

ISLINGTON *news*

The Journal of the Islington Society

Inmarsat, 99 City Road

A planning application has yet to be submitted, but following pre-application consultation, the Society has put forward its views to the Council.



The Chair has written to Islington Council about the proposed re-development of the Inmarsat Building at 99 City Road, on Old Street roundabout. Members of The Society attended two meetings with the developers: in the first the developers recognised that height of the proposed building as a key issue, but in the second they felt unable to quantify by how much they were prepared to reduce the building height.

The Society is very concerned about the height of the proposed building, its impact on the townscape and local area, and especially its disregard for Islington Council's Tall Buildings Study 2018 and the emerging Islington Local Plan. At approx. 151m the proposed building would be considerably taller than the recommended height for this site. The **Islington Tall Buildings Study 2018** in part states: "Old Street Cluster - There is an opportunity to expand this cluster on the south

side of the Old Street with carefully placed taller buildings that reinforce the cluster. This could include up to three additional taller buildings that help to bring regeneration of the area and support its employment function in the Tech City Cluster. The tallest of the three buildings would be located on the site of Inmarsat House. It could rise slightly above the height of the Bower and the White Collar Factory up to 106m establishing a new central focus of the cluster. However the massing and design of this building must ensure it does not create unacceptable harm to views onto Lowndes House from City Road.



The **Islington Tall Buildings Study Nov 2018** refers to Inmarsat House: "District Landmark - no more than 106m; (approx. 26 office storeys) - subject to impact on Lowndes House views" and notes (in part) "Height and form of the building needs to be calibrated to not encroach into and detract from the view onto Lowndes House from

City Road.”

In addition, **Site Allocation BC9** (Inmarsat, 99 City Road) of the current emerging **Local Plan’s Bunhill and Clerkenwell Area Action Plan** says: “The Islington Tall Buildings Study suggests there is potential to redevelop Inmarsat House as a district landmark building of up to 26 commercial storeys (106m). Inmarsat House forms a central part of the Old Street Tech City Cluster.”

Site Allocation BC9 also states: “Any tall building should be lower than any new tall building on the north side of Old Street to support the cluster visually stepping up towards the cluster on City Road.”

The Bower, a tall building on the north side of Old Street, is stated as being 17 storeys and 64.35m above ground. This reference in the Site Allocation indicates that the height of any development on BC9 should be lower than 17 storeys. **Site Allocation BC9** further states:

“The height and form of any development must be calibrated to not encroach into and detract from the view onto Lowndes House from City Road.” Despite this stipulation, the exhibition boards for the public consultation (held on 30th November and at which height was the main issue raised by participants) do not show images of the proposed building including Lowndes House from City Road.

In the **Islington Local Plan Strategic and Development Management Policies Sept 2019** DH3 Building heights Part B states:

“B. Buildings of more than 30 metres are only acceptable in-principle:

- (i) on sites allocated in the Local Plan where the allocation makes specific reference to suitability for heights of 30 metres or more; and/or
- (ii) within specific sites identified in a Spatial Strategy area.”

In the same document para 8.51 states: “Maximum permissible heights for each location, as well as some site specific design principles, including guidance on siting of height within the context of the site/area boundary (where relevant), are set out in the relevant site allocation and/or Spatial Strategy policy. They are repeated in Table 8.1, **Tall building site information**.”

In the **modifications to Islington Local Plan Strategic and Development Management Policies June 2022**, DH3 has been slightly

amended:

“On sites identified as potentially suitable for tall buildings under this policy, development must not exceed the maximum building heights for that specific tall building location, as set out in the site allocation and in Table 8.1”

The Islington Society does not necessarily disapprove of tall buildings, and agrees this is potentially a “landmark” site which justifies a taller building than elsewhere.

However, its concern is the developer’s apparent vagueness about the exact height even when asked, and at 151 metres the proposed building would be nearly 50% more than the maximum specified by the Local Plan in what would clearly be a departure from the Plan.

