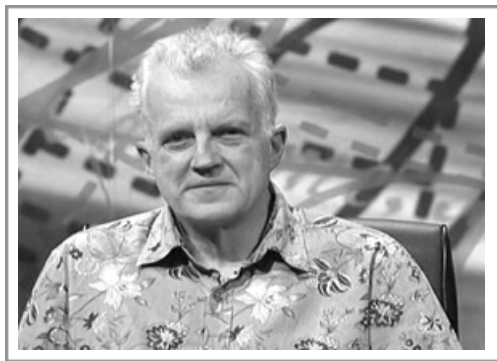


Christian Wolmar to give the talk at the Society's AGM. Tuesday 12 May Clerkenwell Parochial School, Amwell Street from 6.30pm

The Amwell area has, on its fringes, excellent bus and railway services. The 38 bus goes up and down Rosebery Avenue to and from Victoria and Clapton Pond. It is the most frequently served route in London with a bus every minute. Pentonville Road has some very useful routes too - the 205 to and from Paddington and Bow Church and the meandering 46 running from Bart's Hospital to Lancaster Gate via Highgate. We have the world's oldest underground railway beneath our streets opened in 1863 and still running from Baker Street to Farringdon. Crossrail services will begin soon between Liverpool Street and Shenfield in the east. When completed, Crossrail will go out to Taplow in the west, right through central London via Farringdon. In 2013 London Mayor Johnson promised that fares for Crossrail will be "in line with those charged on LU/DLR, and that the full ticketing range including Oyster Cards, Travelcards, Freedom Passes and Zip cards will be valid on Crossrail services." Even before Crossrail 1 has opened its booking halls, Crossrail 2 is being planned. It could run just north of the Amwell area through Angel via Hackney from Cheshunt in the north to Hampton, Subiton and Epsom in the south.



Christian Wolmar

Rod Liddle of the Spectator said "Christian Wolmar is our most eminent transport journalist". We are very fortunate that Christian has agreed talk at our AGM on the impact of the old and newer transport systems around us and the ones that are to come.

The AGM will begin at 6.30pm with a chance to chat to neighbours. The business of the AGM will take place at 7.00pm. Christian Wolmar's talk will follow at 7.30pm. Thanks to Matt O'Brien Head at Clerkenwell Parochial for use of the school hall.

A plague on all our houses...

It seems that many people across London are plagued with clothes and carpet moth. Sadly, the editor of the Amwell Society newsletter cannot recommend any guaranteed mothproofing system...except to mention that John Lewis, Oxford Street and Farringdon Locks and Tools in Exmouth Market supply the effective, Norfolk-made Zero Demi-diamond clothes moth killer. The manufactures explain that the system uses pheromone technology to 'deliver maximum catch rates and protect woollens and natural fibres from moth damage.' Sad to say that cedar-wood balls, lavender bags even the extra-powerful anti-polilla pastilles bought in Spain seem to have very little effect on the muscular London moth.

There are other ways of keeping the moth out of woollens. At the end of the winter season, wash them carefully and dry thoroughly having first bought some special polythene bags for the purpose in which to store your Norwegian gjestal cardigans and luxury cashmere - in the freezer! Moths hate the cold.



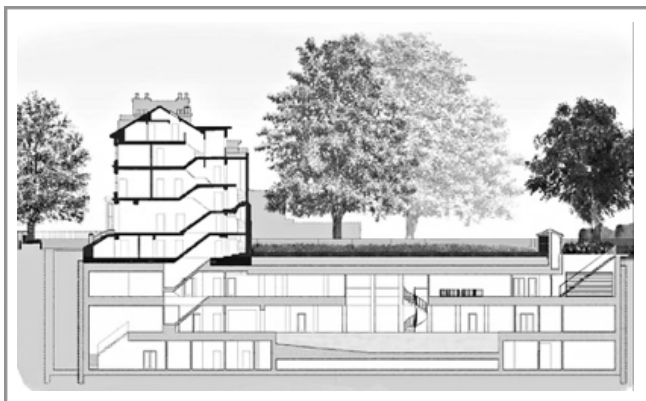
Moths caught on a Zero pheremone strip

A clothes moth is about 6mm in length and buff in colour with no markings. Carpet moths are not the same as clothes moths but are just as destructive. There are plenty of anti-moth websites. Try www.mothprevention.com

We don't [necessarily] dig it

The new enthusiasm to dig down beneath residential houses has been fuelled by many ambitious and imaginative developers in London who cannot get permission to build upwards and who have resorted to excavating beneath, mostly, Victorian properties.

In many ways the Amwell area is blessed. We are well-protected by the rules that govern the New River Conservation Area and the Planning and Conservations teams at the London Borough of Islington [LBI] act in the our best interests. The houses, flats and other buildings within our area - Listed and non-listed - have, mostly, been treated with respect and with regard to planning policies. For many years there has been tension about building mansard roof extensions to provide an extra floor to a Listed house, but it is only recently that we have had to ask LBI if the authority has a policy for below-ground excavations which seek to significantly excavate beneath houses to provide additional living space, home cinemas, swimming pools etc. The illustration below is *not* a sample of what is being proposed hereabouts, but an example of the grandiose notions of what has already been imposed on properties in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and also in the City of Westminster.



