

# ISLINGTON *news*

*The Journal of the Islington Society*

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## Covid Pandemic – last chapter?

After more than two years' disruption to our lives on a scale not experienced even in war time, life seems to be returning to normal: queues at airports, industrial disputes, inflation.

The Spring edition of Islington News coincided with another increase in cases, due to a variant of the Omicron variant. It did little to halt the return to normal and by April testing was no longer compulsory or freely available. With so many people having had the infection, herd immunity seemed to have been achieved and there was no appetite for further lockdown. Indeed, the psychological disbenefits for children in particular were becoming more apparent.

Data is no longer provided daily by the BBC, but as the number of cases has fallen back it appears to be doing so less quickly in London than elsewhere in England, perhaps because Londoners seem less concerned. [Umpires in the south are taking caps and sweaters again, but not in the North. Levelling up has a way to go]. Cases are milder and Monkeypox may even be a greater concern to some.

Data on numbers vaccinated, once, twice, thrice or more than six months ago is widely

available but the corresponding percentages for those still being admitted to hospital are not. This is a missed opportunity to demonstrate the value of vaccination if as we are told it is the unvaccinated who are more likely to need hospital support. There is no data on the impact of face coverings or hand sanitising, since all victims have been close to the unmasked or the unwashed. There is data that falls on the underground have increased; again it is a mystery why TfL does not promote hand sanitising more, rather than just exhorting people to hold the handrail. It is obviously fear of Covid that has reduced use of the handrail.

The Islington Society has been able to restore activities, and reports of some of the oversubscribed events are given here. The Committee has returned to the Town Hall for its meetings, and member meetings will follow.

## Council elections 2022

Three councillors from the same party were returned in every Islington Ward, so there are 16 with Labour councillors and one represented by three Green Party members. There are three new members of the ruling Cabinet as a result of one loss and two members stepping down. Diarmuid Ward takes on the Finance brief vacated by Satnam Gill and Una O'Halloran switches to Housing. Rowena Champion stays at Environment. Marion Spall is the new Mayor and Gary Heather her Deputy and heir apparent.

There was more of interest elsewhere in London. The mound in Westminster and the housing finance problems in Croydon saw them swap between Labour and Tory. National politics may explain Labour's gain in Barnet and loss in Tower Hamlets. Demographic changes confirmed the expected change in Wandsworth.

Low Traffic Neighbourhoods was described by one commentator as the dog that didn't bark. In one seat in Greenwich where it seemed to be the sole issue on which the election was fought, the pro-LTN candidate won. (Islington's two successful parties are also those favouring LTNs). What may have been less popular was spending money on LTNs and then taking them out. Labour lost seats in Enfield and Harrow where this occurred, though other factors were in play in Harrow.

Considering that Labour lost as many councils in London as it gained, the press was surprisingly generous to it. It helped that the outgoing Conservative administrations held their count overnight. Others, like Islington, started counting the following morning.

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## Islington Society News

### *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.islingtonociety.org.uk](http://www.islingtonociety.org.uk)

### **Next Newsletter**

Copy date for our next newsletter is October 2nd, 2022. The views expressed in the journal are not necessarily those of the chair, the editor, or the Society's adopted policy.

### CURRENT OFFICERS OF THE SOCIETY

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### *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

### House of Illustration

The Islington Society organised a visit for members on April 4 to the site at the New River Head for the new headquarters of the Society of Illustration. The New River Head in Clerkenwell is at the end of the historic channel that brought clean water to the City of London from the 1600s onwards. The 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings have been unused for some years but the House of Illustration plans to redevelop them to house its permanent and temporary exhibitions and provide a headquarters for this important organisation.

The House of Illustration was founded in 2003 by Sir Quentin Blake and is the UK's only charity dedicated to illustration. It has appointed Tim



Ronalds Architects, one of the UK's leading heritage practices, to bring the site back to public use, with new galleries, lecture spaces, gardens, a café and shop. These proposals have received planning permission and, subject to raising the £12 million required, open to the public in 2023. Because the site has been closed for so many years some of Islington's most important historic industrial buildings have been hidden from view. Particularly the remains of the windmill, which powered the pumps in the New River Head's earlier days, and the engine house, are fascinating buildings and their restoration and new use is welcome news.

