

**1972 - 2022**

**The Amwell Society celebrates its 50<sup>th</sup> birthday year  
History Weekend and Community Picnic**

**Friday 17 – Sunday 19 June 2022**

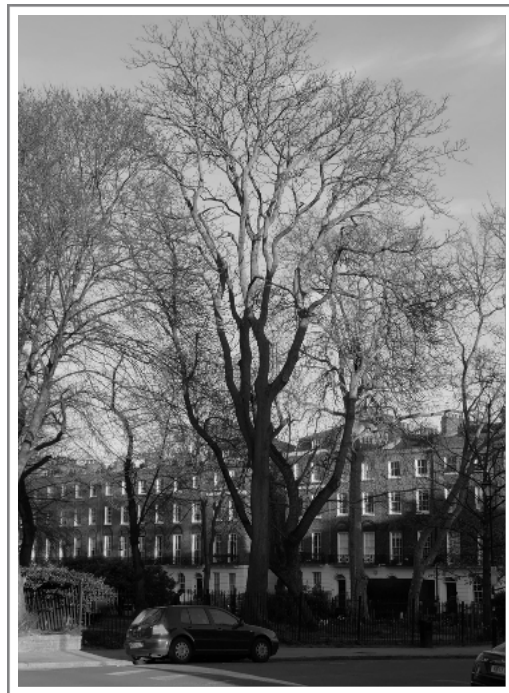
**Join us to celebrate 50 years of community activism**

**Everyone - members and non-members alike - are invited to join us along  
with guests from Islington, across London and further afield**

**See page 4 for details about events over the History Weekend**

**How has the Amwell Society helped our area?** The founders of the Society wanted to see our beautiful 19th century buildings permanently protected. The houses, streets, squares and gardens are all jewels. That's why so many people live in our area for so long. To begin, the Society formed an alliance with London Borough of Islington which had, in the late 1960s, created the New River Conservation Area which is still mirrored by the Society's own catchment. Alongside the preservation work, the founders organised trips out alongside social events. A stone, dedicated to the founders of the Society, Irvine Gray, Carol Goddard and Norman King can be seen in St Helena Garden which is between Lloyd Square and Fernsbury Street. It was commissioned for the 30th anniversary of the Society in 2002.

In the 1820s the New River Company built Myddelton Square along with the surrounding streets. Amwell Street, which until that time had been an open country lane, provided a mix of houses and shops with the proprietors' accommodation above. The shops served the inhabitants of all the local squares and streets. St Mark's Church provided a natural community focus. At the same time, the Lloyd Baker family built Lloyd Square and the adjacent streets with the distinctive, quirky, pedimented terraced houses. St Philip's Church in Granville Square [demolished in 1938] served that side of the Amwell area.



## Evolution

In the 1920s Charles Rowan House in Amwell Street was built as accommodation for policemen and their families. In the 1930s the Metropolitan Borough of Finsbury built the Margery Street Estate and Archery Fields House was built to replace another large church in Wharton Street. At the same time, the Claremont Close development was started. In 1941 WWII, German bombs damaged many properties. Large sections of Myddelton Square, Great Percy Street and Percy Circus were destroyed. Holford Square, adjacent to Great Percy Street, was flattened in one fell swoop. After the war new flats were built. The Lloyd Baker Estate erected Cable House [1948] and the New River Company created Sanders House [1949-50] both at the junction of Lloyd Street and Great Percy Street. A section of Percy Circus, also destroyed in the war, was rebuilt in neo-Georgian style in the 1990s. [The photo above shows a section of the very handsome Myddelton Square as it is today]

The Amwell Society campaigns to protect and promote the area and 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. The Society is open to all residents. For information about becoming a member, e-mail [info@amwell.org.uk](mailto:info@amwell.org.uk) Chairman, Peadar Sionoid. 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

## The Amwell Society. Campaigning on behalf of the locality for 50 years

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

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A few modern, well-designed mews houses have been built in the last thirty years. For example, neat developments in Inglebert and River Streets and very recently another development, Chadwell Mews, behind houses on the south-east corner of Myddelton Square.

There are stylish contemporary houses built on the south side of Cruickshank Street sitting next to clever maisonette houses, constructed by the Metropolitan Water Board in 1910 as homes for senior staff.

The irony concerning the Georgian developments is that, in the 1840s, the railways came to London. Not just the main stations, but suburban lines to Hampstead and beyond. So people who had wanted to reside outside the City and had the good fortune to afford a leased house in the refreshing Amwell area, later decided to move to even fresher, more modern locations further north. The

Georgian houses soon became properties in multiple occupation with several families crammed in together. They had no bathrooms and the houses were badly affected by dilapidations as a result of a lack of investment. Finsbury quickly became the most overcrowded borough in London because of intensive labour-hungry industrialisation. As accommodation was scarce, large families lived in one or two rooms.

