

Our first online newsletter and postponement of the AGM

We send you all warm wishes for a happy and healthy spring at this difficult time.

Feedback about the Society's newsletter has told us that members like having a paper copy delivered to their doors. It's a bit old-fashioned but it is liked, and so we have tried to keep that tradition going. It is the first time that we have been unable to deliver the newsletter. This is because of the coronavirus and being unable to call on the services of our friends at Copyprints where John and Nick have had to close their business temporarily. We send warm wishes to Nick and John, thank them for their help and hope to see them again soon.

The restrictions have also meant that we have had to postpone our popular AGM which was to be held May. Our constitution requires the committee to report to members on activities in the previous year and on the state of our finances. We always include a talk on a topic of local interest. We will either arrange the AGM when restrictions are lifted or we will hold an online AGM. Whatever we do, the affairs of the Society are in a very good state with an active group of committee members. Our chairman for the past six years, Paul Thornton, decided to stand down at the AGM and so committee member, Peadar Sionoid, will be acting chairman until we have elections at the live or online AGM. Paul has done a most exceptional job of leading the Society and keeping it up-to-date and relevant. He has led the conclusion of the long-standing issue of the New River Head site about which he will report on page 3 of this newsletter. Thank you Paul.

Getting the chop

You may have noticed that some street trees have been given the chop leaving about a metre of trunk left in the ground. Trees have been felled in Amwell Street, Cruickshank Street, Wharton Street and Granville Street. This work has been carried out for LBI. It seems that these trees were all unhealthy and cutting them, leaving the trunks, means that they can be more easily ground into chippings at a later date. LBI assures us that all street trees that are removed will be replaced with saplings. It's worth mentioning that, as part of the New River Conservation Area, all trees are protected and none can be cut down without permission. This rule applies to trees in gardens. If you have a problem with a tree or are thinking of removing it, you must contact LBI. Look at <https://www.islington.gov.uk/sports-parks-and-trees/looking-after-our-trees/protected-trees> for the rules.

Keep safe, stay healthy

There are simple rules to follow in connection with the coronavirus. Following the rules could be a life-saver. If you need to give advice or you feel unwell:

- Stay at home for at least 7 days if you have a high temperature or feel hot to the touch or if your chest, head or back or are aching, until you feel better.
- Stay at home if you have a cough.
- Do not go to the doctors' surgery.
- Keep apart by 2m from others [that's a bit more than two yards in old money].
- Sleep alone when you have symptoms [if possible].
- Wash your hands regularly 10 times a day for at least 20 seconds with soap and hot water.
- Don't visit anyone, especially frail or vulnerable people.
- Drink water and take everyday painkillers such as paracetamol or ibuprofen if you need to.
- Take exercise for an hour a day. That would include going shopping
- Go online <https://111.nhs.uk/covid-19/> if worried.

Remember...the virus doesn't pick and choose. Everyone is vulnerable.



Glorious spring at Bevin Court

Photo by Margaret Rowe

The Amwell Society campaigns to protect and promote our area, its architectural heritage and to encourage a sense of community. The Society serves Pentonville Road, Penton Rise, King's Cross Road, Farringdon Road, Rosebery Avenue and St. John Street and all the streets within the area.

For information about becoming a member, e-mail info@amwell.org.uk

Chairman – Paul Thornton. Secretary – Joanna Ward. Treasurer - Peter Kornicki. Newsletter editor – David Sulkin.

The Amwell Society is a constituted group with annual accounts. The Society is a member of the London Forum.

New street lamp fittings

Members will have noticed the installation of new energy-saving fittings in street lamps recently. The lamp standards are the old, conservation-style ones installed in the 1980s.

Some members have observed that the new lamps are too bright but they positively contribute to street safety. During the installation we talked to specialist fitters who told us that many residents hand welcomed the news fitting not least because each lamp saves a significant amount of energy in a year. Here is a photo of the new lamps being fitted in Wilmington Square.



Myddelton's Deli providing home deliveries for older people

Long standing members of the Amwell Society, Myddelton's Deli, is now offering a free local delivery service for local elderly residents and members of the Society.

The Deli carries delicious hams, cheeses, breads, eggs, pasta, fresh fruit and vegetables and more. The Deli carries a nice line in smiles and kindnesses which are free. David and his colleagues at Myddelton's say 'We are here to help.' The number to ring is 020 7278 9192. Tell David you saw this new service in the Amwell Society newsletter first!

London Borough of Islington [LBI]

The council has put together a useful page with links about changes to their services and a guide to additional help which they or other organisations can provide. Thank you LBI.

