

## Smithfield under review...major change nearby...

John McAslan + Partners' contentious £160 million Smithfield Market overhaul has been called in by the Secretary of State. Communities secretary Eric Pickles will decide the future of the scheme after deeming the redevelopment to concern 'matters of substantial regional and national controversy.' The inquiry is expected to focus on the mixed-use scheme's compliance with the local plan and NPPF policies on good design and conserving the historic environment. McAslan's scheme – involving partial demolition of Victorian buildings to create 5,700m<sup>2</sup> of shops and 21,220m<sup>2</sup> of office space – won planning from the City of London in July.

Almost a dozen organisations objected to the Henderson Global Investors-backed project, including the Twentieth Century Society, SPAB, LBI and SAVE Britain's Heritage which submitted a petition with the names of almost 2,700 people opposed to the redevelopment. A previous scheme for the site by KPF, which would have obliterated the existing buildings, was also approved at planning committee before being famously thrown out by communities secretary Hazel Blears in 2008.

A spokesperson for developer said: 'Henderson's conservation-led planning application for the largely disused buildings in West Smithfield is the only realistic, viable and funded scheme which can bring these historic buildings back into use and deliver a proper long-term sustainable balance of redevelopment, restoration and retention. This balanced approach has been supported by the City of London, English Heritage, Greater London Authority and CABE as it retains the vast majority of the existing Victorian market buildings and brings them back into viable use.'

Clem Cecil of SAVE said: '*We're delighted, it shows the significance of the buildings that the Secretary of State has decided to call it in a second time. We are delighted there will be a fair forum for the discussion.*' Cecil claimed the latest twist proved the buildings – which failed to win statutory protection from demolition because they were bombed damaged – should now be listed. The SAVE director called on the inquiry to consider claims the City of London had overlooked the planning inspector's 2008 recommendations in approving the McAslan scheme.

She said: '*The inspector, in 2008, concluded the buildings could be preserved and become a new Spitalfields or Covent Garden and that they should be put on the open market to allow conservation-led scheme to come forward.*' She continued: '*The City of London never put it on the open market. Therefore, it is unfounded to say this is the only viable scheme because no other scheme has come forward. This is why we need this fair forum.*' Go to <http://farringdonsmithfield.blogspot.co.uk/> for more very interesting information. A similar struggle concerning more overpowering ribbon development along Farringdon and King's Cross Road. DS

## Merry Christmas to all our members



At this festive time it's a moment to think of friends and relations near and far away. The meaning of 'far away' has altered. The days of aerograms and telegrams, of inland post and travel only by train or ship have long gone. We can Skype our cousins in India or New Zealand or in Acton or Auchtermuchty. Place is also very important. Walking up Wharton Street to Amwell Street, crossing River Street to Myddelton Square and going up to the Angel the other morning about 05.30 when only two or three dog-walkers were out reminded me how lucky we are to live in the Amwell area. Ours is not, broadly speaking, a transient area. Small favours, knowing neighbours names, people who'll take in a parcel, having a local school, a deli and a coffee shop, not to mention the other quirky emporia, makes our area what it is. DS.

## News about Mount Pleasant

An excellent video by Edward Denison. A 'must watch' item. Thanks Edward.

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=wP-PzGXYHFA&feature=youtu.be](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wP-PzGXYHFA&feature=youtu.be)

## A message from our chair, Darlan Mitchell

I thought I would recount a recent event in which I was involved which could be described as ironic, but also uplifting. As you all should know, the 29<sup>th</sup> September was the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of the New River, and it would have seemed obvious to celebrate the event at the New River Head where it all happened, but no one in Islington was planning anything. Fortunately an architect was looking for a summer project on the theme of water for his students and heard about the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary. He was inspired by the occasion and set his students the task of creating something to mark the event. They came up with the idea of re-enacting the opening of the New River on the very day and at the very spot it all happened 400 years ago. Their contribution was to be a canopy, which would sit over a stage on which the re-enactment would take place. This meant that as well as a canopy being constructed, a theatre company would have to be engaged and a brass band commissioned to sound the trumpets as had occurred on the original occasion. The local school was asked to sing their specially composed New River song, and the whole event soon took on a life of its own beyond the student project. When the day came the canopy, which had consumed at least 75% of the projects funds and 80% of the effort, and was supposed to be the centre piece of the event, blew over and broke up as it was being erected and so the celebrations had to proceed without it. Fortunately none of the audience was aware of this; the stage, the actors, musicians and singers went on regardless, and everyone had a good time. Even the architecture students learnt a lot from their failure. My first reaction was that the canopy had turned out to be a waste of time and money and we could have staged the whole event without it; but of course we couldn't, because without the architecture students and their project nothing would have happened at all on the 29<sup>th</sup> September at the New River Head. So success isn't always just found in ends, it can be found in means too.