*Islington Society members in front of the Engine House at the New River Head*

The Islington Society is organising further visits for members to the West Smithfield development, which will provide new premises for the Museum of London, and to the old Holborn Infirmary at Archway, also to be redeveloped.

See events, page 12

### Islington Society opposes planning applications at No. 1 Torrens Street and the Regent Quarter

The Islington Society is working with local residents and amenity groups to oppose two significant planning applications. One is in the King's Cross area and the proposals affect buildings around Jahn Court, Albion Yard, Varnishers Yard and the Laundry Building. The Society objects to the additional height and mass of the proposed new buildings and the effect they will have on the local Conservation Area and the locally listed buildings it contains. The developers have reduced the height of some of the buildings they propose but the society believes these alterations are inadequate. It will continue to support local residents in their opposition to this development.

The society also opposes the proposed redevelopment of No. 1 Torrens Street, which in spite of its obscure address is the extremely important site on the corner of Islington High Street and City Road. The society is working with the Angel Association and the Duncan Terrace residents to prepare formal opposition to the

developers' proposals. This is an iconic site and the society believes that the proposals are bland and uninspiring, with no awareness of the importance of this major public space. As with the Regent Quarter, the society will continue to fight these proposals unless they are substantially modified.

The Vorley Road application is another matter of concern and the Committee will be considering it later this month.

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## Exhibition review: the Humour of Heath Robinson

*William Heath Robinson's cartoons show his sharp observational skills and artistic skills, writes Christy Lawrance*

A priest conducts a wedding standing on top of a church spire, the couple and their guests circling him in planes. A stern water board official looks down at candidates for a water diviner job equipped with hazel twigs and bells. A rickety system of racks, weights, chains and pulleys – with a man wielding a large pair of scissors – tests false teeth.



Welcome to the world of William Heath Robinson at an exhibition to mark the 150th anniversary of his birth and showcase the cartoons and contraptions that made him a household name. In this exhibition, fun poked is at the self-important, wry observations are made, contemporary life is satirised and serious-looking people participate in absurd activities.

Wartime cartoons raised the spirits of civilians and servicemen alike. In the battlefield, the enemy deploys laughing gas to overcome British troops; on the home front, a complex system for 'doubling Gloucester cheese' eked out rations.

The interwar years brought new ways of living, and Heath Robinson designed contraptions to help people manage without servants, make the most of limited space in flats and dance to music without disturbing the neighbours downstairs. Like today's silent disco, everyone wears headphones –

and the museum has thoughtfully supplied headphones playing music of the era (and other sounds!), so visitors can recreate it.



As well as the silent disco, Heath Robinson anticipated chaos theory, with the consequences of falling toothbrush on Christmas celebrations and the dramatic results of a butterfly's thoughtlessness.

Heath Robinson spent much of his early life in Islington. Born in Stroud Green on 31 May 1872, the family moved two years later to 33 Bryantwood Road then to 51 Benwell Road in 1878. He went to Holloway College in 1880, moving to Islington Probationary School in 1884. He started at the Islington School of Art three years later before enrolling at the Royal Academy Schools in 1892; he wanted to be a landscape painter but started out by illustrating magazines and books.

The family returned to Stroud Green, but he was back in Islington when he married Josephine Latey, in 1903, at Albermarle Mansions by the Holloway Empire, then a larger flat in Cathcart Hill the following year. They left Islington in 1908 for Pinner. *The Humour of Heath Robinson runs at the Heath Robinson Museum until 4 September 2022. Tickets are £6/concessions and include entry to the permanent display.*

## A walk along Upper Street

This walk starts at No. 56 Upper Street, at what was The Three Wheatsheaves pub by the forecourt to the Business Design Centre. It takes us along the full length of Upper Street, with some diversion on either side, as far as Highbury Corner to the north east. This is very much the heart of modern Islington and many of the buildings are familiar, but as before on these walks, we are concentrating on Islington's Locally Listed Buildings. The register was updated by volunteers and completed by the Islington Society in 2021. You can find the full revised list, which has not yet been adopted by Islington Council, on the society's website.

