

## Amwell Society AGM

Covid 19 has played havoc with all aspects of life and the AGM was no exception. One of the most valued and enjoyable events in our calendar didn't take place as planned on 12 May and the committee has now decided that we must hold an annual meeting virtually.

So the AGM will take place on line via Zoom on **Tuesday October 20 at 19.00**. There will be a short introductory talk - about 15 mins - by Tim Ronalds who will tell us about the plans for the New River Head site - please see page 4 of the newsletter for more information. This will be followed by the business of the Society. An agenda is enclosed with this newsletter along with the Society's statement of accounts. To connect to Zoom you need to have the Zoom software downloaded and then save the code which we will send you and log on at the date and time of the meeting. **Join the Zoom meeting from 18.45 on the 20th.**

Many apologies to members who are not connected to the internet.

We will keep reminding members of the date by e-mail and we will send minutes of the meeting anyone who we know doesn't use a computer so that they can keep track of things that were discussed and decided.

## Our new chairman...

Despite the postponement of the AGM, the committee members from the year 2019 - 2020 are still in place. Paul Thornton who has been a wonderful and visionary chair for the last six years told us long before the Covid crisis that he would like to stand down and we had planned to hold the election of a new chair at the AGM in May. With the postponement, we elected an interim chair from the committee who has agreed to stand at the forthcoming online AGM. His name is Peadar Sionoid and has been a member of the committee since 2016.

Peadar has been a resident of the Amwell area for over 15 years - most recently at Wilmington Square. He shares our affection for this area and looks forward to working with all members to achieve the best results for our community. He would also like to thank Paul Thornton for his inspired and energetic chairmanship and rather less so for leaving some rather large shoes to fill!

## St Helena Garden

Another consequence of Covid 19 is the abandonment of the Society's very popular Late Summer Party in St Helena Garden this year. It has proved to be a popular event which has been run for more than 20 years. Despite not holding a party in the garden this year our members Darian and Delia Mitchell continue to look after the garden. It always looks neat and tidy and the cut-through from Lloyd Square to Fernsbury Street frequently used by children, families and everyone walking down to Wilmington Square and Exmouth Market.

Thank you Darian and Delia for the constant care and attention that you give the garden

We hope that, in the autumn, the trees that overshadow the garden will be pruned to allow more light and rain to benefit the soil and to provide better flow of air and light into the flats that overlook the garden.

St Helena Garden is cared for by the Amwell Society in collaboration with the London Borough of Islington.

## Window-box competition

The window-box competition has been run for three years now and there has never been such a need for colour and growth and optimism. Social distancing? Easy. Joy provided? Immeasurable. Thank you to all the window-box devotees.

Many thanks to Sally Hull, Joanna Ward and Margaret Rowe who selected the winning boxes in Chadwell Street and Lloyd Square.

Thanks also to Great Percy Street Myddleton's Deli in Amwell Street for dominating the prizes. We were so sorry that the beautiful window boxes weren't one of the highlights of Amwell Street Summer Party this year but we are already looking forward to 2021. More views of the excellent window boxes can be seen at [www.amwell.org.uk/flower-box-competition](http://www.amwell.org.uk/flower-box-competition)



## Acting on Covid 19 locally

Margaret Rowe has taken a look at what we can do at a local level and provides practical advice and guidance for the Amwell Society area. It's good news that London Borough of Islington working with voluntary agencies is doing a thorough job and is working closely with Camden and Islington Public Health Department.

While all local authorities, including London Borough of Islington, have Directors of Public Health and are doing a sterling job, our Government's centralised Test and Trace has only been partially implemented. It has been made clear that national call centres and online tracers have been tracking down an average of 56% of a person's contacts while overall, local authority staff have been tracking and tracing 98% of contacts.

The Department of Health recently announced that the some of the national contract tracers will be allocated to help the local authorities - like our own LBI - and from 24 August the NHS Test and Trace effort will be much more localised. As a result, the Amwell Society contacted Camden and Islington Public Health Department (CIPHA) to ask if we could help in any way and our support has been warmly welcomed.

CIPHA advised that we could best help by: 1 keeping our members informed about rules around Covid and providing advice and giving info train about any changes to regulations or other local requirements and, 2 in the event of a localised outbreak we would be asked to immediately spread any relevant information to our members and the whole of our community members in order to support the local response.