## Drinks for Christmas. At home and away

The Amwell Society committee invites you for Christmas drinks at the Old China Hand, Tysoe Street, on **Saturday 14th December** from **6.00 pm - 8.00 pm** First festive tipple on the Amwell Society.

At this time of year there's usually a recommended festive cocktail recipe in the newsletter. This year the cocktail comes from the June 1939 book by Ambrose Heath, *Good Drinks*. The seems strong and quirky. Oh well...it's simple to make and delicious by the fire or in the warm as a pure treat.

### Quelle vie

½ Brandy. ½ Kümmel. Kümmel is a delicious caraway-seed liqueur from Germany. 'Half of what?' you may ask. Half a liqueur glass? Half a wine glass? Half a jug? So many questions for such a simple drink. It depends how many are supping. Oh and stir before serving. What a life indeed! DS

## Puss in Boots at the Hackney Empire until 5 January

For fifteen years Hackney Empire has staged a successful pantomime at Christmas. The hero, Puss in Boots arrives in the merry Kingdom of Hackneyonia E8, to seek wealth and power for his master. This cunning feline swashbuckler has it all; the looks, the walk, the talk and most importantly his magic boots. Expect laughs and sparks as our loveable rogue defeats all the odds and wins the day!

There'll be show-stopping songs, dazzling dance routines, knockabout comedy and bags and bags of audience participation.

This year the cast will include Kat B as Puss-in-Boots, Sharon D Clarke as Queen Talulah the Hoo Ha, Josefina Gabrielle as evil witch Evilena, Stephen Matthews as Dame Nettie Knowall, Tony Timberlake as King Konkers the Bonkers and many, many others. Ava-Brown as Celestine. Written and Directed by Susie McKenna. Music: Steven Edis

For tickets contact Hackney Empire  
291 Mare Street, London E8 1EJ  
Box office 020 8985 2424



[www.hackneyempire.co.uk](http://www.hackneyempire.co.uk)  
Tickets: £ 32 - £ 10. Take a bus from  
Islington Green. Nos. 38 and 30. DS

## The Amwell Society - Campaigning on behalf of the locality for 41 years.

[www.amwell.org.uk](http://www.amwell.org.uk)

### Bevin Court. A masterpiece in our midst

Bevin Court is situated at the end of Cruikshank Street on the site of what used to be Holford Square. The Square was flattened by a land mine in 1941 and after the war Finsbury Borough Council seized it under a compulsory purchase order so that they could develop the site for social housing. They employed their favourite architect Berthold Lubetkin [1901 - 1990], with whom the borough had a long-standing relationship, to design a modern block of flats which turned out to be the architect's last major project for Finsbury.

Lubetkin is now famous as a prominent Modernist architect. He was born in Georgia, then part of Russia, studied architecture in Paris and came to London in the 1930s where he set up his architectural practice, Tecton. In this area of London he was responsible for designing the Finsbury Health Centre and the Spa Green Estate as well as Bevin Court.

Bevin Court - at first called Lenin Court - was constructed between 1950 and 1954, and was the first large scale Modernist block of flats to be built in England after the war. Its unusual Y shape fits well into the square and means that none of the flats face north. There are two smaller blocks, Holford House and Amwell House which are

compatible with the existing Georgian houses. There is an unusual circular entrance and the central lobby is an equilateral triangle. The central staircase is remarkable and exceptionally well designed. It consists of a series of short flights at 120 degree angles with triangular landings halfway between the floors on a single pillar. Architectural students frequently visit Bevin Court just to look at the staircase.



### The Peter Yates mural at Bevin Court

Set within the curve of the entrance is a mural by Peter Yates who died in 1982. He was an artist and an architect who worked with and became a friend of Lubetkin. His mural at Bevin Court is called *Day and Night Winged Bulls* and is a stylised interpretation of elements taken from the heraldic arms of the London Borough of Finsbury. These arms, which were granted in 1931, depict the white cross of the order of St John, which has its headquarters at St. John's Gate. The water symbolises the Thames. The red circles and crescent represent the arms of the Charterhouse. The gateway is the old gate through the walls of London into the borough. The two creatures supporting the shield are the bull and the dolphin, the symbols of St Luke and St James. The dolphin wears a badge which depicts the Clerk's Well as in Clerkenwell. The Latin inscription *ALTIORA PETIMUS* means "We seek higher things"