<https://www.islington.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/coronavirus-covid-19>

Neighbours and the coronavirus

We have just heard that the lockdown will be extended until 7 May. During this difficult time, we would like to bring some resources to the attention of our members, friends, family and neighbours.

Here at the Society, we have set up a database of local people who are happy to do shopping, collect prescriptions and run other errands for people who are self-isolating or can't leave home for another reason. A dedicated email address has been created for this initiative - amwellhelp@gmail.com. Alternatively we can be contacted on either 07767 337373 or 07906 572973 in relation to this effort. Need help? Don't hesitate to ring or write.

Our volunteers have helped a number of neighbours recently but we suspect that there are more people who could benefit. We would ask members to alert us if they know of any people in need.

The Peel Centre

The Peel is a charity that has been building a more connected community across Clerkenwell for over a hundred years. As a result of the pandemic they have taken the difficult decision to close the 3 Corners Centre until Government instructions are relaxed.

Peel staff members are still doing what they can to support the community, including:

- Providing telephone support to isolated households.
- Making sure people are able to get essential items such as food or medicine.
- Sending activity packs to help families structure their time and to help with home schooling.
- Running small group phone chats to help people stay connected.
- Putting some regular activities, such as exercise classes, online.

If you want to help or need help, please e-mail the Peel at admin@peelinstitute.org.uk or ring 07949 154297. The Peel's website address is www.peelinstitute.org.uk

Islington Giving

Islington Giving is a consortium of local charities which have been working together in a co-ordinated way in Islington for several years. IG has launched a Crisis Fund to support the most vulnerable and isolated people in Islington during the coronavirus outbreak.

All of the money raised will go directly to support the known, trusted groups and organisations across Islington which can deliver essential services to local tenants and residents young, old and vulnerable of all ages.

If you'd like to know more about the Crisis Fund, make a donation or get to know more about Islington Giving, visit the website <https://islingongiving.org.uk/news-events/covid-19-crisis-in-islington>

Message from the Chairman

Firstly, I should like to add my good wishes to those of our Editor for a safe and healthy spring to all our members, their families and indeed to all who live in this beautiful corner of London. None of us can know how much the world will have changed by the time we are through this epidemic, but let us first and foremost make sure that we do get through it.



At the start of the outbreak, we leafleted all households in the area offering to support residents by doing shopping and the like and calling for volunteers to help. The response from volunteers was heartening, but the number seeking support was quite low. Whether this is because most of our more vulnerable residents are already adequately supported by friends and neighbours, or whether many are too proud or anxious to ask for help is unclear. Let me stress again that the Amwell Society is here to help and if we can't help, we will put you in touch with someone who can. E-mail amwellhelp@gmail.com or ring 07767 337373 or 07906 572973

Meanwhile many of us are learning new skills to cope with the lockdown. Your committee held a meeting using the popular Zoom remote conferencing app a couple of weeks ago. Of course we made the obvious decision to postpone the Annual General Meeting, scheduled for 12 May as well as a tour of the New River Head site planned for the same day. We will take a decision in June about whether to reschedule the AGM for later in the year, or if that looks too risky, we may hold the AGM online.

Although much of the commercial world has ground to a halt, numerous Planning matters require our immediate attention. The Coronavirus Act has given local councils power to conduct their business online. We must ensure that this does not hamper public participation in the planning process. A revised planning application has now been submitted for the demolition and rebuilding of the large office block at the foot of Margery Street, formerly occupied by the Children's Society. The original application, made just before Christmas 2019, gave rise to many objections mainly because of a potential loss of light to the flats on the lower floors of St Anne's House and Bagnigge House. We will be examining the new proposals in detail to see whether this and other problems have been adequately addressed in a revised plan.

One area where good progress can be reported is with the intended conversion of the historic part of the New River Head site to the new home for the House of Illustration, the country's leading gallery and resource centre for illustrators.

The House of Illustration is currently located, behind King's Cross Station near the Regent Canal and close to the large branch of Waitrose supermarket.

Architects for the project were appointed just before the shutdown and have the House of Illustration's consent to interact with us in the period leading up to the submission of a planning application, hopefully in the coming autumn.

A Local Engagement Group has been formed with representatives of the Amwell Society, the Islington Society, residents of the New River Head site and other heritage and educational interests, which is currently chaired by me. Our aim is to ensure that when a planning application is submitted, it enjoys the full and enthusiastic support of the local community. We have already had an initial conference call with the architects.

On this all-too-rare cheerful note, I am signing off not only for this newsletter but also as your Chair. I have been in this role for 6 years, longer than I intended. It has been a privilege to lead the Society, and I expect to remain involved for many years to come. My thanks to all who have contributed during my time in office, in particular to all our committee members. The last committee meeting approved the nomination of Peadar Sionoid as interim Chair of the Society, pending ratification at the next AGM. Peadar has been an outstanding Vice-chair for the past 3 years and I'm sure he will do a great job. Please give him your full support.