There is a general contact e-mail address: [CIPHAdmin@islington.gov.uk](mailto:CIPHAdmin@islington.gov.uk) if you have any specific queries. Don't hesitate to write. I have found everyone helpful and willing to listen

LBI has an excellent page on its website: It's rather a long address but don't let that put you off looking at it. For ease of clicking through, you'll also find these address also on the Society's website.

<https://www.islington.gov.uk/-/media/sharepoint-lists/public-records/publichealth/information/adviceandinformation/20202021/202008030308nhstestandtraceforlocalorganisations11qu.pdf?la=en&hash=571CD37C4B536BEA3862E5A8092E3AB71760AEED> **With the current upswing of numbers of people with Covid. Watch or listen to the news at least once a day.**

We have set out below some specific guidance:

- NHS Test and Trace awareness raising. <https://www.islington.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/support-and-guidance-during-covid-19/useful-guidance-and-resources-covid-19/test-and-trace-for-local-organisations> This refers to local organisations across Islington.
- How to access testing – provided on the NHS website
- Promotion of social distancing.
- Information on We are Islington <https://www.islington.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/coronavirus-covid-19/need-help> where LBI, the voluntary sector and mutual aid groups are working together to provide support to vulnerable residents who might need help to self-isolate.

If we all follow the guidance we can will help control and reduce the numbers of Covid 19 cases in the Amwell Society area, in Islington, London and throughout the country.

Covid 19 has affected us all and we hope all our members are staying safe and well. Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions on the above at [info@amwellsociety.co.uk](mailto:info@amwellsociety.co.uk)

## Other Amwells, New Jersey, USA

Amwell Township was established by a royal patent from Queen Anne in 1708. Its area comprised 200 square miles (520 km<sup>2</sup>) and included present day Delaware, Raritan, Readington, East and West Amwell Townships as well as portions of Clinton, Lebanon and Tewksbury Townships.

The East Amwell has an active Historical Society, which runs a local museum housed in the house of a family called Clawson who settled in East Amwell in the 1820s. The local authority also has a Historic Preservation Committee that meets monthly.

The Historical Society acknowledges that the name of the area originates from Amwell in Hertfordshire.



## Chairman's message

Peadar Sionoid writes...

2020 has and continues to be, an extraordinary year. We hope that you and your families have not been adversely affected by the virus and that we can all look forward to more normal times ahead. However, it is becoming clear that the pandemic will leave its mark. From a local perspective, I and the committee see two important issues ahead.

Firstly, as many of you will have noticed there is the London-wide programme to widen pavements and cycle lanes. In addition, low-traffic zones are being introduced. Two of these current exist outside our area, in St Peters Ward [near the old Pakenham Housing Estate] and Southgate Road/de Beauvoir Town. By the time you read this newsletter we will have the first of these in our area based around Clerkenwell Green. These initiatives are, at present, temporary for 18 months pending consultation. The feedback on the Clerkenwell Green scheme must be made in the first 12 months with formal objections made within the first 6 months.

I know that these initiatives provoke strong feelings and we would welcome feedback from our members. The committee is of the view that the Society should play a significant role in the shaping and evolution of such initiatives in our area.

Secondly, the government has announced significant changes to the planning system. From 1 September 2020, classifications for usage of various types of premises and properties have changed. There are lots of details to examine but the thrust of the measures is to permit the following without planning permission:

1. Change of use of office and light-industrial buildings to residential use.
2. Upward extension by up to two storeys above many existing post-war buildings including for housing.
3. Change of use between different types of commercial and retail activity on shopping streets.

These are significant changes and will affect the ability of London Borough of Islington [LBI] to influence or control development.

The changes to traffic management and the planning regulations have both been imposed by central government without consultation. LBI has taken up the opportunity to advance its plans in the context of the environment. All this adds up to the need for far greater vigilance by amenity societies like ours. The Amwell Society already works with the London Forum - the umbrella organisation for amenity groups. With this in mind, we actively solicit your views on these and other planning issues. In this way, the Society will be better able to represent you. [info@amwell.org.uk](mailto:info@amwell.org.uk)

## Streetscape improvements in London : Safer Streets

Through the difficulties of lockdown this year, we all saw a new London; a peaceful place with clean air and quiet roads. Families appeared on the streets with children, like a newborn fawns taking their first tender steps in spring. However, with great uncertainty over the use of public transport, with car use increasing to above pre-Covid levels traffic is again choking off children's newfound freedom and adults' access to fresh air. To address this speedy action to encourage walking and cycling travel are coming to our area.