We would remind the Council of the importance of the Local Plan and the commitment that “development must not exceed the maximum building heights for that specific tall building location”. The Society would ask the Council to be firm with the developers on this point of height. The Plan needs to be enforced by both planning officers and Planning Committee members to ensure the Council adheres to its own policies.

All references to this site (e.g. in the Council’s Tall Buildings Study 2018 and the Local Plan Strategic and Development Management Policies 2019 as amended 2022) set a limit to the height of any building on this site at 106m, 26 commercial storeys.

The Society supports the Local Plan and recognises the value of adhering to its well-argued provisions.

A further concern is the consequences of demand for office space post-Covid being less than the developer and Council currently predict. The Society asks for a condition limiting the uses to current Classes E, F1 and F2; and prohibiting Classes C3 and C2.

The Society recognizes that many aspects of the proposed replacement building – in particular the increase in public realm – represent an improvement on the existing building which dominates the roundabout, but has asked that the Council addresses these concerns with the developer before they submit their planning application to the Council shortly.

ES/PK

Illustrations of current buildings pre-date the changes to the carriageway at Old Street currently nearing completion.

Islington Society News

London Metropolitan Archive

We are fortunate to have a London wide resource in Islington in the form of the London Metropolitan Archive. The Society visited its premises in Northampton Road on January 17th for a talk on the work of the LMA, a tour of the archive, and a chance to browse some of the extensive documents on general display. The LMA is open Mondays- Thursdays from 10 until 4 (like the Mikado's mystical German preachers), with a late opening on Wednesday evenings up

to 7 p.m. Currently, until the end of March, there is a free exhibition of maps of London, with additional opening on the second Saturday of the month.

The enquiry service is also free and available by e-mail. The LMA is funded by the City of London Corporation. Fire precautions, temperature control to preserve ancient documents, and cataloguing all require and receive meticulous attention to detail.

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.islingtonsociety.org.uk

Next Newsletter

Copy date for our next newsletter is June 4th, 2023. 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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New Barnsbury Estate – Statement to Islington Planning Committee

James Dunnett reflected the Society's concern for standards of amenity in social housing



I am speaking on behalf of the Islington Society, which was founded 62 years ago largely to oppose the demolition of the early Victorian housing stock. This was often in green locations such as Canonbury, or in Arlington, Union and Packington Squares, and there was good success in defending these. But large areas of tight terrace housing largely without any greenery were demolished by the LCC to create Estates such as the Bemerton and New Barnsbury Estates. Post-war, these were generally laid out with ample greenery and at relatively low densities providing good quality housing, and the Society is now in turn seeking to defend them where their greenery is under threat and with it, we believe, the quality of the housing they provide. Whilst in this case the applicants claim that the amount of green surface in the New Barnsbury Estate will remain constant, it will be reduced by 60% per head due to resident numbers increased by 260%. Because the height of the buildings proposed is on average double that of the existing, and in the form of courtyards rather than free-standing blocks, the overshadowing and feeling of pressure and enclosure and overlooking on that green surface will much increase. If the height of buildings doubles so should the width of the spaces between them – but that will be far from the case here. The new buildings, which have double the footprint of the existing buildings as well as double their height, in fact encroach on the green surfaces, though grandly re-labelled as

‘Parks’. The huge reduction in green space per head is contrary to the emphasis in the Council’s Local plan, paragraph 5.20, on the need for green space to be proportional to the population. The most significant planning consent to have affected this Estate recently is not included in the list provided in the Report to this committee – the consent granted on appeal in 2007 for Phelps Lodge, a four-storey block of nineteen flats built by Newlon on a formerly pleasant green space right in front of Messiter House, the finest existing building on the Estate, cutting it off from its views of Barnard Park and creating a dark and dismal space between them. That space is to be recreated by this proposal since that face of the Messiter-substitute block is to be on the same alignment, and its character and dimensions will be reproduced in many other spaces in this proposal. We are not alone in our concerns, and note the frequent references to excessive height, density and associated ‘design failings’ in the Report to this Committee, as there are also in the Report of the Council’s Design Review Panel. But despite this fairly comprehensive condemnation we are astonished that the conclusion is still a recommendation for approval – because of numbers. It will be appreciated that half of the proposed dwellings will be for sale so that the net increase in affordable or social dwellings will be relatively small. But there will be no gain at all if the conditions in the new dwellings will in many cases be unacceptable, as we believe. New housing needs to be built, but political means need to be found to build it where it does not detract from the existing housing or environment, such as in the twenty outer Boroughs comprising 84% of London’s area, with only one third of the population density of the inner Boroughs. If there is to be an increase in Islington, the densest Borough, it needs to be very much less than what is here proposed.