Planning applications

The original purpose of the Society was to protect the architectural heritage of our area, to keep an eye on planning applications that may have a negative impact and to make sure that the New River Head Conservation Area rules are closely followed. One of our committee members has a brief to watch out for all Amwell planning applications and to report on them to the committee.

With prices at a premium, people and companies are looking for ways of developing their land [including gardens and laneways] if possible. Many applications are beneficial and appropriate to our area and so no action is necessary.

There is a good section on the Society's website which highlights current applications and there is also a guide, if you are worried about a pending proposal and how to take action. Members will also be familiar with Planning proposal notices that appear on lamp-posts giving tenants and residents the chance to comment on a proposal. These notices are very clear about the deadline for comments. If you want to discuss an application with a member or the Society's committee, please drop us a line to info@amwell.org.uk The link to our website, with additional information on this matter is <http://www.amwell.org.uk/local-planning/>

Transport and amenities in the Amwell area

The Society takes a keen interest in the transport and landscape of the Amwell area and has, for some time, liaised with the London Borough of Islington [LBI] in this regard. In particular, we have had discussions regarding the Quietway 10 cycle route which was planned to run from Finsbury Park along Amwell Street to the City. This now seems to be on hold whilst the LBI conducts a wider review of travel and other amenities in the area. We will keep a very close eye on Quietway 10 plans and report to members.

With this in mind, the Society would like to focus its efforts and develop a collective response to these kinds of initiatives. To this end, we have set up a sub-group of the committee including new committee member, Martin Worthington. Topics we are considering include traffic flow, cycle lanes and street furniture. We would very much welcome the input of members to this process. You can contact our interim Chair, Peadar Sionoid at peadarsionoid@gmail.com

St Helena Garden

You may have noticed how lovely St Helena Garden is looking. This is due to the tireless volunteer work of Darian and Delia Mitchell who are digging in essential fresh compost.



The Society has an agreement with LBI and has cared for the garden since 2000. The canopy of trees makes the soil dry and needs regular organic material to keep plants fed and healthy. St Helena Garden is at the junction of Lloyd Baker Street and Lloyd Square. There is a pathway that runs through the garden and on the wall a slate plaque to the founders of the Society. Norman King, Carol Goddard and Irvine Gray

Happy clappy

Don't forget to support the NHS at 20.00 [8.00pm] every Thursday evening. Don't be shy. Get out onto your doorstep or hang out of your window and make a noise for all those brave and committed NHS doctors, nurses, admin staff, cleaners, maintenance people, ambulance drivers and volunteers who are saving our lives. The Amwell Society tries to keep off political matters but we must say that the NHS has proved its worth and more. In future we should call for investment in it, equal to that of our neighbours in Germany. The UK commits £3,000 a year per person to health care. That sum is £4,500 a year in Germany. This fact speaks volumes.

There are other key workers too, who deserve our thanks. Our postmen and the teams who collect refuse and recycling, shop-workers and bus and tube workers.

Be alert and not a mug.

We hear that there has been a big increase in con-artists and fraudsters taking advantage of people at home and online. At this time do not allow anyone into your home no matter how plausible their tale maybe or even if they show you what looks like a bona fide identity card. All official organisations and businesses are following strict social distancing orders...so anyone who wants you to let them in to your home is bogus. Not only will you put yourself at risk by inviting an unknown person in, but they will certainly have untrustworthy objectives in mind.

Also be alert online and on the telephone. Never give passwords or any other personal information if asked. Never take a photo of your credit card and send that information to anyone. Don't be afraid to change you online passwords if you have a funny feeling about a caller or website. Remember that scammers can easily ask you to ring off and then ring you back giving you a false sense of security. In this time of self-isolation and lockdown, scammers are even more active than before. It is up to us all to watch out. Remember to ring our helpline if you need advice about callers to your house or flat or if you want help with what looks like a scam on line. Remember, if there's a shadow of doubt, don't press 'send', 'pay now' or 'sign up'. Remember our helpline numbers are 07767 337373 and 07906 572973.

Auction. The History of Clerkenwell

A copy of the facsimile edition [2001] of Pinks' *History of Clerkenwell* [1881] is up for auction. Only 500 copies of this edition were printed. Illustrated hardback 800 pages. Reserve £35.00 The profit from the auction will be donated to Islington Giving. Send your bids to info@amwell.org.uk by 1 May.

Check out the Society's website at www.amwell.org.uk You'll be surprised about the range of things we cover.