

## Annual General Meeting 2017

The AGM will be held on Tuesday 16 May 2017 at Clerkenwell Parochial School, Amwell Street.

Drinks & nibbles from 6.30 pm meeting starts at 7 pm. Our guest speaker is acclaimed East End tour guide, David Rosenberg, author of *Rebel Footprints*. He will talk about Clerkenwell's radical history and links to leading figures in the Russian Revolution. All members are welcome and bring a neighbour!

David Rosenberg was born in London in 1958. His grandparents came to the East End as Jewish immigrants from the Tsarist Russian



Empire in the 1900s. At first they lived just off Cable Street, then later on Princelet Street and Hanbury Street just off Brick Lane.

David divides his working time between adult education teaching, training teachers, working on educational and cultural projects, writing, giving talks and guiding people on radical history walks.

## Mary Ward Singers Annual Concert St Mark's Myddelton Square

The Mary Ward Singers, a community choir founded by Gustav Holst, will give their annual concert on Thursday 6 July at 7.30 pm. The programme will include works by Orlando Gibbons and Benjamin Britten. Admission is free. There will be a retiring collection for a charity chosen by the choir on the day. Please support this event if you can. See more about Mary Ward on page 3.

## See page 4 for news of a canal-boat trip

## News from Great Amwell

We are delighted to report that we have been contacted by our sister amenity group, based at the source of the River Amwell in Hertfordshire. We are planning a visit to Great Amwell later in the year. It's a charming village, with generous and hospitable friends and hosts. We'll be in touch about dates and travel plans. In the last few years we visited Great Amwell and we then welcomed members of the other Society to tea in the hall of Clerkenwell Parochial School. We are delighted to be in touch once again.



## Tight and troublesome

For sometime now - more than a year - a group of residents in the Amwell area have endured the building of a new house on a site which is cheek-by-jowl with and tucked behind existing Victorian and Georgian houses.

Several new-build residential properties in contemporary styles have been built in the Amwell area in recent years, but none as hard as this one on long-standing residents. This state-of-the-art development has included endless deep digging with 10 months of continuous removal of spoil, then the seemingly endless delivery of liquid concrete to be pumped about 50 metres from the street to the site with all the adjacent mud, noise, dust and dirt and diesel fumes and - more importantly - risk to health and the ruination of peace and quiet.

The Society encourages the protection of the Listed buildings in the New River Conservation Area while also supporting new projects that enhance our part of London.

However, the Society also wants the assurance of Planning Officers at LBI that they will pay special attention to access issues linked to sites, when interesting planning applications for new properties are received. It is unfair for residents and neighbours to have to live through two years of heavy-duty misery because, while the site is adequate for the proposed development, the access to achieve it, is not.



## Mrs Humphry Ward, novelist 1851 - 1920

Mary Augusta Ward [née Arnold] was a successful novelist in her time, whose work is largely concerned with religious and political issues. She also pioneered modern child day-care.

She was born in Hobart, Tasmania. Her father, Thomas Arnold, was the

second son of Dr Thomas Arnold, the famous headmaster of Rugby School. In 1847 Thomas migrated to New Zealand. Later he became inspector of schools in Tasmania. In 1850 he married Julia Kemp, the daughter of a previous governor of the island. Mary was their first child.

In 1856 Thomas Arnold converted from Anglicanism to Roman Catholicism and had to relinquish his position in Tasmania. With the help of John Henry Newman, he moved to Ireland to teach at the Catholic University in Dublin. Their one school-age daughter Mary, who was to be raised as an Anglican, was left with his mother, the widow of Dr Arnold, at Fox How, originally their holiday home, in Westmoreland. Thomas Arnold returned to Anglicanism in 1856 and reconverted to Catholicism in 1876, thus in turn opening and losing a career in Oxford.

