s stucco architraves and a cornice were added to No. 68. No. 70, on the other side of Britannia Row, is Historic England Grade II listed and contains some important early 18th century panelled interiors. H.E. suggests that No. 70 may have originally been built as a shop,

rather than having the front inserted later, so perhaps the same might apply to Nos.. 66 & 68.



66 & 68 Essex Road

Cross to the left-hand side at the point Essex Road begins to widen. Nos.. 67 and 69 make a handsome pair of Georgian terraced houses. The façades have been renewed with dormers at roof level but their character remains. As you walk along, the road falls away to the right and the pavement is stepped higher, covering the course of the New River. Parts of the river were covered over, hence this area of raised pavement. Nos.. 79 to 85 are nationally listed, late 17th century in origin, re-fronted in the late 18th century and extended in the 20th. Inside, above the ground floor, the late 17th century interiors are largely intact.

On the north corner of Cross Street, seven single storey shops with a concrete balustrade curves round Cross Street and Essex Road. No. 4 Cross Street is locally listed as a shopfront. They were built at the same time as the South Library in Essex Road (nationally listed) and so can be dated to 1921. No.4 is an important example of a shopfront of that era. Parts of the overall structure are in poor condition but enough remains to give this shopfront its value.

Across the road you see another of Essex Road's corner pubs, on the junction with Popham Street, recently refurbished and restored. Locally listed in 1993 as The Half Moon, it is now The Alpaca with the Taylor Walker fascia. It retains its green mottled tiling up to window level and plain green tiling up to the fascia. The leaded windows also remain. There was a pub on this site from the 1790s, but the current

structure is later, with the tiled exterior late Victorian or Edwardian.

A bit further along is another fine pub, the Green Man. It dates from around the same time as the magnificent Peabody Square behind it in Greenman Street, built as “model dwellings for the industrious classes” in 1864-5, by architect Henry Darbshire for the Peabody Trust. The pub was built on the site of the Lower Street Meeting House, a chapel for dissenters.

As with many urban walks, the interest level now drops a bit. Apart, that is, from the former Carlton Cinema on the left. It has a multicoloured Egyptian front, with recessed columns. Inside is equally magnificent, though now locked, in the Empire style. “Lavish” Pevsner calls it.

Stride on, across the junction with New North Road, until you get to Annette Crescent. This is now concealed behind the vigorous growth of trees in the gardens in front, and best viewed walking round the crescent. It is early for Islington terrace housing, 1819, with well-preserved details, particularly the ironwork.

Close by is No. 292 Essex Road, an important early 1800s landmark and a memorial to a long forgotten industrial process. It was built in 1812 and by 1829 occupied by Samuel Ridley and Company, the leading manufacturer of floorcloth in London. Floorcloth was a precursor of linoleum and was much in fashion in the 1700s and the first half of the 1800s. It was laid on top of wooden or stone floors, often imitating complex tile, parquet and marble patterns. Its demise came with the invention of linoleum in 1855, and by the late 1800s this building was occupied by Probyn's, a beer bottling company which used the elevation of the building to display giant beer bottles. 292 Essex Road was taken over by Islington Council in 1972 and turned into offices. The windows were then inserted into the front elevation and they make a mess of what was once a coherent Georgian Baroque industrial structure. But if you mentally blank out the windows above the ground floor, you can get a good idea of what was a very grand building for Georgian and early Victorian Essex Road. Giant Ionic pilasters rise from the first floor carrying an entablature with a central pediment and balustrade at the top.



292 Essex Road,
watercolour before
the windows were
added

The next major landmarks are Nos. 324 to 328. They are hard to make out as they are set back behind later shopfronts. Cross the road and you can see a line of gable ends above the shops which are all that remain of the failed Islington Cattle Market. This opened in 1836 to challenge the cruelties and abuses of the Smithfield Market, where cattle were slaughtered close to the City of London itself. The Islington market was a well-designed enterprise. But it failed quickly, not because locals objected but because Smithfield's vested interests managed to get it closed down. The market itself was set at an angle to Lower Road and these buildings are marked on the map as market workers' cottages.



Nos.. 324-328, the last remnants of the 1836 cattle market. We walk past two more fine former pubs at Nos.. 382 and 412 until we get to what was the old village of Balls Pond, at the end of Essex Road. This had ancient origins but was given focus in 1826 with the building of St. Paul's Church by Sir Charles Barry. On the instructions of the Church Commissioners, it was almost an exact copy of Barry's St. John's Church at the top end of Holloway Road.