We start at **The Three Wheatsheaves**. This has been renamed but is a longstanding Upper Street pub with licensees recorded as far back as 1791. Rebuilding began in 1863 to take advantage of extra custom from the newly completed Agricultural Hall. The contractors were urged to hurry so it would be ready for the first cattle show on December 7. But just before noon on November 26 the floors and walls collapsed into the basement. Two men were killed and several others severely injured. The current building dates from when it was completed after the collapse. Like many public houses along Upper Street its original name was moulded into the frontage which helps it keep its identity, even after many changes of name. It is currently a bar and restaurant. Its design is typical of its time, with pilasters and consoles at either end of the ground floor pub frontage. In the centre above is a crisply sculpted pub name with three sheaves of wheat.



Rescuers at "The Three Wheatsheaves" in 1863

Upper Street has been a shopping centre for Islington since the mid-1800s. Before that it was mainly residential, and many of the buildings at this end of the street, facing Islington Green, began their lives as private houses. **Nos. 60 and 61 Upper Street** are much earlier than their

neighbours and were once part of a group of buildings called Oddy's Row. Philip Oddy was a local man who died in 1738 and is buried in St. Mary's churchyard. These buildings predate his death and would have been houses rather than shops, with the shopfronts inserted later. They are important survivors of Georgian Upper Street and may be even earlier than that.

**No. 69 Upper Street** has the only original Victorian shopfront in the sequence of buildings facing Islington Green. As with many of its neighbours it would have begun life as a residence, with the ground floor shop inserted when Upper Street was developed as a shopping centre in the latter part of the Victorian era. And it is a magnificent shopfront, bow windowed with steps up to a highly elaborate front door, with all the features of Victorian Baroque splendour. No. 69 was a dental surgery from 1880 to 1940 and the shopfront may date from the year the dentist set up business there. This is an important Upper Street building, the most distinctive shopfront from Liverpool Road to Highbury Corner.

**The Screen on the Green** is perhaps the oldest continually running cinema in the UK. It was opened in 1913 as a purpose-built cinema by the Pesaresi brothers, after the passing of the Cinematograph Act of 1909. The architects were the London Wall firm of Boreham & Gladding. This cinema is far from the sober office blocks the firm otherwise specialised in. It is more Clacton than Islington, and adds a bit of early 20<sup>th</sup> century glamour to the otherwise sober Islington Green. The exterior is largely as built, though the interior has been modified. It remains one of Upper Street's most important landmarks.



Screen on the Green, more Clacton than Islington  
Walk north and cross the road in front of what is now the **Angel Studios**, on the corner of Gaskin Street. This was originally the Congregational Chapel and is a magnificent example of late 19<sup>th</sup> century Queen Anne revival style. It is nationally Grade II listed, built by Bonella and Henry John Paul in 1888-9, influenced by a Norman Shaw church in Bedford Park. The area railings are also Grade II listed.

The last building before the churchyard is **No. 303**. This was for many years the Islington Dispensary. It was originally built in 1821 but was replaced by this building when the street was widened in the 1880s. It was maintained by voluntary donations and subscriptions and offered free medical care for "such poor persons as are properly recommended", usually by the charitable subscribers. It suffered bomb damage in 1940 and was closed in 1946 just before the National Health Act provided free health care for all. 303 Upper Street is a fine Victorian Arts & Crafts building in a prominent position and an important piece of Islington's medical history.

We now take a short diversion down St. Mary's Path, with the church gardens on the left. **No. 3 St. Mary's Path** is a wonderful little building, well worth hunting out. One authority dates it to the time of Queen Anne and its outline is certainly shown on the earliest printed map of Islington in 1735. It appears much as it looks today in a 1788 engraving and in an 1839 watercolour in the Islington History Centre. It may have been built as the sexton's cottage and was for a time the parish soup kitchen. More recently it housed St. Mary's curates, among them the cricketing bishop the Rev. David

Sheppard and, in the early 1960s, the future Archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey. Church Cottage is an historic little building, one of the oldest in the borough, and deserves to be better known.