The big political drive, started before and continued after WWII, was to demolish every slum, as they were considered. The activism of the Society, the neighbourly contacts and love of the area helped the Amwell Society protect the houses from demolition, to monitor planning applications, ensure that the architectural integrity of the houses and flats was maintained and proposed new buildings considered in the context of the Georgian townscape. In the last 50 years, working with other agencies, the Society has prevented the building of a huge budget hotel on Penton Rise, supported the development of the heritage centre at the New River Head which is to be home to the House of Illustration and challenged numerous destructive planning applications. Our History Weekend is a time to celebrate. [Photo above: The Amwell Street Summer Fayre. 2018].



### **Celebration party. An exclusive event just for members**

Friday 17 June 7.00 pm to 9.00 pm. The hall of the former Clerkenwell Parochial School, Amwell Street, EC1. A special guest will attend.

There will be drinks and snacks. The party will be a social event for members to get together and celebrate. There will be few words about the achievements of the Amwell Society and the importance and value of acting locally.

### **Programme of free events. See page 4 for booking information. Spaces at all events is limited. Book early to avoid disappointment**

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### **Sadler's Wells Theatre - a theatre for the people. A tour and talk about its long history**

Saturday 18 June at 10.30 am. Meet in the foyer of Sadler's Wells, Rosebery Avenue, EC1. The tour will end at about 12.00 pm.

Sadler's Wells is the UK's contemporary dance theatre. Not many people know that Richard Sadler discovered a spring and started a pleasure garden on the site in 1683. The tour will cover the whole history of the Sadler's Wells, including the role of Lilian Baylis, whose burning passion for a people's theatre for North London, led to the creation of the National Theatre, the Royal Ballet and English National Opera. Many people who worked at Sadler's Wells from 1930 until about 1995 lived in the Amwell area.

**Marguerite Bullard**, Senior House Manager, Sadler's Wells will lead the tour.

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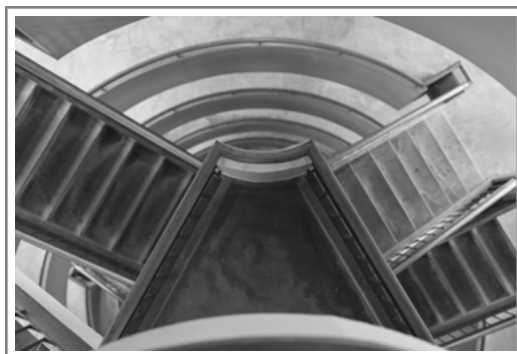
Treasurer, Peter Kornicki. Newsletter editor, David Sulkin.

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## Modernism in Amwell. What the bombs did

**Saturday 18 June at 2 pm. Upper room, St Mark's Church, Myddelton Square, EC1. Ending about 4 pm**

In 1941 a parachute mine and high explosive bombs fell on Holford Square and Percy Circus causing widespread devastation in the immediate vicinity and considerable damage by blast to buildings over a large area. In 1945 the Metropolitan Borough of Finsbury lost no time in planning to improve living conditions for people whose housing in other districts had been sub-standard for years, where sharing life with fleas, vermin and bed bugs was common-place, where toilets were shared by several families in damp and overcrowded, unhealthy conditions. Berthold Lubetkin was commissioned to build a large block of flats on the site of the former Holford Square. The result was good, airy homes for working people, beautifully designed with much needed hot-water, inside toilets and no cohabiting insects and rodents.



**John Allen**, architect and friend of Lubetkin, will give a talk about the architect's life, his background, inspiration and struggles. After the talk, we'll walk to Bevin Court. [Photo: Staircase at Bevin Court, from above]

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## Georgian house building. The New River Company and the Lloyd Baker family

**Sunday 19 June at 11 am. Upper room, St Mark's Church, Myddelton Square, EC1. Ending about 12.30 pm**

Alec Forshaw will give a talk about the New River Company and the Lloyd Baker family who had the drive to create the first housing estates, just outside of the City of London. Alec's talk will include the Georgian and early Victorian developments, and some of the neo-Georgian ones as well. If the weather is fine this event will include a walk to visit examples of the two distinct areas.

**Alec Forshaw** was Senior Conservation Officer at the Borough of Islington and is the author of numerous books including *20th century buildings in Islington, 1980s London, Smithfield* and *The Building that Lived Twice*.