There are three buildings nearby which predate most other development and give a good idea of what the village may have been like in the 1820s and 30s before the development of nearby terraces from the 1840s onwards. Nos.. 1 and 3 Newington Green Road are unadorned cottages. There is stucco moulding around the door of No. 3, but otherwise little decoration. No.4 St. Paul's Road on the other hand is an exceptional example of a late Georgian or Regency Tudor style cottage. At the time it was built, 1833/4, it stood by itself, with Nos.. 1 and 3 Newington Green Road round the corner and 1790s terraces on the other side of Newington Green Road, of which traces survive at Nos.. 16-20.

This rural grouping makes a contrasting end to our stroll up the Essex Road and its nationally and locally listed buildings.

Carl Ludwig Franck and the New City of Finsbury

The Metropolitan Borough of Finsbury embarked on a vigorous housing programme in the 1920s and early 1930s, but not until it encountered the first of three key architects, Berthold Lubetkin (1901-1990) in 1935 was the vision of a new city to take shape. By the time the Metropolitan Borough was abolished thirty years later it had rebuilt itself perhaps more comprehensively than any other. It may be hyperbole to call the achievement - or even the ambition - that of creating a new city, but it was an era when architectural thought was focused on what should be the new form of city to suit the machine age, the motorcar age, and hence the new form of its principal component, housing. The primary aim was to humanise housing, to introduce nature to it (by building taller so as to free more ground surface), to make it a suitable environment for the whole population not the few, and these Modern Movement ideas on the subject were embodied as much in the new Finsbury as in the contemporary new city of Brasilia. The inception in 1956 of the Brasilia project as new capital for Brazil coincided with the assumption of the role of chief housing architect for Finsbury by Carl Ludwig Franck (1904-1985), the most prolific of its three consecutive housing architects (the second having been Joseph Emberton, 1889-1956). The contract to build the last of Franck's estates, the Finsbury Estate, was signed on the eve of the dissolution of the Borough, and continued building till 1970, coinciding closely with the end of the ideal of the 'New City'. The next generation of architects - John Melvin, Harley Sherlock, Kenneth Pring in Islington, Neave Brown and his school in Camden, for example, wanted their housing to fit into the city as it existed. They wanted to conform to the city, not reshape it. Their work is lauded for that aim, but it is also worth trying to understand the ideals of those they succeeded - especially since it is under attack even from the present London Borough of Islington (LBI), ever on the look-out for 'unused' green pockets on which to build more housing. But those green pockets were fundamental to the vision of its predecessor, the Metropolitan Borough.

Franck is less well-known than his two predecessors, partly because he was more self-effacing and perhaps less imaginative, but Lubetkin said of him 'truly I never saw such a talent' and, as the winner of the Rome Prize for 1931 he was regarded as the brightest architectural student of his year in Germany.

His work certainly merits study and appreciation. He was a pupil in Berlin of the leading architect of his day in Germany, Hans Poelzig, famed for his Expressionistic inventions such as the Grosses Schauspielhaus in Berlin of 1919 as well as the massive and more rationalist HQ building for IG

Farben in Frankfurt of 1929-31 (on which Franck worked). Franck was progressively forced out of practice in Nazi Germany either because he was Jewish himself or because his wife was Jewish (accounts differ). He arrived with family in London and established himself in Lubetkin's firm Tecton as a 'drainage expert of international standing' where his role is portrayed in John Allan's book as a draughtsman of infinite patience, willing to draw multiple versions of a particular façade to facilitate choice. But he was evidently a man of very considerable intellectual background, as is evident from Charlotte Benton's short profile of him in *A Different World: Emigré Architects in Britain 1928-1958* (1995).

The precise sequence in which he built the various Estates for Finsbury between 1956 and 1965 is not significant, but in 1959 came the gently curved Mulberry Court, 37 flats on six storey's on Percival Street adjacent to the Brunswick Estate (by Joseph Emberton, on which Franck also worked), the Pleydell Estate further east, and the King Square Estate. Of Mulberry Court the Survey of London says that it "transcends Emberton's unforgiving formalism and more closely reflects Franck's grounding with Tecton. Here the fluted balcony fronts survive. These pre-cast elements were intended as a decorative solution to rainwater streaking. The roof, with an aerofoil, was designed as a sun terrace and the forecourt [an extensive green area overlooked by all flats] as a recreation area". It was built for single people, many of them single mothers, and an extensive pram storage area was provided. The curved format recalls the block that Walter Gropius built for the Interbau housing exhibition in Berlin in 1957. Curves were to be a feature of many details in Franck's designs, especially at roof or entrance level, and in the layout.