*Church Cottage, No. 3 St. Mary's Path*

Walk back to Upper Street and cross the road to Almeida Street. The Grade II listed **Almeida Theatre** is on the left. This was built c.1837 as the Islington Literary and Scientific Institute, though it later became a music hall and now the theatre. It was designed by the local firm of Roumieux and Gough who left a strong legacy in the borough, around the corner in Gibson Square and in the magnificent villas in Tollington Park. Opposite is the locally listed former **Myddleton Hall**. This was built in 1856 and was originally entered from the shop premises at No. 142 Upper Street. It was in active use for over 50 years as a venue for concerts, lectures and fund-raising bazaars. Charles Dickens gave a reading in aid of a local charity here on 31 January 1866. The hall was rebuilt in 1891 when the entrance in Upper Street was replaced by a terracotta row of four shops, now Nos. 140a-143 Upper Street. The new entrance in Almeida Street bears the name Myddelton Hall and date 1891 beneath the pediment over the central doorway. The hall continued in use until 1916. This building is a memorial to the days when music hall thrived in Islington.

Return to Upper Street and round the corner is **No. 147**, locally listed as a shop front. This has been replaced since the original 1993 listing. The shop was from 1852 to 1885 a milliners, run by a Mrs Greenaway. Her daughter Kate, writer and illustrator of children's

books, lived there 1852-73.

Walk further along to **No. 176**. As with some of its neighbours, this was probably built as a private house and converted to a shop or business premises in the 1830s and 1840s. It was occupied by a variety of businesses, the longest lasting being James Wagstaff who combined the professions of surveyor, auctioneer, estate agent and perhaps architect. He was a prominent developer in Islington in the mid-1800s and built villas in Highbury and Canonbury, with the best examples in Highbury Crescent, Alwyne Road and Willow Bridge Road. The elaborate upper storey window surrounds and parapet owe something to James Wagstaff's Italianate style, so could be by him.



*James Wagstaff's office at No. 176 Upper Street*

The former **Hare & Hounds public house** dates back to 1813 but was rebuilt in around 1840. It has a yard at the back and its entrance adds to the attraction of the pub façade. It was run between 1910 and 1934 by Edward Joel for the Barclay Perkins Brewery. He was sufficiently well established to have his name on the fascia. Most of the old signage has been removed but all attempts to change its name are mocked by the large moulded panel between the windows at the second-floor level. It depicts a hare being vigorously chased by a pack of hounds. To the

right is an access door to upper floors with a remarkable rectangular fanlight above, with ogee moulding. This is a fine old pub, though diminished by its modern external redecoration.

The recessed entrance to **No. 193 Upper Street** has a nice, though damaged, tiled floor with the name Beller's inserted into the pattern. Miss Kitty Beller set up a shop providing clothing and other accessories for "larger ladies" in the 1930s, where you could buy whalebone stays, outsize corsets and bloomers as well as larger size dresses, skirts and blouses. Apparently Upper Street had a number of "outsize" clothing shops and No. 193 is a nice memorial to them all. On the other side of the street is a sequence of well-preserved late Victorian shopfronts. As with many other good quality shopfronts they were locally listed in 1993, and these in particular show the value of local listing in their preservation.



*Beller's for "Larger Ladies"*

Walk across the junction with Islington Park Street to the former National Provincial Bank, latterly NatWest Bank, at **No. 218 Upper Street**. In September 1940, the original 19th century bank was bombed and replaced in 1953 by the present building. It is one of the comparatively few Modernist buildings on the local list, so its preservation is important. Post-war National Provincial branches showed a strong reaction against the pseudo-Georgian bank designs of the generation before. NPB built a series of new

modernist banks designed by its chief architect BC Sherren, including this building at No. 218 Upper Street.

Our last building before Highbury Corner is **No. 246** a spectacular example of late Victorian flamboyance. It has four upper storeys of neo-Baroque and Arts & Crafts brickwork, dating from 1885. The red brick facing is decorated with cornices, friezes and terracotta

panels with a scrolled panel which dates the building precisely at 1886. The first and second floor facade is substantially taken up with canted bay windows. The gable which frames the fourth-floor attic dormer window has on each side a triangular buttress and a parapet, both topped by a coping with scrolled ends. No. 246 adds a note of late Victorian Baroque distinction as Upper Street merges with Highbury Corner. AC

## Highbury West LTN

The latest issue of the newsletter of the Highbury Community Association includes an article suggesting some amendments to the Highbury West LTN, for which they believe the consultation deadline was June 10<sup>th</sup>. Somewhat confusingly, the Council issued a press release indicating that the LTN is to be retained, on June 6<sup>th</sup>. The two are not incompatible; it can be retained but amended.