Although she had no formal education at Oxford, Mary assisted her father in his research and, given a pass to the Bodleian Library, studied Spanish history and literature. These studies enabled her to enter the highest intellectual circles and she was soon famous as a remarkably intellectual young woman.

In 1872 Mary Arnold married Thomas Humphry Ward, then a fellow of Brasenose College. They lived in Oxford till 1881 when Humphry moved to London to work as a political leader writer on the Times later being demoted to art correspondent. They had three children, all born between 1874 and 1879.

In 1869, before her marriage, Mary Arnold had written several romantic stories, one of which, *A Westmoreland Story*, had been published in the *Churchman's Companion*. In 1881 she responded to a religiously conservative Oxford sermon with a pamphlet, *Unbelief and Sin, A Protest*, defending free thought against its association with sin. Later that year she published a children's book, *Milly and Olly*, 1881 based upon her own childhood, that of her children, and ancient British and Spanish tales.

Mrs Ward's novel, *Robert Elsmere*, 1888, was an astounding success. It is the story of a Church of England rector who loses his faith in the miraculous events in the Gospels and feels morally obliged to resign his rectorship, to the dismay of his devout wife.

Pirated editions of it were bestsellers in America and Canada. Its most prestigious reviewer was Gladstone, who was both enthralled and horrified by it.

Mrs Ward became an immensely popular writer. She wrote 25 novels, concerned largely with religious, political, and social issues.

In *Helbeck of Bannisdale*, 1898, Mrs Ward narrated the disastrous and eventually tragic, engagement of an almost fanatical Catholic man with a woman who had been brought up as an agnostic.

Mrs Ward suffered from rheumatism, insomnia, eczema, gallstones, and chronic pain. These maladies were soothed by regular use of cocaine.

Mrs Ward's involvement in public affairs was intense and varied. In 1878-79 she had played a key role in the founding of Somerville College - the non-denominational of the first pair of Oxford colleges for women. She was on the Somerville Council, 1881-98. In 1883 she was invited to be the first woman examiner of men at Oxford.

*Marcella* was published in 1894 and deals with a middle-class Christian woman's experience of serving in the East End of London. H.G. Wells said of this novel, 'If you want to know about 19th century Socialism, read *Marcella*.'

In 1897 her creation she founded the Passmore Edwards Settlement in Tavistock Place [a short way from the Amwell area in Bloomsbury and now called the Mary Ward Centre]. It was opened as an educational club for working class men and women. Later it included an innovative play-centre for children, the forerunner of after-school care in Britain, and soon also a special school for disabled children from working-class homes who previously had stayed listlessly at home while their parents were out to work. Mrs Ward was highly effective in persuading rich philanthropists such as Passmore Edwards himself, to pay for it.

These schools opened a new era in the treatment of disabled children. Mrs Ward used her influence to insert a clause in the 1902 Education Bill, obliging Local Education Authorities to fund children's play centres, vocational schools, and other recreational facilities for children.

Later in life, as president of the Anti-Suffrage League, she campaigned against votes for women. She felt that women worked best by influencing men. She nevertheless campaigned vigorously for women to be active in local government both as voters and councillors. Shortly before her death she became one of the first seven women magistrates.

The first woman journalist to visit the Allied Front during WWI, she was given special facilities for visiting the trenches by the War Office.

Mrs Ward's final years were plagued by debt. This caused Mrs Ward to write several pot-boilers that damaged her reputation, somewhat accounting for her low profile as a writer today. She was the aunt of Aldous Huxley. More reading? Try *Mrs Humphry Ward - Eminent Victorian. Pre-eminent Edwardian* by John Sutherland. 1990.

## A message from our chairman, Paul Thornton

I am writing this column on the first day of British Summer Time with ample evidence all around that spring has well and truly sprung. We have enjoyed some glorious spring days, trees are in blossom and the birds, squirrels and no doubt other residents of our enviable corner of central London are looking decidedly frisky!



