

Late Summer Party

Saturday 6 September between 5.00 and 8.00pm.

After more than twenty years of looking after St. Helena Garden, our two loyal and committed volunteers, Darian and Delia Mitchell are retiring. So our Late Summer party will be held once again in St Helena Garden which is at the southwest junction of Lloyd Baker Street and Lloyd Square. The party will be a chance to say thank you to Delia and Darian as well as for neighbours to meet up and get to know each other better at this sociable event.

The Society provides wine and soft drinks for the party. Members are invited to bring food to share.

We have held the Summer Party for many years and it's always a great success as well as pleasure to hold the party in St Helena Garden, which the Society has cared for since the 1990s. We are working on a plan to continue the maintenance of the garden, and will let members know when that plan is in place. The garden is part of the Margery Street Estate so tenants and residents there will be included in our deliberations.



Amwell 200.

June and October 2026.

The full programme, with dates and times, will be released in January. Walks, talks, picnics, puppets, music visits and lots more.

Amwell 200. June and October 2026

In 1800 the Amwell area was open fields - apart from the man-made ponds which collected water from the New River. Sadler's Wells was a pleasure garden with a mineral water spring to draw in the crowds. By 1830 the Georgians had designed houses, dug foundations and built the multiple terraces of houses that we see around us today. They make up the historic New River Company and Lloyd Baker Estates.

So, the Society is preparing a mammoth Festival in the summer of 2026 which will celebrate Amwell over 200 years. 'Amwell' as an area was a concept cemented by the New River Company. Great Amwell in Hertfordshire is the source of the New River. As part of the Festival we are going to organise a trip to Great Amwell as well as holding parties in Myddelton and Wilmington Squares with music and puppetry, stage talks and walks and events in unusual venues. We are delighted that we shall also be collaborating with the Quentin Blake Centre for Illustration. The Festival will be open to all, residents and visitors alike. Watch this space as we will reveal the whole programme early in 2026.



The Amwell area before Georgian development, seen from Spa Fields.

Welcome to new [and re-joining] members

- Julia Barclay, Cruickshank Street.
- Noemie Caprini, Arlington Way.
- Gillian Henschley, Great Percy Street.
- Arlett Hoff, Lloyd Square.
- Jessica Reeve, Great Percy Street.

The Amwell Society. Campaigning on behalf of the locality for 53 years

Message from our Chairman

Peadar Sionoid writes...

Since I last wrote to you, we held a very well-attended AGM in the Meditatio Centre, St Mark's Church. Thank you very much to the Centre for hosting this and other Society events. We are very grateful. Rachel Godden of London Borough of Islington [LBI] Planning Department spoke at the AGM about planning applications in the context of Listed buildings. She spoke about retro-fitting of double-glazing, solar panels and air source heat pumps, which I know is an important topic for members when taking care of their homes and looking to energy efficiency. As promised, we will be following this up with a talk for members from a market practitioner in November.

Our next event is our Late Summer Party on **Saturday 6 September**. We are returning to St Helena Garden. We are starting the party at **5.00pm** to make the most of the late summer sunshine. As this is the last year of many, during which volunteers Darian and Delia Mitchell have been looking after the garden, the party will be a chance to say thank you to both of them. I'm sure you will share my appreciation and gratitude for this long service to the Society.

In the next column - and on the Society's website - you can see the schedule for our upcoming events. We have included another pub meet up at the George and Monkey in Amwell Street on **29 October**. We are delighted that the pub gatherings are so very popular, with over 20 people attending the last one. Call in for 10 minutes if you can in October, or stay longer. This is a great way to get to know other members and make new friends.

Behind the scenes, the committee has also been active. We invited two of our LBI councillors for Clerkenwell to meet us. Despite our well-documented frustrations with LBI, we found the councillors, Ruth Hayes and Ben Mackmurdie, candid and helpful. They reported on successful initiatives and on the challenges too. We hope that working with councillors we will be able to build stronger relationships with both councillors and officers of LBI which will have a direct benefit for the Amwell area.

In the background, we are busy planning our big Amwell 200 festival. The full programme will be published soon after the New Year and I hope you will be as pleased with the range of events designed for all ages that we are including in the programme.

Lastly, later this year we will be sending you - the members - a survey aimed at learning what you like about the Society and how you'd like to see the Society develop in future. We have, in recent years significantly increased the number of events, and interestingly, the most informal events seem, to be the most popular. We are looking forward to hearing from the membership when the survey is circulated.

Open House weekend

The London Open House Festival will take place between 13 and 21 September with online booking from 20 August. Open House celebrates London's buildings and architecture with opportunities to explore both ancient and modern spaces.

Chabad Islington. Visit the synagogue, learn about Jewish culture and community work, view the Ein Sof Gallery, and explore the Jewish Heritage Trail.

