

newsletter

of the CAMDEN HISTORY SOCIETY

No 243

Jan 2011

Highlights in the political history of Camden

Thurs. 20 January 6.45pm
Council Chamber, Camden Town Hall, Judd Street WC1

For the last event to celebrate the Society's fortieth anniversary we shall be dealing with the eventful history of politics in the borough since Camden was formed in 1964. Our speaker will be Piers Wauchope, who was a Camden Conservative councillor from 1998 to 2006, and whose book on the subject, *Camden: A Political History*, was published in 2010.

Camden was formed from the reluctant merging of Hampstead, Holborn and St Pancras. The result of the first council elections in 1964 was not predictable, and many people thought that in any case the histories, both social and political, of the component parts would not easily be reconciled in the new authority. In the event the transition went smoothly for some time.

Our speaker's subject is the ups and downs since 1964 and should lead to a lively evening.

To mark the occasion – and the subject – the Mayor of Camden, Councillor Jonathan Simpson – has kindly allowed us to have a small reception on the civic floor of the Town Hall with drinks and refreshments. We shall also be able to view the various items of regalia in the Mayor's Parlour. He will also attend the talk, which will be held in the Council Chamber where the first public meeting of the Camden History Society took place. So, we are gathering at 6.45pm and the talk will be at 7.30 as usual. Please go to the main entrance to the Town Hall in Judd Street and go up the marble staircase to the civic floor.

Blitz Boy in Camden

Thurs. 17 February, 7.30pm
Charlie Ratchford Resource Centre, Belmont Street, NW1
(road opposite the Roundhouse)

Our speaker, Bob Trevor, has recently published a book on his wartime experiences in Camden during his boyhood. This talk marks the seventieth anniversary of that dark period in the capital's life which encompassed loss, destruction and much bravery.

Mr Trevor's story has some less than heartening twists. He lived in Kentish Town and he remembers how when walking home along Kentish Town Road some bombers made his mother try to rush them both into a shelter in Patshull Road only to be blocked by the warden there who said that it was only for residents of the street. Upon evacuation to Pangbourne at the age of six he was mercilessly bullied by local boys who resented the appearance of London kids in their village. He was rescued from their continued physical aggression by Canadian soldiers at a nearby camp.

Things to Come

Please put these talks in your new diary:

17 March: John Liffen on *How the London & Birmingham Railway reached Euston*.

14 April: Mireille Galinou: *Fields of villas: the Eyre estate in St John's Wood and Camden*.

19 May: Naomi Games: *Abram Games, designer, and the Festival of Britain*.

15 Jun: Ian Dungevall: *History and restoration of the Kentish Town Baths*.

21 Jul: Emily Gee on *English Heritage Listing in Camden*.

15 Sep: Peter Woodford: *Was Queen Square a hotbed to grow hospitals?*

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Remembering the Blitz

Our member, Robin Woolven, who makes a special study of wartime London, was interested in Billy Osborne's memories of the bombing of Oetzmann's in Hampstead Road during the war (see previous *Newsletter*). Robin is at the moment engaged on the considerable task of transcribing the diary of Anthony Heap, which is now kept at London Metropolitan Archives.

At the time of the Blitz Mr Heap, then aged 30, had a flat in Sinclair House on Sandwich Street and worked in the Borough Treasurer's office at St Pancras Town Hall. He took shelter every night in the crypt of St Pancras New Church, where his mother was an ARP Shelter Warden. As soon as the all clear sounded Mr Heap toured local streets to observe and record the damage and sights that he saw. Here follows the relevant entries covering the bad raids of 23/24 September 1940, which include the raid on Oetzmann's.

Tuesday, 24 September

A hell of a lot of damage done in Kentish Town last night by incendiary bombs. Every time anyone in the office goes out wage paying or rent collecting, they come back having witnessed some fresh scene of devastation. The daylight raids tend to slacken off as the night time ones get more prolonged. We rarely get more than one or at the most two during the day now.