Digging down at its most extreme.
Not a proposal for the Amwell area

Tim Dowling wrote a compelling article in The Guardian on this matter in August 2014 which can be read in full at www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2014/aug/18/basement-conversions-disputes-digging-iceberg-homes The kind of horror stories that Tim Dowling tells are the source of the concerns of Amwell Society members. These concerns are not an example of perfectly formed local NYMBY-ism but worries about geology, shallow foundations and footings and about big scale, long-term disruption as a result of digging deep.

What is revealed from experiences in other London boroughs is the intensive and long-lasting level of disruption imposed on neighbours while hundreds of tons of spoil is excavated from domestic sites. Then there is the seemingly endless pounding of piles as they are driven in to support the older houses - an act in itself which has been known to undermine the integrity of neighbours' houses, leaving owners with years of legal wrangles and financial misery while party-wall agreements become a subject of civil action in the courts.

Only recently has LBI started to consider planning policies for deep excavation work beneath houses in Islington. With the largest number of Listed buildings in any borough in London it's vital that such policies are robust. The building standards of our Georgian houses were based on the a 'needs must' theory. There were no structural or engineering regulations - more a case of an individual builder's experience and intuition. We know that as domestic architecture developed, standards of drainage, sewerage services and foundations improved, so that the solid, late-Victorian houses of Holloway and Highgate and of Kensington and Chelsea are significantly more robust than those in the New River and Lloyd Baker areas. As most people realise we live in a hilly area riddled with springs. Most people who live on the hilliest part of our area will know that collectively all the houses are sliding gently downhill. No one will worry - unless basements are dug next door. It's a fact of life. If deep excavations were undertaken without due care and attention to shallow Georgian foundations and to the topography and sogginess of our area, unforeseen changes may be triggered. This narrative is, of course, not scientific. It may well be that we need to understand our houses better than we do, to be better informed about local geography and then make decisions about excavations. In the meantime we are working with LBI and local councillors on policy matters related to deep excavations.

In Tim Dowling's article, Stephen Merritt of the London Basement Company is quoted.

"The prices of many houses are at least £1,000 a square foot. A basement, all in, is probably about £500 a square foot." A basement conversion may be dirty, disruptive, stressful and expensive but if you live in the right neighbourhood it's still cheaper than moving house".

Our chairman, Paul Thornton, has recently contributed to the LBI consultation on a proposed planning policy on basements. Read www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2012/nov/09/billionaires-basements-london-houses-architecture See also www.rbkc.gov.uk/pdf/Kensington%20Basements%20report%20-%20FINAL__.pdf

A busy start to the New Year. A message from our chair, Paul Thornton



Let me start by wishing all our members a very happy 2015. The year has started briskly for the Amwell Society with three consultation documents on housing from Islington Council [LBI] and one on Crossrail 2 from the Department for Transport [DfT] all requiring a response by the end of January.

The LBI consultations address the following topics:

Basements - a new Supplementary Planning Document will restrict both the depth and the extent of basement developments, picking up on the issues raised in the article in the newsletter.

Urban Design Guidelines - a general update is proposed to the 2006 Islington Urban Design Guide, which sets out general principles and specific examples of good and poor practice in urban development. The main changes concern roof extensions, rear extensions, gated developments, energy efficiency and the use of contemporary materials.

"Buy-to-leave" homes - LBI is planning measures to prevent new homes in larger developments being purchased as "bullion in the sky" and being deliberately left empty for prolonged periods.

Details of all these consultations can be found at www.islington.gov.uk/involved/consultation-engagement/consultations/Pages/default.aspx

Readers of Islington Tribune will be aware of the anger raised by the recent publication of the probable route of Crossrail 2, and the likely location of major surface facilities on Penton Street and on the west side of Upper Street. The latter appears to require the demolition of the landmark Angel Building at the corner of Upper Street and Pentonville Road, which houses the Co-op Bank. Details can be found at www.gov.uk/government/consultations/crossrail-2-safeguarding-directions

We shall be commenting on those aspects which most affect the Amwell area, and our responses will be posted on the Society's website. Taken together with a number of one-off planning applications which raise important issues of principle, your committee will have its work cut out over the next few weeks. Hence our plea in the neighbouring column for additional active members to join the committee!

COMMUNITY CONCERT - St. MARK'S MYDDELTON SQUARE. JOSHUA ORPHAN & COMMUNITY CARE, MALAWI. TUESDAY 12 FEBRUARY 7.30pm.
TICKETS £5 IN ADVANCE. £7 ON THE DOOR

Committee news

It's amazing that the Amwell Society is 43 years old this year. Three activists - Norman King, Irvine Gray and Carol Goddard recognised what a unique community of people then lived in the Amwell area. We have seen the popping up of contemporary-style businesses in Amwell Street and children at Clerkenwell Parochial School today are the grandchildren of the pupils from 1972. Many residents from that time continue to live here and have been joined by younger people starting families. All are welcome to enjoy this unique 'village in London'. The Society depends on volunteers. There is no paid member of staff, just a group of people who make up the Society committee who keep an eye on planning proposals and ensure that they enhance, not detract or damage the townscape that is the Amwell Society area. The committee liaises with other groups, for example the residents of both Wilmington and Myddelton Squares and keeps in touch with the work of the Peel Centre on Percy Circus and Clerkenwell Parochial School. The Society also looks after St. Helena Garden at the junction of Lloyd Baker Street and Lloyd Square.