Homes fit for a king: what will Charles III say to Prime Ministers?

London Forum President Ben Derbyshire has seen King Charles' passion for housing design and planning up close. Here he lists the areas on which the new monarch is likely to provide private advice to prime ministers

During his long wait for accession, the Prince of Wales developed a reputation for 'black spider memos' by which he allegedly sought to influence outcomes in areas beyond the royal prerogative. One of these was the world of planning, architecture, urbanism and of course housing. Backchannelling in this way was not the only means he had of influence. His charities have been active in research, discourse and publication of his ideas. As a past president of the RIBA I have reason to appreciate the resentment amongst some in the profession arising from his interest in architecture - not least his 'Carbuncle Speech' at the 1984 celebration of the Institute's 150th anniversary. But I also know that the King has a significant understanding of the issues. The extent to which his understanding will be conveyed to Liz Truss' successors in the course of their weekly audience remains to be seen. As the Prince of Wales, he appeared on the Cover of the 1987 Penguin, *Community Architecture* pictured with John Thompson, founder of the practice I now chair, at our seminal project Lea View House, co-designed with its residents by a team from our on-site studio. After that, we undertook a similar exercise on a Duchy property, Newquay House, where he insisted on co-design and took a keen personal interest. Building on this connection, the prince came to open our projects; Mothers Square in Hackney and Sandringham Buildings in Charing Cross Road. Even a cursory examination of the output from The Princes Foundation and built output of the Duchy of Cornwall reveals a man with a long and personal commitment to housing and place making. It is apparent that successive prime ministers have worried about the state of planning and home building. Theresa May said the system was broken, Boris Johnson launched a 'once-in-a-lifetime' reform, Liz Truss fretted over 'Stalinist' housing targets. Briefing from civil servants and special advisers aside, what advice might King Charles have to offer? Here are a few pointers I'm willing to bet on:

1. Give the people a say. There is no doubting the King's belief that public engagement, co-design, community architecture, etc., generates buy-in from local communities, improved design and a sense of ownership that helps sustain community pride and care for the environment. The King has said that empowering people in this way can turn opposition to support for new development.

2. Go harder and faster towards net zero carbon. The King has repeatedly expressed his concern about slow progress in mitigating and adapting to the climate

crisis. Aside from the bizarre experience of a full English breakfast on the royal yacht moored in Belem, the main message of our trip to S. America in 1991 was about preserving embodied carbon. There have been many similar missions since.

3. Stewardship. The duchy of Cornwall has effectively promoted the virtue of long-term patient investment in creating sustainable places. Poundbury, for all its quirky adherence to traditional architecture, is a working demonstration of the way value accrues to landowners who take pride in place rather than developing land and trading it on.

4. Mixed use walkable neighbourhoods My *A Vision of Britain* (1987) and *Urban Villages* (1991) both with forewords by the Prince and much inspired by him attest to his enthusiasm for mid-rise dense urbanism where walking or cycling is the predominant means of access to leisure, education, health or to work.

5. Mixed tenure Rod Hackney, Community Architect and RIBA president in 1988 got into trouble following a private conversation with the Prince in which he reported the heir as saying he was concerned about acceding to a divided nation. Despite his privileged existence, it is clear that the King abhors ghettos either of the rich or the poor and seeks the diversity of mixed neighbourhoods.

6. Biophilia The Prince of Wales was teased for tree-hugging, long before *Biodiversity Net Gain* became common currency, let alone the basis on which planning decisions are made. He may have expressed this tendency in a fairly inchoate spiritual way, but there is plenty of scientific support now for nature's beneficial effect on urban microclimate and mental health.