However, *Highbury Community News* also reports on continuing concerns about the inadequacy of the Highbury Corner scheme raised at the HCA Annual General Meeting in April. Many of the concerns about the

Highbury West LTN would be ameliorated if Highbury Corner provided a more satisfactory environment for pedestrians and bus users, and for the buses themselves. The HCA agreed to pursue those concerns. TfL had hoped to improve the situation by altering the phasing of the traffic lights, but the road as configured simply does not have enough space between signals for a sensible flow of traffic to be maintained. The shorter the space, the shorter the time period that can be allowed for each phase without one line of traffic blocking the junction, but if the phase is as short as it needs to be impatient drivers will jump the lights.

## Development proposal in South Shoreditch

Developer Lion Portfolio, whose assets are managed by Capreon, is proposing the redevelopment of an important site in the historic South Shoreditch area in Bunhill Ward. The site is bounded by Paul Street, Epworth Street and Clere Street, and is currently occupied by Fitzroy House and Castle House. It is at the heart of what was once London's leading furniture manufacturing area and many of the fine former workshops, warehouses and showrooms survive in the surrounding streets.

The developer has begun public consultation on the proposals, including with committee members of the Islington Society. The existing three storey building has little to recommend it. It dates from the latter part of the twentieth century and is, as the developer says, "dull and dated". In its place Lion Portfolio and Capreon propose a five-storey building with additional storeys set back from the façade. Part of the ground floor will contain space for retail,

food and beverage and leisure facilities. The rest will be office space, including some affordable space for local small businesses.

The design, as presented to the Islington Society Committee members, takes inspiration from local historic buildings, including in the colouring and detail of its facades. It also contains a substantial central atrium, which committee members were concerned might be sacrificed if more value is squeezed into the available space. The developer indicates that it intends to apply for planning permission in July 2022. In general the society committee members who attended the presentation found the design sympathetic and attractive.

AC



## The changing political map of Islington, 1965-2024: Part I

*The recent boundary changes applied to the local elections are likely to be followed by alterations to the Parliamentary constituencies which will end co-terminosity with the Borough boundary. Andrew Bosi begins a series reviewing the changes that have occurred during the life of the Islington Society.*

The Islington Society was born into a political world largely based on boundaries that had been set in the late Victorian era. Islington was then one of the larger Metropolitan Boroughs. There were over 70 local authorities in the area that was to become, five years later, Greater London, following a Royal Commission on Local Government in Greater London.

The Royal Commission had been established in 1957 and took three years to report. Its remit had extended beyond the GLA area we know to-day, including parts of Hertfordshire around Watford and the whole of Middlesex which included Potters Bar.

The 1960 report left Islington unchanged and recommended merging Holborn, Finsbury and Shoreditch. Finsbury and Shoreditch already shared an MP. The reduction to 52 authorities was considered insufficient, however, and there was also a move to link the rich central London Boroughs with their poorer neighbours. When the changes were implemented in 1965, Islington was paired with Finsbury, Shoreditch with Hackney (which also gained Stoke Newington) and Holborn with St. Pancras (which also joined with Hampstead).

The GLC had been first elected in April 1964, with 100 councillors (three from Islington) and 16 Aldermen. The new Islington Borough had 65 councillors, elected for a three year term. The political complexion was largely red, but this changed in 1968 when the elections coincided with the low point in the popularity of the Wilson government. The Conservatives also took control of the GLC in 1969. In both cases they lost control at the following elections, in 1971 and 1973 respectively.