LBI is introducing Low Traffic Neighbourhoods [LTNs] to stop *through* traffic but allowing car access to **all** properties. There are four in place in Islington, including St Peters Ward where the results have been remarkable. Prebend Street is no longer a rat run for speeding traffic. LTNs area about letting communities have safe roads and clean air for peoples to live in.

The project School Streets will restrict motor traffic near schools at specific times, preventing pollution the school gates and allowing space for social distancing.

These changes are under Emergency Traffic Orders - ETOs. Within 6 to 18 months after implementation, consultation will give us the opportunity to decide if we want to keep these improvements. These initiatives have been funded by Central Government and there is no clear strategy for completing schemes once initial funding is spent.



## Ernest Bevin : Labour's Churchill by Andrew Adonis

Ernest Bevin : Labour's Churchill was published on 2 July. It is about the Bevin in Bevin Court.

Ernest Bevin was one of the greatest and most inspirational figures of the twentieth century. Minister of Labour in the wartime coalition during the Second World War, he was at Churchill's right hand man, masterminding the home front, while the war supremo commanded the battle front. Born into abject poverty, an orphan farm boy from Bristol with virtually no formal education, Bevin's remarkable rise to power and fame power is unmatched by any leader to this day. RRP £20.00

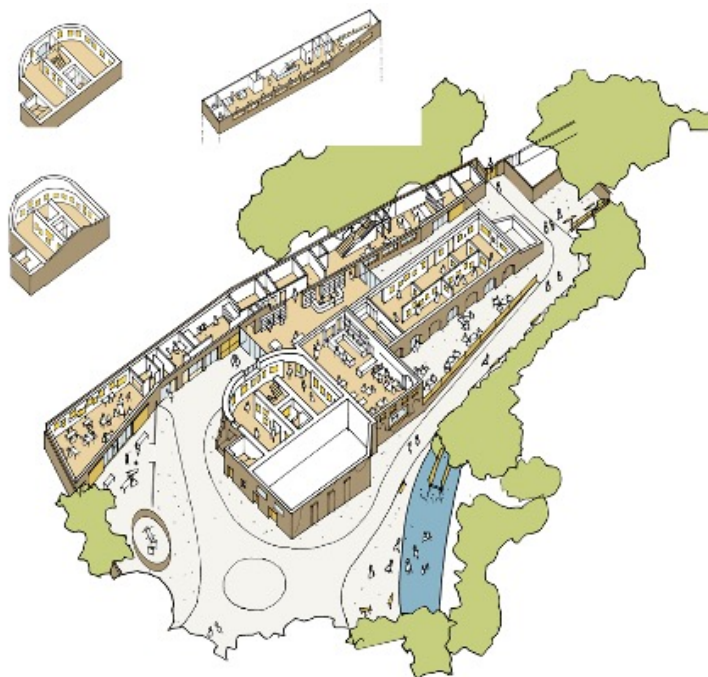
## **The Triumph that is the New River Head**

Paul Thornton writes....

In the last newsletter, I reported that the House of Illustration had appointed architects to design and plan the transformation of the remaining unconverted buildings at New River Head into their new home. Local firm, Tim Ronalds Architects (well known to many Amwell Society members for their work on the Hackney Empire, Wilton's Music Hall and Ironmonger Row Baths) has now been busy at work for several months and recently presented their Stage 2 Design Report to House of Illustration trustees and staff. This is little changed from their original concept for the site, which was outlined in the Islington Tribune a couple of months ago. Working on the site presents few social distancing problems as it is currently almost deserted!

The scheme provides for:

- Gallery and exhibition spaces, and a café in the group of listed buildings to the south of the site – the former South Stores, Boiler House and Engine House
- Education and administration facilities in the North Stores buildings which will be extended towards Amwell Street
- A covered foyer linking and giving access to the two groups of buildings and housing reception/ticketing desks and a shop
- A new walkway through from Amwell Street to Myddelton Passage, giving access to the site from either end
- A shallow pond alongside the walkway, providing a reminder of the site's historic role in the provision of clean water to the growing Capital.



These proposals were reviewed and given the thumbs-up by the Local Engagement Group which informally represents the Amwell and Islington Societies, Islington Buildings Preservation Trust, residents of the New River Head apartments and Islington Council's heritage service. We are delighted that Tim Ronalds has agreed to give a brief presentation of their proposals via Zoom at the Society's upcoming AGM. The next stage is the preparation of a formal planning application, hopefully before the end of this year