University College on Gower Street and Oetzmann's in Hampstead Road were set on fire during the night raid (3-5.30). [After the all clear] I dashed up to see them, both still blazing fiercely. At the UC it had started at an outbuilding and had just spread to the dome. The orange glow of the flames set against the rich blue sky at daybreak made a fascinating sight. But then there's a horrible fascination in watching any fire providing it involves no personal loss. The one at Oetzmann's which had likewise been raging all night was more smoke than flames and another fire was just starting at Maple's depository over the way. Walked up to the other end of T.C. Rd which was thick with smoke to see the damage done by a magnetic mine which had dropped along by the Blue Posts opposite the YMCA. It was considerable and extensive. A small fire was burning there too. As I came back the Maple's fire spread to the Euston Road frontage and looked like lasting a good while.

Bitterly cold morning. Home at 7.30. No time for any more sleep but shave and washed.

Wednesday 25 September

Heard that the Queen's Theatre had been hit by a bomb last night. Went along to see it in the evening. It had - very much so. The bomb had apparently gone clean through the front corner in Shaftesbury Avenue. This is the first theatre to be hit so far (not counting Tussaud's Cinema). Another bomb had

completely demolished the famous old church opposite - St Anne's Soho. Others had fallen outside Endell St schools opposite the Princes, in Russell Square just opposite the Imperial, on a house in Brunswick Square and on a church in Wakefield St. Saw all these on my way back as well as large sections of Bloomsbury roped off awaiting the explosion of time bombs. I now hear that large numbers of YMCA members who were sitting in the reading room overlooking T. C Rd last night were killed from the blast of the mine from the building opposite. Also people were killed in the Blue Posts which was still open. A ghastly business.

Crypt 8.0 till 6.0. Slept on camp bed for a while then on the floor. Overslept the all clear by half an hour.

Robin tells us that he recently gave a talk to about two dozen older residents at the Castlehaven Community Association centre in Castlehaven Road. Some half a dozen had lived through the war in Camden. One man recalled that, aged 14 in 1940, he was an ARP messenger in Hampstead (based in Gospel Oak) and later an ARP Warden. He was the youngest member of his ARP Post and, at one time, the only one to be awarded the Defence Medal after three years' service.

Butchers in Kentish Town

In *Camden History Review* no. 20 (1996) Desmond Whyman contributed a fascinating article on the many butchers that had once existed in Kentish Town. Nowadays, of course, independent butchers' shops are a rarity in high streets, let alone back streets - not quite as rare as fishmongers, but still hard to come by in much of London. For example there does not appear to be a butcher's shop in Muswell Hill nowadays. Highgate village residents once had the amenity of several butchers, including one that was only a pork butcher and which had its own slaughterhouse nearby.

Making use of his Kentish Town knowledge, Mr Whyman has now expanded his researches into a full book on the history of urban butchers and their place in our social history. He covers the enormous changes in the trade since the last war, when a typical customer would visit a butcher's shop three or four times a week.

The author was born and educated in west Kentish Town. He first entered the meat trade in 1954 aged 13 years, employed as Saturday boy and also on evenings after school. He began a 7-year apprenticeship in the trade, broke off for national service where he qualified as an army slaughterer/butcher, and then returned to the trade afterwards.

The book is entitled *Shoulder of Mutton Field* (from the name of an old field in Kentish Town). Published by the Nottingham University Press, Church Lane, Thrumpton, Nottingham NG110AX. ISBN 978-1-907284-73-1. 144pp £14.99.

Hidden allotments

Nestled quietly in the middle of the Cumberland Market Estate owned by The Crown Estate, just between Park Village East and Albany Street, is the largest and oldest collection of allotments in Central London. These forty-four allotments sit on land that was formerly the Cumberland Basin of the now-defunct Cumberland Cut branch of the Regent's Canal. And they have a fascinating history.

The Cumberland Arm of the canal was part of the original plan for Regent's Park by John Nash (c. 1813), architect and town planner to the Prince Regent. This branch of the canal was designed to bring in hay, stone, fresh produce and other vital supplies from the North to the Cumberland Market (the former Hay Market moved from the West End), and for the workers and artisans who worked on the Nash Terraces surrounding the Park, who were accommodated in the purpose-built worker-houses surrounding and just below Cumberland Market.