7. Renovation. Growing up surrounded by heritage, it is no surprise that members of the Royal Family are imbued with that sense of collective memory that society obtains from ancient structures. Heritage preservation can be a powerful force for community cohesion and the Prince of Wales has supported many campaigns to rescue loved buildings at the heart of community life.

8. Beauty. Perhaps the trickiest of all the prince's enthusiasms to endorse on account of his particular devotion to classical and vernacular styles. But I reckon those black spider memos getting through to government played their part in design quality finding a place in the NPPG. Fortunately, British governments are no more able to insist on styles we use to clothe our buildings than to direct citizens in what style of clothes they should wear.

A walk along Rosebery Ave, from Clerkenwell Rd to St. John St.

This walk takes us along the full length of Rosebery Avenue. The road was planned by the Metropolitan Board of Works and clearance began in 1887. Progress was slow and little had been constructed by the time the board was abolished in 1889. The project was taken over by the new London County Council and finally completed in 1892. The name comes from the council's first chairman, the future Prime Minister Lord Rosebery. And it was the LCC that took the decision to plant the plane trees that give the street its character, particularly in summer. 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.

The walk begins at the junction with Clerkenwell Road, in the borough of Camden. The borough boundary with Islington lies immediately ahead on the far side of the bridge crossing the Fleet Valley and Warner Street. On either side as you approach the bridge are blocks of late 19th century public housing, Rosebery Square West and East. The southern section of the new road involved much clearance of slum property and the municipal authorities were committed to rehousing as many of the inhabitants as possible. Much of this southern stretch of Rosebery Avenue as far as Farringdon Road is a viaduct, with the magnificent nationally Grade II listed bridge as its highlight. It is best seen from below, in Warner Street.

The first locally listed building is on the left past the bridge, **No. 7-15 Rosebery Avenue**. This is listed for the shopfront only, which has been altered and updated since the original listing. But the shopfront is part of an important building as a whole and should be viewed as such. It was designed by developer-architect Frank Job Chambers, a major figure in the development of Rosebery Avenue and built between 1891 and 1893. This building is plainer and more utilitarian than Nos. 20-26 opposite, by the same architect. For more than 40 years, it housed the Temple Press which published *Cycling* magazine, the first mass-market illustrated magazine for cyclists.



Nos. 7-15 Rosebery Avenue

No. 25 Rosebery Avenue, now the popular Luis' Café, is a fine example of a late Victorian shop front sitting beneath a mansion block. This is one of a group of blocks commissioned by the Metropolitan Board of Works as part of its slum clearance. Its highly decorative design was aimed at attracting a 'higher class of resident'. James Hartnoll was the architect and developer, and this project followed on from his humbler Rosebery Square buildings in 1891-3. There are three of his mansion blocks grouped together here on either side of the road, Bideford, Branton and Barnstaple Mansions. These are tall lively buildings in red brick, with stepped gables, stone dressings and carved panels, a manner derived from Norman Shaw's Franco-Flemish designs of the 1880s. As with many of these Rosebery Avenue shopfronts No. 25 is worth seeing in the context of the building above.

We walk up the hill, past the former Post Office buildings on the left, over Farringdon Road to Exmouth Market. This is now one of the social and commercial hubs of modern Clerkenwell, a busy pedestrian street, after a 1990s regeneration project. The market developed in the 1890s when Rosebery Avenue was built and traffic diverted. **The Exmouth Arms** on the corner of Exmouth Street and Spafiel Street is the best of the locally listed buildings in the market area. There has been a pub here since around 1819 but it was rebuilt in a neo-Georgian style for the Camden Brewery Company in 1915-16, by the Bedfordshire builder S. Redhouse & Son. It was ornamented as it currently appears, though the large lettered green-tile panel on the canted corner was altered following a takeover by Courage, perhaps in 1935. It has been excellently restored.