The two identical 17-storey blocks of the Pleydell Estate are aligned and form a powerful symmetrical composition with two single-storey outlying blocks, standing together in a generous landscaped area continuous with Radnor Gardens and St Luke's churchyard, with a further 6-storey L-shaped block to the north. The two taller blocks illustrate a pattern that was repeated in at least six other versions in other estates - a shallow U in plan with open access galleries running between the two arms and with cylindrical paired rubbish or ash chutes running up symmetrically on either side forming a pronounced feature, and with the roof capped by a curved pediment-like feature enclosing a space of unknown purpose. They had a steel frame structure since Franck believed cross-walls would be too restrictive for future replanning - a technical solution that was called 'the Finsbury model'. Their wall surfaces are generally brick, with painted

concrete or precast elements, and there are curved porch canopies faced underneath with a powerful red mosaic, with canted hoods or canopies to either side reminiscent of Tecton's work.

The King Square Estate expands the garden of war-damaged King Square and picks up the axial relationship that Philip Hardwick's surviving church, St Clement's King Square (1822) had with it, extending the pedestrian axis through the garden and under a giant shallow arch supporting 20-storey Turnpike House above (a variant of the Pleydell Estate type). A six storey linear block defines the northern edge of the gardens and overlooks them, while a two-storey block overlooks them from the far side of Lever Street to the south. At many times of the year with their mature trees the King Square Gardens are truly a setting for the Green City. Beyond the church is a paved shopping square, an attractive urban space. Recently Islington Council have built substantial amounts of new housing on formerly open space either side of Turnpike House. Whilst not overly harmful, this is beginning to encroach on that feeling of openness, light, and greenery that was the fundamental objective of the design - the quid-pro-quo for building taller.

The last Estate was the Finsbury Estate. The site was created by diverting vehicular traffic to a realigned Skinner Street to the south. A green continuum was then established from the site across the street to Skinner Street Gardens and Spa Fields on the south side. Newly created green spaces to the back of Tecton's Finsbury Health Centre fulfilled an old dream. A pedestrian route was then created through the estate marked by an arch at its western end and passing through generous gardens under a deep red mosaic-clad curvaceous canopy under 25-storey Michael Cliffe House (a variant of the Pleydell type again, named after the Chairman of Finsbury's Housing Committee) which dominates the estate. This tower is again topped by a curved canopy or roof of uncertain purpose with lights let into its soffit (still operating) to ensure that it makes its statement at night as well as in the day. The path then passes under Patrick Coman House with its curved roof and façade features and past the Finsbury Library with its curved ceiling and frontage to St John's Street, supported on green mosaic-clad columns. Through Northampton Square leads to the start of the King Square axis - a grand urban conception for the New City.

Apart from the Estates described, Franck built a number of detached blocks, some on the Pleydell pattern, such as Peregrine House - the tallest of the 'Pleydell' type at 26 storeys - which stands obliquely alongside City Road, Kestrel House and Rahere House

(17 storeys), both again on the Pleydell pattern and standing further back from City Road, 9-storey Macclesfield House, on Central Street, and others on Donegal Street near King's Cross. Franck was seemingly aware that because of their height, they would be seen in relationship to one another over quite long distances. So Peregrine House and Kestrel House are at right angles, not adjacent, to one another, having a spatial relationship from afar, moulding the space between them, Rahere House is parallel to Kestrel House, and Peregrine House is on the same alignment as Turnpike House. The axis shifts slightly across St John's Street, and Michael Cliffe House (pictured below) is on the same alignment as the principal blocks of Tecton's Spa Green Estate, with which Franck would have been entirely familiar. This is a kind of realisation of the idea of the 'spatial city', which was the ideal of the Modern Movement - relationships across space, 'city planning in three dimensions'. JD



Book review

1980s London: Making the Best of It

This is a personal account of life in London in the 1980s, a sequel to the author's earlier work 1970s London: Discovering the Capital. It is somewhat Islington centric, unsurprisingly as the author lived and worked in the Borough throughout the period under review, but the breadth of his interests: buildings, music, pubs, street markets, eateries, sport, local politics to name but seven, take him and the narrative across the whole of London and occasionally beyond.

It is a timely reminder of how London has changed, both in appearance and in the attitude of its citizens, since the period in which the population declined to its lowest point since the war and began to climb. The text is well annotated with footnotes that bring the story up to date, including the Coronavirus years. The easily readable style will appeal to those interested in our social history who do not want an A Level text book on the subject.