The canal basin itself was surrounded by a wharf, which unloaded much of the hay used to feed the horses that served the nearby barracks and commercial enterprises of the day.

This vital supply arm fell into decline with the arrival of rail transport into Euston station twenty years later, and the area became very overcrowded and poor with the displacement of some 7,000 people from the Somers Town area when St Pancras Station was built.

After the First World War Crown Lands Commissioners tore down the wharfs and surrounding factories and gin mills, and built a residential estate designed for war veterans, community workers, and their families. However the canal basin remained, though it became stagnant with disuse.

The Crown Tenants Horticultural Society was formed in 1938, originally as a windowbox gardening society, to 'practise the principles of horticulture and to improve the aesthetic environment' surrounding the estate. An annual horticultural competition and show was set up, that continues to this day. During the Second World War the canal basin and the Cumberland arm of the canal were filled in with bomb rubble from buildings destroyed on the east side of the Canal (which are now replaced with Council blocks) to stop German bomber planes from following the line of the canal to get to the Albany Street barracks - a prime target.

The Society quickly seized upon the need to grow food and contribute to national security in accordance with the 'Dig for Victory' campaign. They lobbied the Crown Lands Commissioners for the use of the land, and made their own arrangements for piping, plumbing, soil, and supplied the labour to level the

land, install walkways, and make the soil covering the bomb rubble suitable for cultivation. This is a fascinating period in the Society's history, as minuted in their meetings, which were sometimes held in air raid shelters. 1940 saw this work take place, with the first real 'harvest' recorded in 1941.

Since the war the Society has overseen the cultivation of this unique piece of land, providing social cohesion, seasonal beauty and tranquility to the estate. Twice in this time parts of the further allotments along Park Village East have been sold off by the Crown, in order to build Richmond House and Silsoe House on Park Village East.

The Crown Estate recently announced the proposed buyer of the Cumberland Market estate to be the Peabody Trust, with a proposal to lease the allotment land to the Horticultural Society for a term of 50 years. The Society hopes to preserve the use of this historic site for generations to come.

David Hannah

Chair, Crown Tenants Horticultural Society

(a version of this article previously appeared in the newsletter of the Camden Civic Society)

More About Car Mart

Further to mentions of Car Mart and Bath Place in the previous two *Newsletters*, Kathleen Turner came across the illustration below which features in a new book by Philip Purser called *Danger UXB*. The caption notes that a 2,500 pound German bomb which fell in 1941 remained buried opposite University College Hospital until 1948 when it was removed by Army sappers and defused. The picture of the Dixon of Dock Green-type constables shows the scene, but also Stanhope House behind, which was the showroom of Car Mart. Ms Turner notes that when the hoarding nearby was later taken down, no. 4 Bath Place was revealed.



News from Local Studies

Camden Local Studies and Archives have just taken possession of the drainage plans microfiche which used to be in the Town Hall planning department. These could be enormously useful and their possession means that the Centre now has easy access to floor plans for the majority of buildings in Camden.

The Centre is also celebrating the 50th anniversary of Holborn Library. There is an exhibition of photographs and memories of former staff on display until 26th February.

Camden Town and Beyond

Portraits relating to the Camden Town Group of painters (fl 1911-13) are now on display at the National Portrait Gallery. Pictures by Bevan, Gilman, Gore and Sickert are on display.

JOHN FRANCIS VEITCH

As a long-shot, Mr D Saunders has written to us about John Francis Veitch who was born in 1917 in Lady Somerset Road, Kentish Town, and who became an RAF pilot. Sadly he was lost in Algeria in 1944. Mr Saunders is preparing a memorial to Veitch's navigator, Douglas Saunders, and would very much like to have information about John Veitch to complement it. Anyone who can help, please write to him at 29 Lyndsey Place, Anlaby Road, Hull, HU4 6AE.

AMATEUR CINE FILMS

Mike Hymans collects old amateur cine films and has an archive of 2000 files. He is producing these on DVDs and his latest is one of London in the 1920s and '30s. Details of this can be seen on his website www.totallyarchive.co.uk. It shows Croydon airport, London docks, the Zoo, the West End etc. The cost is £12.99. His email is hymans@btinternet.com.