The good condition of the mural was maintained until relatively recently, but a deterioration in the external fabric of the lobby allowed rain water to damage the surface on which the mural is painted. In addition some graffiti and a do it yourself repair added to the mural's misfortunes. However owing to the efforts of Julia Barclay, who lives in Bevin Court and is an Amwell Society member, Peter Yates' daughter, Sally Ann Yates, was alerted to the plight of the mural and she commissioned a report to ascertain its condition, and make proposals for its conservation and restoration. Quite a lot of money was needed to save it but fortunately the Heritage Lottery Fund has come to the rescue and renovation work on the mural will start shortly. The building itself has undergone extensive repairs and redecoration over the past year or so and the central lobby and staircase have been repainted in their original colours of red, grey and cream. Definitely worth a visit. DM



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### Myddelton Square update

The public gardens in the Square have been leased to London Borough of Islington [LBI] and its predecessors since the Square was laid-out in the 1820s. A peppercorn rent has been paid and LBI now bears responsibility for its management and maintenance.

The property development company Derwent London became the freeholder in 2007. Derwent is the successor to the New River Company. In 2008, Derwent decided to sell the freeholds of flats and houses and the Square. These were parcelled into 13 lots. Derwent was obliged to offer first refusal rights to the long leaseholders. The majority of the leaseholders chose to purchase their freeholds. Some remaining parcels of land which did not have resident leaseholders on them were offered for sale by Derwent publicly. One of these lots included the gardens in the Square. Derwent did not offer the freehold of the gardens to LBI. So, the sale was publicly notified - including an advert placed in the Islington Gazette in February 2008. Regrettably, it seems that no-one involved at LBI noticed it.

The sale of Myddelton Square gardens and the children's playground sale to Marcus Cooper, a property developer, was completed in June 2008. Derwent had combined the open space in the Square with the freehold for number 66 in the Square; but the gardens were effectively sold to Cooper at a nominal sum only.

In 2010 LBI took action to notify the freeholder of their intention to carry out repairs to the garden shed which was dilapidated and becoming dangerous. This was when LBI discovered that Derwent had transferred the ownership to Marcus Cooper. They also learned that Cooper refused consent for this repair work. Early in 2010, the Council erected hoardings around the park shed to prevent access to the dangerous structure. These have since been removed and the Council has carried out repairs.

Update No. 9 of the Myddelton Square Gardens Group:

Under the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954, the Council has the right to keep on renewing its lease over the gardens save in specific circumstances. Unless he can stop them, the Council's right to renew essentially makes Mr Cooper's freehold commercially worthless.

The lease expired on 29 September 2013. Mr Cooper has refused to allow it to be renewed. LBI has issued an application to renew its lease to the Court. By Section 64 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954, LBI's lease will continue unless and until the Court decides that LBI is not entitled to a new lease. Therefore, the gardens will remain open until the Court decides otherwise.

The Court listed the case for a preliminary hearing on 2 December 2013. No news as yet. This will be limited to giving directions as to how the case will be decided: it will not be a hearing where the Court decides any issues about the future of the gardens. We hope the Court will give a date for the final hearing, but it is unlikely to be earlier than Easter 2014.

Mr Cooper's defence to the application to renew is based, as we understand it, upon an assertion that he has a realistic intention to carry out "*substantial works of construction*", which is one of the limited defences upon which he can rely. Under the London Squares Preservation Act 1931 the only buildings that could be constructed on the gardens would be buildings "*necessary or convenient*" for "*the purpose of an ornamental garden pleasure ground or ground for play rest and recreation*". Accordingly, Mr Cooper applied for planning permission to install recreational facilities which included a hut for the purposes of playing bowls.

His planning application was dismissed by the Council on 9 September 2013. In order to have any chance of persuading the Court that he has a realistic intention to carry out construction works, he will have to appeal against the Council's decision. He may well also make another application for planning permission. Mr Cooper is a very experienced property developer and he will have a good understanding of the planning system, so we must be vigilant.

Accordingly, whilst we can be glad that Mr Cooper's planning application has been turned down, the end is not yet in sight. But the gardens will continue to be in public control unless and until Mr Cooper is successful in his litigation against the Council. JW and MP.

### Our Most Holy Redeemer, Exmouth Market

In mid November Father Christopher Trundle was licensed as Vicar of Our Most Holy Redeemer, Exmouth Market and St. Mark's Myddelton Square. After a gap of almost a year Fr. Trundle replaces the very popular Fr. Bagott who has moved to St. Cuthbert's, Philbeach Gardens, SW7 after 18 years in our parish. We welcome Fr. Trundle to his first Christmas in Clerkenwell and wish him a long and happy time here. DS.