A particular pleasure for me was the reminder of some of the characters that graced the planning department in the Islington, many of whom survived into the 90s but whose names go unrecorded in the directories of the time. Battersea Power station is probably more recognisable from the 1980s photograph than some of the politicians of the day who are still around now.

There are one or two errors of detail but they do not detract from the general sense of the story. Alec Forshaw was for twenty years one of the most respected conservation officers in London and has continued to provide advice and guidance to those seeking to preserve and enhance the built environment ever since.

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Major Changes to MHCLG

It has been announced that the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) will become the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, in line with the Government's "central mission" to "level up every part of the UK".

Andy Haldane, the former Bank of England Chief Economist, has been appointed as the new Head of the Levelling Up Taskforce. The taskforce will report jointly to the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Michael Gove. Mr. Gove has already announced that plans to reform the planning system will be paused. This is taken by most commentators as a reflection on the disquiet expressed by back-bench Tory M.P.s and the result of the Amersham & Chesham by-election.

Brutalist Tower Delisted & Demolished

During her first morning in office as the new Secretary of State for DCMS, Nadine Dorries overturned the heritage listing of the Dorman Long Tower, a 1950s early brutalist building in Redcar, making way for the building to be demolished as part of a wider redevelopment of a former industrial heritage site in south Tees.

The decision has seen criticism from across the heritage sector, especially as the "nationally unique" Tower had received an emergency listing from on recommendation of Historic England, following the approval of planning permission for its demolition.

Transport News Round-up

Northern line extension opens

The extension of the Northern line from the Charing Cross branch to Battersea Power Station, with a second new station at Nine Elms, began operating at 5.30 a.m. on Monday September 20th. A sizable crowd greeted and joined the first train. The new tunnels are of greater circumference than the traditional tube, allowing for a staff walking route alongside the tracks. The new stations are spacious and officially fully accessible. They have however attracted criticism from disabled people. In particular, the lifts are too small and wheelchair users cannot turn round inside them. The signage has also been somewhat lacking, at Kennington and on the next train boards, where "Check destination on front of train" appeared rather than "Battersea Power Station".

TfL responded positively to the criticism and the signage issues are being addressed, but enlarging the lifts seems unlikely given its cost.

Crossrail

Crossrail was far better at getting signage in place; some of the signs have been there since 2018, taped over in readiness for when they can be revealed. That will not now be before May 2022. A recent report dashes the hopes the Commissioner held for December 24th this year. However, the report is not totally bad news: Bond Street station may now be completed in time for the opening of the central section. There is also the launch of the second edition of Christian Wolmar's book, *The Story of Crossrail*, to come, although I do not think the dates for this have been inked in just yet.

Cuts to bus services

London Travelwatch was successful in persuading the government to delay a review of bus services in London from June, when Work from Home remained commonplace, to October, when it was hoped a more normal pattern of usage might have evolved. Reports suggest that patronage is back to 70% of pre-pandemic levels, but to only 60% in the case of freedom Pass holders. Outside London, Freedom passes bring revenue to the privatised bus companies.

Some reductions in service have nonetheless preceded the review. Cuts were made to the 56 at the end of July; to the 277 at the end of September and to the 38 on October 2nd. Use of the 277 into Dalston is notably down on the levels when the bus ran on to Highbury Corner, and there has been an embarrassment of riches on the 38 ever since successive Mayors tried to convince us that a change of vehicle would herald an improved service. There have

also been cuts to weekend Night Buses, despite the fact that they are the sole source of public transport for the time being. No date has been given for the return of Night Tube. The current financial settlement runs until December 11th.

Covid restrictions

Following the removal of the legal requirement for face coverings, the Mayor has become almost Messianic in his support for their continued use on buses and tubes. It is a condition of travel on TfL services, which means people without them unless exempt can be asked to leave but not fined. The Overground is a Network rail service and TfL has a franchise. It remains subject to National Rail rules, including the right to buy a ticket to any station on the network. Unlike vaccination, there is no data on the impact of face coverings. There is however data suggesting an increase in injuries on escalators, as a result of passenger reluctance to touch the handrail. The response to this has been more signage to encourage people to hold the hand rail, but regrettably, no announcements encouraging the use of hand sanitiser (or gloves) as is repeatedly done for face coverings. Very few people avail themselves of either gloves or hand sanitiser. The rather belated campaign for better ventilation has been more successful. Where windows can be opened, they have been. Colder weather and heavier rain may challenge that. When the review of what could have been done better finally happens, the enthusiasm for air conditioning over fresh air must be reassessed.