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## The Oak Room at the New River Head by Grinling Gibbons [1648-1721]

**Sunday 19 June at 12 pm - 1.30 pm. Meet in front of the Metropolitan Water Board building in Hardwick Street, EC1 just off Rosebery Avenue. This event will comprise three short visits to the Oak Room.**

The Oak Room is a late Renaissance room, created to demonstrate the New River Company's wealth. It was saved, restored and installed in the Metropolitan Board's new building in 1925. Gibbons was a sculptor and wood carver known for his work at Windsor Castle, Hampton Court, St Paul's Cathedral, and Petworth House.

Book for a one of the three visits. See page 4 for details.

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## 8 Stations Around the Head

**Sunday 19 June at 2 pm. Meet in front of the Metropolitan Water Board building in Hardwick Street, EC1 just off Rosebery Avenue. The walk will end at about 3.30 pm**

A tour of the New River Head, discussing the elements that can be seen from various stations and what lies behind them, emphasising the 'Head' as the focus of a system of water distribution which has evolved continuously in both scale and complexity. The Head dominated that system until the 1890s and still accommodates vital elements of it. Andrew hopes that those attending will ask questions and comment as the tour progresses. The tour will be outside with the last station inside the Engine House complex. Andrew will illustrate four centuries of history [1613 onwards] through explaining the role and function of the 8 Stations.

**Andrew Smith** is a structural engineer. His long involvement with the New River Head has generated a strong interest in its history and that of the New River. He is continuing research on its origins and on its construction.

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## **Community Picnic. Myddelton Square. Free to all neighbours whether members of the Amwell Society or not. Families and children very welcome**

**Sunday 19 June 3 pm - 6 pm.** The Amwell Society will provide some snacks, refreshments and drinks for all. Please bring some food to share as well.

There will be live music and a chance to meet neighbours. **No need to book.** Just come to Myddelton Square.

### **Sustainability**

The History weekend is all about celebrating the Amwell area. When planning the weekend we decided that we should also mark the 50th anniversary in a sustainable way along with events and celebrations. During 2022 a number of trees will be planted in our area. We will report where they are going to be planted, something that we are discussing with the London Borough of Islington. Thames Water has generously contributed to the cost of the new trees which will enhance the Amwell area in the spirit of sustainability and to support the environment.

### **Booking places for the events over the weekend**

All weekend events are free, but so that no one is disappointed please go to Eventbrite and choose the events you'd like to take part in and reserve a place or places. You can also make a donation on Eventbrite towards the tree-planting campaign. Your support would be very welcome.

**Booking opens on Monday 9 May at 6 pm**

**Use this link - [tinyurl.com/2wmjverv](https://tinyurl.com/2wmjverv)**

- Event no. 1. **A guided tour of Sadler's Wells Theatre.** Saturday 18 June at 10.30 am. Meet in the foyer of the theatre. The tour will end about 12.00 pm
- Event no. 2. **Modernism in Amwell. What the bombs did.** Saturday 18 June at 2 pm. Upper room at St Mark's Church, Myddelton Square followed by a walk to Bevin Court. Will end about 4 pm.
- Event no. 3. **Georgian House Building.** The New River Company and the Lloyd Baker family. Sunday 19 June at 11 am. Upper room, St Mark's Church, Myddelton Square. End at 12.30 pm.
- Event no. 4. **The Oak Room at the New River Head** designed by Grinling Gibbons. Sunday 19 June. Three groups of fifteen people can visit the room at 12 pm - 12.20 pm. 12.30 pm - 12.50 pm and 1 pm - 1.20 pm
- Event no. 5. **8 Stations Around the Head.** 2 pm. A walk around the New River Head. Sunday 19 June. Ending about 3.30 pm

## **The Amwell Society 50th anniversary History Weekend and Community Picnic has been generously supported and helped by**

The London Borough of Islington, Thames Water, the House of Illustration, Copyprints Ltd, the Myddelton Square Association, the Wilmington Square Association, St Mark's Myddelton Square and St Mary Magdalene Academy Sixth Form

### **Founder members**

We are still in contact with several people who were founding members of the Society in 1972. They have a special place in these celebrations. They are Alan Baxter, Jean Elrington, Caroline Penney, Nicholas Riddell and Jane Wainwright.

### **Our committee**

The Amwell Society is led by a committee of volunteers. They are Peadar Sionoid [Chair], Keith Baker, Dale Barter, Josh Chalkley, Melanie Davis, Katrina Fialko, Sally Hull, Peter Konicki, Andrew Mansfield, Tony Relph, David Sulkin, Paul Thornton, Jane Wainwright, Joanna Ward and Martin Worthington.

**For information or questions about the forthcoming weekend, our contact e-mail address is [info@amwell.org.uk](mailto:info@amwell.org.uk)**