*Exmouth Arms*

We have already come across buildings by the two late Victorian architects who did most to give Rosebery Avenue its unique character, James Hartnoll and Frank Chambers. Hartnoll developed many of the mansion blocks, and Chambers is perhaps best known for his unique cast iron shop window design. In 1896 he took on the leases of plots of land between Easton Street and Yardley Street. He erected shops with cast iron fronts to a system he had patented in 1885-6. These were designed to fit into very restricted spaces. Including timber backing, the front walls were only three inches thick. They were designed to be temporary, but remarkably some of them have survived. This sequence of shops, from **Nos. 49-53 on the corner with Easton Street to No. 67 on the corner with Yardley Street** were complete but Nos. 59-61 and Nos. 63-65 have been replaced with modern shopfronts. A fine example of how they must have originally looked is round the corner at **No. 38 Easton Street**.

*No. 38 Easton Street*

The iron frames provide a frontage with pilasters at the side and between the windows with brackets above. The frame curves below an upper line of smaller windows with fascia and frieze above. The stall risers and doors are wooden. The design is delicate and unusual, making these shops important survivors of late Victorian shopfront style. On the other side of the road, **Nos. 62-68 Rosebery Avenue** is an exceptionally fine late Victorian warehouse, again by Chambers. This building is symmetrical with five central bays and two at either end, separated by an access bay, with the crane surviving on the left-hand side. The iron framed window sizes are generous, rising to a cornice and pediment with the date at the top. In 1910 Chambers himself converted the ground floor into a cinema for a client called David Barnard, the Avenue Picture Palace. It closed in 1914, perhaps because of competition from Sadler's Wells which was turned into a cinema in that year. This building has been less altered than many of the 1890s commercial buildings in Rosebery Avenue, with its original iron window frames, loading bays and cranes.

Next door, **No. 70 Rosebery Avenue** is a fine piece of late Victorian industrial Baroque architecture. It was built in the Queen Anne style fashionable in many public buildings at the time and makes generous use of sandstone on the front elevation on the ground floor and the pilaster strips. Architectural details are similar to the former LCC Weights & Measures office at No. 5 Rosebery Avenue. No. 70 was built as the former London County Council gas meter testing station, for all meters from domestic to industrial. It was closed in 1929, when it was taken over by Edwin Jones & Sons, a firm of engravers, printers and paper merchants. After they left in the 1970s it was derelict for some years until sold by the GLC. It has now been converted into offices. This is an important building historically for Islington and for London as a whole.

Nos. 72-82 Rosebery Avenue was listed as a shopfront in 1993, which survives. But it has a broader architectural significance than that. It was built by Lewis Solomon in an Edwardian Baroque style in 1905. He also designed a number of other warehouses and industrial buildings further north along Rosebery Avenue in the triangle with Hardwick Street and Amwell Street. These have all been demolished so this is an important surviving example of Solomon's

work. This building's chief glories are the two original entrances with sweeping curved consoles. He used the same architectural flourishes in his Shacklewell Lane Synagogue which he designed at around the same time.



Nos. 72-82 Rosebery Avenue

No. 84 Rosebery Avenue is a former bank on a prominent corner site. Its architect was Edward Gabriel who designed several branches for the London & South Western Bank, in Kilburn, Willesden Green, Wimbledon, and here in Rosebery Avenue. Above the banking hall, which survives, was a two storey flat for the manager. No. 84 is a fine example of the late Victorian Baroque banking style, with lavish detailing. It has a prominent corner cupola faced on the ground floor in granite and above in stone dressed red brick.

Perhaps the most architecturally significant building on Rosebery Avenue is the former **Finsbury Town Hall**. This lost its central purpose when Finsbury was absorbed into the new London Borough of Islington in 1965. It was used as offices by Islington Council for some years but is now a dance studio with rooms to hire. It is nationally Grade II listed rather than locally listed, so worth a look as you walk past. It was built in 1895 by an architect

called William Charles Evans-Vaughan, little known then and since. He won the commission in an open competition against better known architects including Saxon Snell, with much more experience of designing public buildings, including the Holborn Union Infirmary in Archway. Finsbury Town Hall is in a mixture of styles, with "Renaissance Revival" the dominant one. It is worth a look inside, particularly the Great Hall and the Council Chamber.