Low traffic neighbourhoods

The first Low Traffic Neighbourhood, St. Peter's Ward, has been the subject of formal consultation to make it permanent. Despite the visible campaign by those opposed to LTNs, or People Friendly Streets, it seems that a majority of residents support the proposals. The objection that many of the main roads to which traffic has been directed are themselves predominantly residential does not carry weight where there has been no significant increase in traffic on those roads. However, the Society was concerned at reports that Popham Road, which is heavily used by pupils walking to the New North Academy, was suffering from an increase in traffic and we have asked the Council to consider how this might be addressed. There will be differing views among Society members, but we urge anyone with specific concerns of this nature to make them known in the consultation. Our expectation is that most of the schemes will be endorsed, but that there is scope for tweaking them if one or two roads are not as people friendly as was intended.

Walking network launched in Islington

On September 23 a new walking network for everyday walking in Islington and Hackney was launched. It was devised by the Footways London team, Living Streets' volunteers, Islington and Hackney guides and many others. They joined Councillors Rowena Champion and Nurullah Turan of Islington and Mete Coban from Hackney for a celebratory walk from Islington to Hackney town hall through attractive, quiet, back streets.

The guides pointed out several of the delightful features en route, beginning with Islington's neo-classical Town Hall, officially opened by the mayor, Alderman William Manchester, in 1930, and marking a time when there was great pride in local government. Highlights of the Islington part of the walk included the handsome villas of Alwyne Road by James Wagstaffe, leafy New River Walk, opened in 1954 on the route of the 17th century New River (visible from Willow Bridge Road), the recently re-opened Marquess Tavern and the Victorian terraces of Northchurch Road. Across Southgate Road in Hackney we enjoyed fine views of St Peter's church, the Tudor-style villas of De Beauvoir Square, picturesque and Italianate Albion Square (1840s) and London Fields, ancient historic pasture, saved from the threat of development in the 1860s.

Londoners walk both for leisure (along the canal or New River Walk, for example), and for utility. Walking is the main mode of transport in Islington, but we walk much shorter distances than in the past. The average walk-all-the-way trip across London is around half a mile. This has got to change. Walking more and further is critical to tackle our health, pollution and climate crises, and to relieve pressure on roads and public transport.

The new Footways network aims to highlight routes that will prompt Londoners and visitors to walk longer distances on everyday journeys. It connects important destinations and green spaces via the two boroughs most welcoming and appealing streets. This is about getting people from A to B, but in the most enjoyable and healthy way possible.

Walking can take little more time than mechanised forms of transport. It takes just 20 minutes to walk from the Angel to Smithfield and a

few minutes further to St Paul's. And any minutes lost by walking are easily made up for in terms of health and wellbeing. These walks can take in wonderful views, streets and historic sites.

The good news is that walking is getting better all the time. Islington Council has been building on long-established improvements such as Myddleton Square (who would open it to through traffic now?). Thanks to the People Friendly Street schemes, in a large area of the borough we can avoid the vehicles and wander through quiet roads listening to birds, sniffing flowers in comparatively clean air, gazing up at trees. An added bonus of the borough is that there are so many beautiful examples of architecture and places of historic interest to explore.

Last weekend, walking from King Henry's Walk to the Angel (a little over 30 minutes) through the quiet streets of De Beauvoir, Canonbury and St Peter's, I saw numerous people enjoying the urban landscape. There were elderly men and women, millennials, teenagers, families pushing buggies, solitary figures smiling and chatting on their phones, a couple of joggers, dogs on leads, cats in the undergrowth, little children pedalling safely on the tarmac. I especially enjoyed spotting some plants cascading from a balcony resembling something in a tropical jungle.

Islington/Hackney Footways will help residents make the most of the transformation of our roads and the pleasures walking brings. It follows on from the successful Central London Footways Map, which was launched last September. The digital version of that map has been visited 750,000 times and the paper maps have been in much demand. As yet Islington/Hackney is only available on Google maps, but it can be downloaded onto a mobile form, and Islington Living Streets are keen to produce a paper version.

An important part of the map is to point out interesting features, and we continue to add to these. Do your children enjoy any particular sights or destinations? Can you point out any imaginative planting or unusual buildings with particular historic interest? To contact Living Streets, and see the map: <https://footways.london/>

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