Islington Town Hall. A chance to explore the whole building, noting all of the rooms and their original functions. The Town Hall was designed by ECP Monson and opened in the 1920s.

A New River Walking Tour. A self-guided tour along the New River crossing some major roads but mostly on quiet streets and linear parks.

Private gardens. During Open House weekend in Islington several private gardens will open their gates to visitors. Additionally, the outstanding Culpepper Community Garden will be open.

Quentin Blake Centre for Illustration will be open on 16 September between 11.00 and 4.00 pm [last entry at 3.30pm]. This will be a self-guided tour so that visitors can see the progress of work on the site before it opens in 2026 - a special attraction for Amwell Society members.

Other special highlights of the weekend are the chance to go inside **10 Downing Street**, take the lift to the top of the **BT Tower** and have a sneak preview of the **Museum of London's new home at Smithfield**. These venues will be popular so admission is by ballot only. See the Open House website. <https://programme.openhouse.org.uk>

Up-coming Amwell Society events.

Make a note in your diary ...

- **Late summer party. St Helena Garden. Saturday 6 September 5.00. - 8.00pm.**
- **Quentin Blake Centre for Illustration.** Tom Walker, Head of Development will give an update on the building work. Date to be confirmed.
- **Pub get-together at the George and Monkey, Amwell Street, Wednesday 29 October from 7.00pm**
- **Retro fitting double-glazing, solar panels and heat source pumps.** How to achieve planning permission. Charlie Baxter who works for Alchemy Group will give a talk. **Date to be confirmed** but during the first week of November.
- **Christmas Dinner.** The Union Tavern, Lloyd Baker Street. **Thursday 8 December at 7.00pm.** Nick and Brook at the Tavern always welcome us and provide a delicious Christmas meal. Booking will open in mid-autumn.

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President, Jane Wainwright. Chairman, Peadar Sionoid. Secretary, Joanna Ward. Treasurer, Keith Baker. Newsletter editor, David Sulkin.

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Councillors call on the Society

On 4 August two councillors for Clerkenwell Ward of the London Borough of Islington [LBI] joined our committee meeting. We had been hoping for a meeting for sometime as our contact with LBI officers has not been as strong as it used to be. Ruth Hayes and Ben Mackmurdie attended the whole of the meeting which proved to be very helpful for both of them and the Society. The councillors feel that LBI is making positive inroads into anti-social behaviour in our area, including drug-dealing. The task is a hard one, as drug dealing, as we know, is a fluid activity moving from place to place. Parking and dumping of Lime bikes is also an ongoing issue for LBI and one that significantly annoys residents. Investigations into a system of fines for companies and users for not using designated parking places is being investigated. More specifically Ruth mentioned that she hopes that money will be allocated for the repair of at least some of the damaged railings in Wilmington Square of which many are badly in need of attention.

The future of the former **Clerkenwell Parochial School** in Amwell Street was discussed. The building has been empty and, for a time squatted, since the departure of the Sixth Form Campus more than a year ago. A commitment at the meeting, by the councillors, to discuss this within LBI was swiftly superseded by a message that the London Diocese Board for Schools has sold the CPS building with the announcement of new owners being released shortly.

St Helena Garden was discussed. It was agreed with the Society and LBI - the owners of the garden - would try to work more closely together in future. Money has been allocated for improvements to the outside spaces of the Margery Street Estate. Ruth indicated that some financial help could possibly be allocated to St Helena Garden, which would be very welcome indeed. We discussed the dense tree cover and that, for the garden to thrive, regular pruning is needed. Finally, we discussed renewing our Site Agreement with LBI which has lapsed.

Urgent. Can you help? We are looking for...

- **Website.** A tech savvy person to help develop and maintain our splendid website and give guidance on social media.
- **Planning.** A person who will monitor local planning applications to LBI. No specialist knowledge required.
- **Graphic designer.** Someone local who can support the Society with occasional ideas to promote our work and to help with the 2026 Festival.

Help with these tasks would much appreciated and volunteers will be invited to join the committee. For more information or a chat, write to info@amwell.org.uk

The Angel Canal Festival

Following our successful Canal Boat trip on 5 July we're pleased to recommend the Angel Canal Festival which is to take place on **Sunday 7 September from 11.00 to 4pm.**

The Festival will be held around the City Road Basin, Graham Street and adjacent gardens. The postcode of the basin is N1 8JY to help directions.

There will be Morris dancing, juggling, along with live music, a celebration of Pearly Kings and Queens, a craft market with art activities plus boat trips and more. Delicious street food will be on sale.



So, join neighbours and boating friends for a fun day out. Go to www.angelcanalfestival.co.uk

If you'd like to take and run a stall selling gifts or bric-a-brac for the day it will cost £50 with catering pitches at £110. The festival organisers welcome the help of volunteers if you're willing to help out, go to the website to sign up.