Meanwhile, the attention of the Boundary Commission turned to Parliamentary boundaries. The Metropolitan Borough of Islington had had three M.P.s (East, North and South-West) whilst as previously noted Finsbury shared a member with Shoreditch. The declining population no longer justified these numbers and the Boundary Commission took the opportunity to reflect the new local



1960 proposed map of London- Islington unchanged (number 4)

government boundaries in its recommendations. However, the boundary changes were judged to be electorally disadvantageous to the Labour Party, and though James Callaghan proposed them in the House, Labour MPs were whipped to vote them down. The three and a half members thus survived to the elections of 1974. The North seat then gained Hillmarton Ward; East gained Holloway Ward and was renamed Central, and the rest of South-west joined with Finsbury to form Islington South & Finsbury.

After the two General Elections of 1974, it was not long before the Ward boundaries came under review. Councillors' term of office from 1974 was four years, bringing the Boroughs into line with the GLC and ensuring that the two would not be simultaneously elected. Islington emerged with twenty wards, some with two members and some three, and a total of 52 councillors. Highbury Ward extended from Highbury Corner to Finsbury Park; Quadrant and Canonbury West were much smaller.

## Book review: *House in the Country*

This is the book James Dunnett might have written had he had the time. It explores the way urban planning and residential architecture has evolved since 1815, the legacy of the garden city movement and why it is time to leave it behind.

It examines the current housing crisis, about which so many have written, and puts forward solutions which have been rather less forthcoming. There is plenty of material to attract the interest of historians, and interviews with key

players in the housing field are capped by the forward from Lord Heseltine. The author, Simon Matthews, has widespread experience first as a councillor and planning committee chair in neighbouring Hackney, and later in a professional capacity.

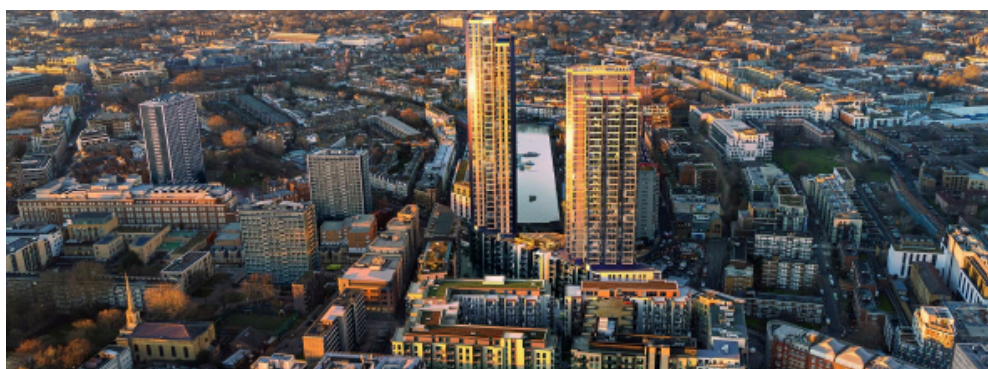
*House in the Country* is published by Oldcastle Books, ISBN number 978-0-85730-495-7 at £19.99.

## The Greene King of Finsbury and his successors

*James Dunnett reflects on the changing face of City Road.*(concluded, page 12)

City Road has been of late been transformed, as any Islingtonian will know. Hi-rises have appeared on both sides of it, such as the 36-storey twin residential towers by Foster & Partners for Berkeley Homes on the south side ('250 City Road') and the 'Canaletto Tower' by UNstudio on the north, with its curious bulging forms, and a varied tangle of hi-rises further east on the north side in Hackney that rise sheer from the pavement line. The prospect exists of a similar development on the present Moorfields Hospital site on the south side In Islington, when the hospital moves to King's Cross. Though Islington's planners, unlike Hackney's, may disapprove, the precedent is set and they were over-ruled by Boris Johnson as Mayor of London in respect of the Berkeley Homes towers (pictured). Politically the pressure will be for maximal development value on the hospital site to financially benefit the NHS. The precedent for high-rise development on this straight and quite broad street had,