Hopefully many of you will have noticed that the Society is trying to encourage active participation by putting on events which we hope will be of interest to members. Back in September, newsletter editor, David Sulkin led a fascinating walk round the area followed by a Smithfield walk led by the erudite Alec Forshaw. In February, Society member and award winning architect Tim Ronalds led a party of 20+ round the sensitively restored Wiltons Music Hall in Wapping. In this issue of the newsletter we are drawing attention to the forthcoming Islington Canal Boat trip, as well as the AGM on 16 May and the Amwell Street Summer Fete on 16 July. I hope that all members will support these events. If anyone has ideas for future events do please let me know, especially if you are willing to take the lead!

The AGM is the time at which we aim to strengthen the Committee with fresh talent. We would be particularly keen to hear from any architect who would be willing to join the Committee and from anyone who could help in keeping the website up-to-date. Please contact me via [paul@thornton-associates.co.uk](mailto:paul@thornton-associates.co.uk) or call me on 07831 743185.

2017 marks 45 years since the Amwell Society was started by Norman King, Carol Goddard and Irvine Gray back in 1972. The aim to the Society then, as now, was to protect the unique Georgian townscape of the Lloyd Baker and the New River Head estates. Now Lubetkin's Bevin Court and Gilbert McKenzie Trench's Charles Rowan House are just as precious to us. Some people feel that planning regulations impede their right to change their properties as they would like but few can deny the thrill of, for example, walking along Wharton Street from Lloyd Square on a sunny day with the small pediments stepped down the hill and every frontage showing a uniformity that was intended in the 1820s. It was these unique aspects of the Amwell area that we have sought to protect over the years. Any ideas about how to mark our half-century in five years time will be gratefully received.

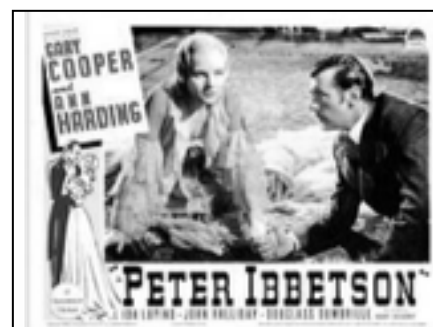
**Don't forget. The future of the Society relies on word-of-mouth. Please ask your neighbours if they'd like to join up.**

## Talking of *Peter Ibbetson*

The chairman's message mentions walking down Wharton Street and seeing the perspective of the Lloyd Baker houses and their pediments. This same view was admired by the 19th century illustrator and novelist George du Maurier who lived, for a time, at no. 44 Wharton Street. His novel *Peter Ibbetson* was published in 1892. Du Maurier had turned to writing as his career as an illustrator came to an end as a result of failing eye-sight.



He was the father of actor and matinee idol, Gerald du Maurier [1873 – 1934] who gave his name in, receipt for royalties, to a brand of cigarette. Gerald was the father of novelist, Daphne du Maurier [1907 - 1989] who wrote *Jamaica Inn* and *Rebecca*.



We first mentioned *Peter Ibbetson* in a newsletter before the predominance of the internet. Now, if you'd like to log on to YouTube search for *Peter Ibbetson* 1935 film, you'll be able to see the full-length feature which stars Gary Cooper, Ann Harding and Ida Lupino. [Members should be warned that the film was made in the US and so there is no hint of Wharton Street in it.]

*Peter Ibbetson* was also adapted for the opera stage by American composer, Deems Taylor from a libretto by Taylor and Constance Collier, *Peter Ibbetson* was first performed at the Metropolitan Opera in New York in February 1931 and appeared in four seasons for a total of 22 performances until 1935 when the two singers who created the starring roles, Lucrezia Bori, Spanish soprano, [1887 - 1960] and Edward Johnson, Canadian tenor, [1878 – 1959] retired.



An illustrator, two novelists, four actors, two opera stars and a brand of cigarettes all connected with our area, one way or another.