National Rice Pudding Day

Saturday 9 August was National Rice Pudding Day. Quite surprising as a rice pudding day might be better in February to cheer up that dreariest of dreary months. Rice pudding can come in a variety of forms with memories of cold and lumpy rice puddings for school dinners to dreamy, creamy puddings made by grandma. This is a luxurious variant based on the traditional pudding.

45g pudding rice
30g sugar
400ml whole milk
200ml evaporated milk [Carnation]
A pinch of grated nutmeg

This recipe is based on one by Elisabeth Ayrton in her *Cookery of England*. 1975

The Carnation [evaporated] milk gives the pudding an extra rich flavour.

Butter a pie dish, mix the two kinds of milk in a jug and stir. Put the rice and sugar in the dish and pour on the two milks. Grate and sprinkle the nutmeg on the top of the pudding. Bake in a very slow oven 100-120 C or 200-250° F. After the first 10 minutes, stir the pudding with a wooden spoon to prevent the cream rising. Stir a second time after another 10 minutes. Then bake for about 2 hours. Serve when the milky crust is golden brown and while the pudding is semi liquid. If the rice swells and the pudding sets, it will be too gluey.

Making a really lovely rice pudding takes time in the baking, so plan ahead. Go for a swim or a jog while it's in the oven.

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Weeds, trees and seeds

It's a shame that the LBI has had to cut back on street maintenance to focus on essential services ... but, to compensate, LBI has guidance for tenants and residents who have time to plant and care for what are described at 'tree pits' - spaces around street trees where flowers can be seeded and bedding plants planted.

<https://www.islington.gov.uk/physical-activity-parks-and-trees/parks-and-green-space/gardening-and-greening/tree-pits#> Or go to the LBI website and type in 'tree pit'. On the site there is a page of tree pit guidance notes. It is a page full of military style orders when you think it should be notes of encouragement ... but don't be put off.

Barbara Holliman, Society member with professional gardening experience writes ... My advice is to start small. The soil around trees is usually poor and very dry and the space shaded for some or all of the day by the tree itself. Some dog owners will let their dogs pee on the site and drivers will inevitably step on the planting, so be prepared, but don't get downhearted.

Wildflower seeds are a great way to begin. Calendula, poppy, cornflower and nigella will encourage the bees and insects ... in fact that's what this is all about, creating a pollinator pathway, as well as beautifying the street.

Seeds cost very little so it's not so upsetting if the plants that grow are not respected initially. You can buy 100g of seeds for as little as £1.00 if you keep an eye out. Otherwise a box of seeds might cost £4.00. Another way is to buy some affordable bedding plants, like marigolds, in Chapel Market. Oh, and don't worry, you won't damage the roots of the tree using friendly seeds and small plants.



Two perfect examples of tree pit planting. Once you begin, the care becomes enjoyable and gives pleasure to everyone, young and old.

I have found that, once the plants are established, people walking by notice and really appreciate the planting and comment on it. Some have even made a detour to admire the little garden. Drivers park more carefully too. A big thank you to those that do. This is what keeps me going.

You will need to water to get the seeds to germinate and plants to take root. Water is also good for the tree as well, which is why LBI is keen for us to help. Don't underestimate how much water is needed and remember, even though it might rain, the benefit for your pit is limited because the tree protects and keeps dry the area the pit occupies. So water every day if the soil looks dry.

Watering when the weather is hot and dry is essential and helps your pit as well as the tree. Use 'grey water' if you can, which saves using fresh water. Grey water is wastewater from domestic activities like showering, washing up and washing. It can be reused for purposes like tree and plant irrigation if not too soapy. Dead-heading is also important once your plants begin to flower. It helps the plant create more flowers and only takes a few minutes to do some snipping.



From now until the end of winter isn't the greatest time to plant out a tree pit ... but it is a good time to look, clear, weed and improve the site you want to care for. Then, in spring you can start your planting plan.

If you are unlucky and have an old tree with composite resin gravel underneath near you, I think that, although more limited, it's still possible to get some seeds into the broken areas and cracks. Brush in some compost first. Water gently so that you don't wash away the compost and seed. Autumn and winter are good times too to clear the site and work compost into these cracks.

Very important. Register your tree pit. There is a page on the LBI website where you can fill in a form which [fingers crossed] will protect your pit from LBI workers going about spraying chemical weedkiller or using destructive strimmers. Have a look at the guidance notes. Here is the very long link <https://www.islington.gov.uk/physical-activity-parks-and-trees/parks-and-green-space/gardening-and-greening/tree-pit-maintenance?status=inprogress&ps=&ref=>

Lastly, tell us about your tree pit.

Your ups and downs.

Send us photos to info@amwell.org.uk

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