however. been set nearly sixty years earlier by Finsbury Metropolitan Borough Council, which built 26-storey Peregrine House on the south side, to the designs of Carl Ludwig Franck (1904-1985), about whom I wrote in *Islington News*, Autumn 2021. But there was a big difference. Franck, who had worked to Lubetkin and Tecton, was heir to the Modern Movement ideals of the Green City. So Peregrine House does not rise from the pavement line but is set well back in a substantial green space and at an angle to City Road – seemingly dictated by a desire of Franck's to align it with his 21-storey Turnpike House in Goswell Road. His nearby 17-storey Rahere and Kestrel Houses are aligned with them too, forming a composition across space. Less than 15% of the site area of Peregrine House is built over compared to over 50% is built in the case of the Berkeley Homes City Road development, despite the claims on the sales website that it is a 'soft green oasis in the heart of the city'... Originating 100 years ago with the first showing of Le Corbusier's drawings for a *Contemporary City for Three Million* in 1922, the Modern Movement believed, in reaction to the dark slums of the nineteenth century, that every home had a right (in his words) to 'Light, Space, Greenery' – as a means to physical and mental well-being. It was willing to build taller in order to furnish the home with those attributes – not to make more intensive use of sites. Building taller freed up ground surface, for any given density. How best to use and look after that surface was not always fully addressed and neglect was the result, leading gradually to a rejection of the concept.



## Transport News Round-up

### Crossrail opens as Elizabeth line

The opening of the central section of the Elizabeth line on May 24<sup>th</sup>, two and a half years after the originally published opening date, attracted great interest. People queued overnight to travel on the first available train. It has received a good press, the word “transformational” appearing regularly. The transformation is set to be complete in the August when the current three strands are joined up and Bond Street station opened. At that point, Farringdon station in Islington will have direct links to four airports.

As well as the train service, the architecture of the new stations and their spaciousness has received rave reviews. Hence the interest in a tour organised by the Islington Society (see events, page #).

### New Northern line station at Bank

The three month closure of the Northern line through Angel station ended a few hours early on Sunday May 15<sup>th</sup>. There is an enhanced station at Bank to show for it, with more space. Work is not complete on the full scheme, which will see an additional entrance on Cannon Street, but this can be completed without lengthy closure of the railway.

### Cuts to bus services

The latest round of cuts to buses was prefaced by a three hour discussion at the GLA transport Committee. London Travelwatch, Transport for All and other disability campaign groups, Campaign for Better Transport and a bus driver all gave evidence. Travelwatch were aware of an imminent 4% cut in bus services – the proposals were released a few days later. Those representing disabled people emphasized their dependence on the bus as the only accessible means of travel for many; that having to change buses mid-route could deter travel altogether, but that long waiting times could also render buses inaccessible.

The early impression is that TfL has tried to address these concerns as best it can. None of the proposals affecting Islington seem as catastrophic as the loss of the 21 along Mildmay Park or the 277 on St. Paul’s Road, both of which reduced service by 50%. The 476 will take advantage of that loss by terminating at Newington Green and not coming into Islington. Some routes, including the 4 in Islington and even the major tourist attraction the 11 (there is no voice for tourists these days) are axed altogether, but unlike the last round

of major cuts only Russell Street loses its buses altogether. Many people will have to change, in the case of one proposal three times, but there are journeys opened up to through travel. Although some routes are curtailed, many are augmented and are no shorter than they were before. Apart from the introduction of multiple changes in place of a current through route, the most disconcerting aspect of the plans is that some interchanges involve a walking distance that will certainly deter those of limited mobility or carrying heavy luggage. TfL is clearly seized of this issue, highlighting the availability of same stop interchange whenever that is proposed.

There are changes to the southern end of the 19 & 56 routes. The 259 is re-routed, as is the 236: many will welcome the belated restoration of that route beyond Finsbury Park, although Tufnell Park Road sees one circuitous route replaced by another. The 205 ceases to be an inter-station bus route, and is more like the 214; the 214 replaces much of the 24 which is axed. The 43 is diverted to Liverpool Street instead of London Bridge. The 254 is curtailed at Finsbury Park rather than Holloway Road. The numbers ascribed to the proposed routes may conceal where the most severe cuts will hit. Mike Harris has produced a map of the proposals in the central London area, available from this link: <https://www.busmap.co.uk/bus-review>. Officially, the proposals are out for consultation until July 12<sup>th</sup>.