Walk on past Spa Green and Sadler's Wells to some much older terraces, on either side of the road, which predate the late Victorian development of Rosebery Avenue. **Nos. 96-110** were built in the 1840s on land originally owned by the Lloyd Baker Estate. For simple terraced houses opening directly onto the street they are surprisingly richly detailed, with stucco surrounds to the windows, a cornice above and rusticated ground floor. Most have their original panelled doors.

Nos. 181-189 opposite were built in 1853-4 by George Payne, of Wharf Road, King's Cross, again on Lloyd Baker land. This terrace originally began at No. 177 which was demolished for the rebuilding of Sadler's Wells in the 1920s. More recently, and since the original listing in 1981, No. 179 was demolished for the 1990s rebuilding of the Wells. On the ground floor the houses have round arched moulded openings with small pilasters and brackets to the sills. Most have original glazing bars. They have key-stoned doorways with panelled doors above steps over the basement areas, and decorative cast iron front and steps railings, more elaborate than the terrace over the road.

This walk ends at the junction with St. John Street, close to the former Empress of Russia pub now a restaurant. I'm aware that it is somewhat shorter than previous walks, but you could add to it by walking through the Angel to either Essex Road or Upper Street. These walks can be found on the Islington Society website or in earlier editions of *Islington News*.

Books from our President and late Vice-President

Suicide of the West, by Richard Koch & Chris Smith, , 14.99 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

Marion Joan Harvey, M.B.E.

One of the Society's longest serving chairmen, Marion Harvey, died shortly before Christmas in her nursing home in Herefordshire. After the death of her husband, she had retired to Hay-on-Wye although for many years after she continued to visit London for Society and London Forum events.

Marion's lasting legacy will be the London Forum. Not content with chairing the Islington Society, which she did from 1985 to 1996, Marion saw the need for an umbrella group of Amenity Societies in London, particularly after the demise of the GLC had left it the only capital city in the developed world without a devolved government. In its first year of existence, the Forum was run by a small steering group but at the end of this Marion was elected to the newly created chairmanship and served in that role for twelve years. The Forum became the London Forum of Amenity & Civic Societies when it absorbed LATA, the London Amenity Transport Association that with the expert knowledge of Harley Sherlock and Michael Bach had successfully resisted the incursion of motorways into central London.

Marion was made M.B.E. in the New Year's honours list for 1999 for services to the environment, in recognition of her leadership of the Forum.

Marion had extended the remit of the Islington Society to cover energy conservation with the Energy Fair held in 1994. Perhaps her greatest contribution to environmental issues in Islington was the Schools Environment Project. Pupils were encouraged to re-order their play areas and to debate environmental issues in public meetings. She introduced the Geoffrey Gribble Awards, (later the Conservation Awards), and she secured advisory member places on the Development Control and Conservation Advisory Committees.

Marion's involvement in Islington predated her chairing of the Society. She had served as an opposition Labour councillor for Thornhill in the 1968-71 period of Conservative rule, and as a member of the majority Labour group representing Holloway from 1971 to 1974. Always more aware of the bigger picture, she belonged to the Bewdley Street Association which was at the centre of long running battles over the Barnsbury Traffic Management Scheme (the first of its kind in Islington) but not its prime mover. By profession she was a teacher at Barnsbury School.

Like all good eggs, Marion was interested in cricket: her nephew played for Shropshire and then nine seasons at Warwickshire, scoring two centuries in 1981.

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

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 continues this series reviewing the changes that have occurred during the life of the Islington Society.

Part II took us to the end of the twentieth century, by which time further changes were imminent, this time to the local Ward boundaries. Islington's population was thought to have declined since the 1970s, when the boundary commission had ruled that the entitlement was to 52 seats, and this was now reduced to 48. The opportunity was taken to rid the Borough of two member wards. The old 20 wards were replaced by sixteen three member wards, evenly split between the North and South Parliamentary constituencies as before.