At the AGM in May the committee will be elected. Most members will carry on serving the community but we will also be on the lookout for new committee members. If you have a few - a very few - hours to spare each month join us as we look ahead to our 50th anniversary year.

The current committee members are:

Paul Thornton from Lloyd Square - Chair
Francois Smit from the Margery Street Estate - Secretary
Bibra Ronalds from Lloyd Square - Treasurer
David Sulkin from Wharton Street - Newsletter editor
Giles Colchester from Myddelton Square
Sally Hull from Myddelton Square
Mathew Kidwell from Wharton Street
George Smart from Wharton Street
Jane Wainwright from Cumberland Gardens

We are very fortunate and very grateful that Darian and Delia Mitchell put in many hours working to keep St. Helena Garden looking good. Darian also keeps an eye on matters related to the New River Head.

Subscription rates are a bargain - £15 per household for three years. If you'd like to join or - just as important - renew your membership, write your name, address, e-mail address and contact number on a card. Put the card and £15 or a cheque for £15 made out to the Amwell Society in an envelope and send or deliver it to Bibra Ronalds, 3 Lloyd Sq, London, WC1X 9BA

DON'T FORGET! SUGGEST TO YOUR NEIGHBOURS - NEW AND OLD - THAT THEY JOIN THE AMWELL SOCIETY

The Amwell Society - Campaigning on behalf of the locality for 43 years

www.amwell.org.uk

News from Myddelton Square

Monica Potts reports....Councillors from LBI met members of the Myddelton Square Association and members of the Amwell Society to discuss Myddelton Square Gardens [MSG] on 27 October. Cllrs Claudia Webbe, James Murray, Alice Donovan and James Ward attended with James Gilchrist, Head of Greenspace and Leisure. LBI is committed to keeping MSG open for public use under LBI's management. Whilst it is possible that LBI will need to acquire MSG by compulsory purchase from the freeholder, Marcus Cooper [MC], for legal reasons, it is necessary to pursue all other avenues of negotiation and compromise. LBI is seeking a new 15-year lease under Section 24 of the Tenant & Landlord Act of 1954



Myddelton Square Gardens

To this end LBI has made an applications to the Courts to extend its lease. MC's company has objected to the proposed extension on the basis that he intends to run a business in MSG. A hearing was planned for 3 June at which MC wanted to argue that he had a chance of securing planning permission for a catering business for which he would construct a tea kiosk. The application was turned down but the hearing was adjourned until after MC's application for an appeal had been determined. The appeal was dismissed in August.

LBI has now applied for another hearing but no date has date been fixed. In his report, the Planning Inspector was reluctant to permit any commercialisation of the garden. We hope that MC's chances of persuading a judge to allow changes to access of MSG are diminished.

Whether LBI is successful in its plan to renew its lease or invoke a complusory purchase, Cllr Webbe stressed that it is committed to keeping MSG as a garden accessible to all and to securing funds to restore and develop the garden. We also have a commitment from LBI to full local consultation every step of the way.

The rise of the lady typewriter

The Amwell area sits on the edge of the City, so in the late 19th century, with the rise of opportunities for women at work beyond domestic service, girls and young women had only a short walk to 'business' from here to Finsbury Square, Cornhill or Leadenhall Street. Imagine how many typewriters were busy at the Prudential Building in High Holborn when it was completed in 1901. By then, women were colonising the occupation of 'lady typewriter' coupled with the skill of taking shorthand. Some suggested that women were more dextrous than men in using a typewriting machine. No mention of the fact that they were cheaper to employ. Money was used to keep women in their place.

It was government, not business, that first employed an army of typewriters. They were engaged on an experimental basis in 1890. In 1894 the Treasury reported that *'women typists have proved themselves an efficient and economical form of labour'* although *'copying with the aid of a machine...is not difficult, so their pay should be moderate'*. At 16 shillings a week [£85.86 a week or £4,465 a year in 2015 money] a typist's starting pay was, the Registrar General noted *'not such as to tempt applicants'*. Lady typewriters were expected to resign their posts if they married. *'Continuous and effective service is the first condition of permanent employment under the State and a woman, as wife and mother, cannot be expected to work for the State continuously and effectively and her service must therefore cease on marriage.'* This applied to the State, education, banking, teaching and medical sectors - although not to manual workers in the cotton mills of the north west or coal sorters at pit heads in Durham.



Lady typewriters at work in an enrolment department. Note the supervisor on the right as well as two men working by the pillar. Note also the uniform of the ladies with regulation hairstyling.