### TfL finance

The bus cuts are dictated by Government conditions for continuing to fund TfL. In every previous report on this topic, there has been reference to a postponement of the long term agreement. At the time of writing the can had been kicked to June 24<sup>th</sup>. In a bizarre article in the Evening Standard, the Secretary of State praised Crossrail for its cheaper fare than Heathrow Express; commended the value of Executive Mayors; and berated the London Mayor for seeking to exercise those powers in ways the government did not like – keeping fares down, rejecting the notion of cutting staff pensions or introducing driverless trains. Both of these latter ideas were mooted under the previous Mayor, and rejected as impractical or counter-productive. AB

## Forthcoming events

The Islington Society is discussing with the developer the possibility of a visit to the former Holborn Union Infirmary in Archway.

The annual dinner will be held in October. The proposed venue is Osteria Tufo in Fonthill Road, Finsbury Park. The A.G.M. will be held on Wednesday, November 9<sup>th</sup>.

The Committee is also planning possible meetings on EGA school and its links with Michelle Obama, a trip along the newly opened section of the Elizabeth line, and Cricket in Islington, following the recent developments at Wray Crescent. We are aware that some in the community are still reluctant to attend meetings in person; indications of members' wishes would be welcome.

### Greene King of Finsbury, cont. from page 10

What has happened in this century, with the apparent returning acceptability of taller buildings, is that those ideals have not returned with them, so we are getting the tall buildings but not the open space. This reflects the persisting mistrust, even dislike, of such space: even where it survives from the earlier enthusiasm it is open to seizure by Councils and others under pressure to build ever more housing without the funds to acquire new sites for it. They are aided by the classification of existing housing estates as 'brownfield land' and therefore especially a target for such action.

This is happening in Boroughs all over London, but Southwark has an especially active programme in this field with the controversial demolition of postwar estates such as the Heygate and the Aylesbury and their rebuilding at much higher densities. The same is also happening on Islington's borders with Hackney's Woodberry Down Estate. Islington largely refurbished its Six Acres Estate which was built with the same precast system as the Heygate and Aylesbury, but total demolition and rebuilding is now in prospect for Newlon Housing Association's postwar Barnsbury Estate, at triple the original density. This is a modest low key pleasantly-relaxed estate of well-spaced largely 4-storey blocks and without the social problems, as far as is known, that are reported to have bedevilled Southwark. From the published plans it seems there will be a reduction per head in open space of about 75%, with thirteen-storey blocks lining the Regents Canal.

The nearby Bemerton Estate South is not to lose actual open space but with the raising in height by 50% of most blocks and the doubling in length of eleven-storey Falkland House the 'feel' will certainly become more intense than at present.

Densification schemes of this kind are being carried out widely in the Borough. The contentious building over of the grounds of fifteen-storey Dixon Clark Court at Highbury Corner, resulting in a loss of trees and a 68% reduction in open space, is well under way. Spaces have been filled in at the Andover Estate and consent granted for building more housing over pleasant green spaces at the Park View Estate near Clissold Park. Most strikingly consent was granted last summer to the City of London to build four new blocks on the pleasant grassed lawns of the York Way Estate, which will drastically close off the views from many of the existing dwellings.

A requirement of the GLA is that residents of such estates are consulted but it must be doubted whether the impact that the redevelopment or 'regeneration' schemes will have is sufficiently apparent – nor the consequence that, where demolition is involved, any existing leaseholders will be compulsorily bought out.

The nine inner London Boroughs and the City together comprise no more than 11% of the surface area of London, and they are of course already the most densely populated, and most limited in open space. It is doubtful if the housing targets allotted to each Borough by the London Plan show adequate recognition of the negative consequences of meeting them in already dense areas by schemes for further densification such as these. This blindness is in part due to a continuing failure to recognize adequately the benefits to human life of 'Sun, Space, Greenery'. To me there is no more graphic demonstration of this than in Hall Street leading off the City Road, from which Peregrine House is approached. On the east side stands Peregrine House well back from the street in its green setting, and soaring upwards in a way that gives a sense of scale and release and space. On the west side, and on the pavement line, is a development of three- and four-storey housing dating from perhaps 25 years later, rising straight from the back of the pavement and apparently without any greenery or space, and not much sun or light - apart from what they will be getting from the space round Peregrine House opposite. JD