The Boundary Commission was obsessed with equalizing numbers between each Ward, which in a transitory place like Islington made little sense. The Packington Estate redevelopment was taking place at the time, temporarily distorting the population. The Wards were supposed to reflect a defined community, but one obvious community focal point was the local Primary school. In merging Canonbury West and East (which had been split in 1976), there were too many residents for a three member ward and bits were hacked off and moved into neighbouring Wards, taking Canonbury School into St. Mary's and Rotherfield School into St. Peter's. The third school in the old wards, Ecclesbourne, had merged with Charles Lamb school and decamped to its site also in St. Peter's Ward.

Holloway, which was the only Ward to have remained unchanged since 1912, shifted northwards to encompass Hillmarton and St. Mary's was considerably altered in turn. Besides acquiring Canonbury School, it crossed the North London line taking parts of the old Holloway. And while the two Canonburys merged, the sprawling Highbury Ward gave way to two Highburys, East and West, embracing much of Quadrant which name along with Gillespie, Sussex and Thornhill disappeared from the political map.

Shortly after this review, which took effect from the 2002 local government elections,

there was a mini-review of Parliamentary boundaries in London. Islington's two seats survived intact, and the main changes were in inner west London. So there was to be no further change for twenty years, a remarkable period given what has gone before and since.

This period of calm was brought to an end by Arsenal Football Club. The completion of a new stadium led to the conversion of the old one to housing and a population increase in one of the Highbury Wards taking it above the Borough average plus 10%, the threshold for a Boundary Commission review. This came in two parts, first to ascertain the number of seats justified by the latest population figures, and then an exercise to allocate those seats. Part one established that the population had now risen to qualify for 51 councillors instead of 48, and the Commission accepted the Council's preference for all Wards to be represented by three councillors. So there were to be 17 Wards, the expectation being that there would be nine in the North Parliamentary constituency and eight in the South. But at this point the Boundary Commission reassessed the population to take account of residential properties under construction. This population assessment, had it been justified, would have entitled Islington to more than 51 councillors, but that was fixed, so the upshot of this was that the 17th Ward was allocated to the South. Laycock Ward is the new name, introduced in the elections of 2022, but it is closer to the old Holloway, and Holloway is similar to the old Hillmarton. The more significant changes are around Bunhill Ward, very much reduced in size on account of the properties which may well turn out to be of the infamous "buy-to-leave" category. There are minor changes in the North, only St. George's unchanged save in its name, now Tufnell Park.

These changes were closely followed by a wide ranging review of Parliamentary boundaries. This is nearing completion and will be the subject of the final part of this series.

Transport News Round-up

Bus cuts implemented

The removal of the 271, unchanged since trolleybuses replaced trams save in its number, took place on February 4th when the 21 was diverted away from Newington Green to Nag's Head. The loss of the 21 leaves Mildmay Park with only one route just as it was offering the option of a swift connection to the Elizabeth line. Once again Newington Green is denied a link to south London – it lost two in the early 1990s and had to wait fifteen years for this one to be restored.

The night bus N271, reprieved to provide a link to Whittington Hospital, remains, so patients in the south-east of the Borough can still get a bus home if they wait until after midnight. The 21 will inherit the built in delays around Highbury Corner and northbound passengers can expect to be thrown off at Moorgate or Hoxton as buses are turned short.

Fares to rise by 5.9%

Bus and tube fares will rise by 5.9% from March, in line with the increase in National Rail fares. Any other decision would have created anomalies between the two wherever the journey can be made by either tube or rail, and any smaller increase would have reduced the grant from central government. Newspapers have pointed out that it is the largest increase for ten years, but it is also the biggest discount from RPI since railway privatisation, when that index was introduced into the formula for fare rises.

One anomaly that persists is the rounding, usually up, to the nearest shilling. With no cash payments there is no reason why the fares could not be rounded to the nearest penny. Had that been done for the last two years, the bus fare would be rising to £1.71 instead of £1.75.

Decline of the travelcard

At the GLA Transport Committee last month it was revealed that there has been an 80% decline in use of the monthly and annual travelcard, in favour of pay as you go. This is explained by the fact that the monthly travelcard is based on 27 times the daily cap. (The annual card offers better value). Twenty years ago the monthly travelcard was just under ten times the daily rate, and the annual card 102 times the daily rate or ten months and four days. In those pre-WFH days many employers offered a loan for the purchase of annual season tickets.

TWaTs

Anthony Trollope was apparently unaware of the meaning of the derogatory term, but it now emerges as a description of the modern commuter. TfL reports travel 15% down on Mondays. Reduced commuting on Fridays is partially offset by more leisure travel, but the City AM newspaper has discontinued its Friday print edition. If businesses are to make optimal use of office space it should only be a matter of time before they incentivise varied WFH patterns. For the efficient running of the railway, this cannot come soon enough.

Bus diversionary routes

One adverse consequence of Low Traffic Neighbourhoods is the lack of suitable diversionary routes for buses when something goes wrong. A burst water main in Englefield Road sent 76s out to Kingsland Road, in place of New North Road and Southgate Road, and made all the more absurd when an unsafe building in Stoke Newington sent northbound buses back along Balls Pond Road into Mildmay Road. The old Stamford Street route would have rendered the water main diversion unnecessary. Shacklewel Lane and Rectory Road might have been more convenient as a diversion from the A10.

Following a serious fire in Rotherfield Street, an extended road closure enforced by the police closed the only legal route available to some vehicles. Islington Council is looking into ways of temporarily lifting restrictions should such circumstances recur.

Elizabeth Line exceeds expectations

The Elizabeth line recorded its 100 millionth passenger in the last week of January, having opened the previous May, and is now the busiest railway on the National network. It has generated £50m. more than anticipated, with little sign of lost passengers elsewhere – the Central line might have been expected to lose patronage. Southeastern rail are blaming the Lizzie for lower than expected passenger numbers, but this may have been an excuse to justify the cost cutting and passenger inconvenience raising changes it imposed in December, without consultation. Following severe overcrowding at London Bridge, where more people are being asked to change, pressure is mounting for the changes to be reversed.

AB

Recent and Forthcoming events

Society events

The A.G.M. was held on Wednesday, November 9th. There were no changes to the office holders or committee. The meeting was followed by a talk by Andrew Clayton on the Local List of buildings in Islington.

Future events will include a survey of Islington's trees with Gavin Rees, and a chance to meet Jo Dibb, former head of Elizabeth Garrett Anderson school.

London Forum

The London Forum AGM was held on October 12th and the President's address is reported on page 5. The Forum is advising members about the planning reforms going through Parliament as part of the so-called Levelling Up Bill. Its principal concern is with the proposed National Development Management Policies, which might be set by secondary (unscrutinised) legislation and over-ride Local Plans which have been submitted to Examination in Public. The range of topics is as yet unspecified. There is a risk that the new Infrastructure Levy fails to deliver the sums necessary, and on the necessary timescales to fund infrastructure and affordable housing. The Forum is concerned at the inability of Local Planning Authorities to resource all the tasks necessary to introduce the new planning regime successfully on the intended timescales.

Heritage Alliance

Heritage Alliance celebrates its twentieth anniversary this year and its annual heritage Day takes place over two days, March 1st & 2nd.

Heritage Alliance are also encouraging attendance at two SPAB talks to be held on line. They are, on February 23rd, an illustrated introduction to the SPAB's Old House Project - former St Andrews Chapel, a Grade II* 'building at risk' in Kent, which stood empty for 50 years; and an illustrated introduction to the archaeological work at SPAB's Old House Project undertaken at St Andrews Chapel from 2019 - 2022, on April 27th.

Islington Council

Meetings in March (Town Hall, 7.30)

2nd: Full Council, budget setting

7th: Planning Committee

9th: Licensing Sub-Committee

16th: Licensing; Housing Scrutiny

21st: Planning sub-Committee A

23rd Executive

27th: Environment/Regeneration Scrutiny

28th Planning Committee

30th: Licensing Sub-Committee C

Greater London Assembly

March Meetings in the new City Hall, 10a.m. except where stated.

9th: Environment

16th: Plenary -full Assembly

21st Transport

22nd: Planning & Regeneration (2 p.m.)

23rd Mayor's Question Time

Tba: Housing

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