A two-way, pleasantly uncongested Parkway, Camden Town, early 20th century, with the Mother Red Cap in the distance.



This Newsletter is published by the Camden History Society.

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Mar 2011

How the London & Birmingham Railway reached Euston

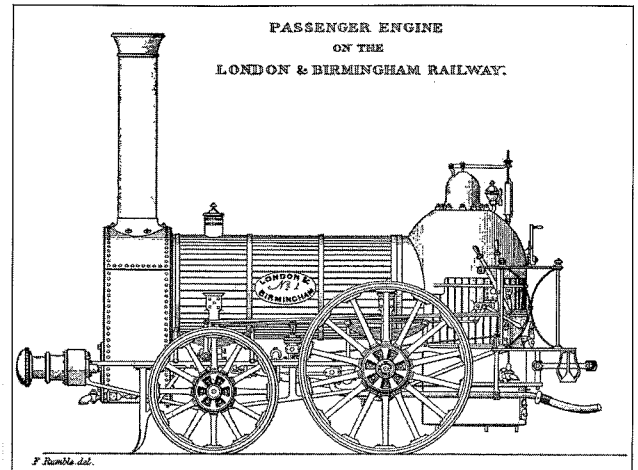
*Thurs. 17 March 7.30pm
Burgh House, New End Square NW3*

The London & Birmingham Railway opened at Euston on 20 July 1837, but only as far as Boxmoor; the line was not fully opened until 17 September 1838. It was an event that was to change north London and especially Camden irrevocably.

It is well known that the carriages were detached from the diminutive engines at today's Camden Goods Yard and then sent down the slope to Euston (the railway went over the canal and beneath Hampstead Road). For their return they were hauled up by cable to Camden Goods Yard and reconnected with an engine. It is often said that this operation was necessary because the early engines were not powerful enough to pull carriages up the slope, though there is a contrary claim that the engines at that time were not allowed by legislation to go nearer to London than Camden Town. It will be interesting to hear the view of our speaker, John Liffen, in March as to the latest opinion on this.

The railway increasingly took on freight and blighted the hopes of investors in the Regent's Canal which had fully opened only in 1820 with the object of moving coal and heavy materials from the midlands down to London or to the docks at Limehouse.

Camden Town thus became a convenient and large interchange for canal and railway freight and the goods yard expanded so as to dominate the northern aspect of the area as well as providing much employment. The London & Birmingham eventually became part of the London & North Western, growing larger and larger, spitting pollution over the area as it grew.



It is a fascinating story and our speaker, who is a Curator at the Science Museum, has made a special study of the subject. He last spoke to us a little while back on Trevithick's railway experiment in Gower Street. He will describe the competing interests involved in the railway's formation and illustrate with examples of the artistic creations surrounding the construction.

The Eyre estate in St John's Wood and Camden

*Thurs. 14 April, 7.30pm
Charlie Ratchford Resource Centre, Belmont Street NW1
(road opposite Roundhouse)*

The Eyre estate is mostly in St John's Wood but some of it is in Camden. This illustrated talk by Mireille Galinou, author of *Fields of Villas* (2009) relates the history of the development of this upmarket extension to London. It was helped by the building of what became the Finchley Road, much to the chagrin of the irascible Sir Thomas Maryon-Wilson, Lord of Hampstead manor.

Ms Galinou is also the author of *Cottages and Villas: The Birth of the Garden Suburb*.

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Please put the following in your diary:

19 May: Abram Games, designer, and the Festival of Britain. (Speaker, his daughter, Naomi Games)

15 Jun: AGM and the History and Restoration of Kentish Town Baths (Speaker, Ian Dungevall)

21 Jul: English Heritage Listing in Camden (Emily Gee)

6 Aug (provisionally): Annual Outing, to Bletchley Park

15 Sep: Was Queen Square a hotbed to grow hospitals? (Peter Woodford)

18 Oct: Brickmaking in 19th-century London (Peter Hounsell)

17 Nov: Anthony Heaps 1930s and 1940s diaries (Robin Woolven)

14 Dec: The letters of 23-year-old Samuel Molyneux in the early 18th century. (Ann Saunders)

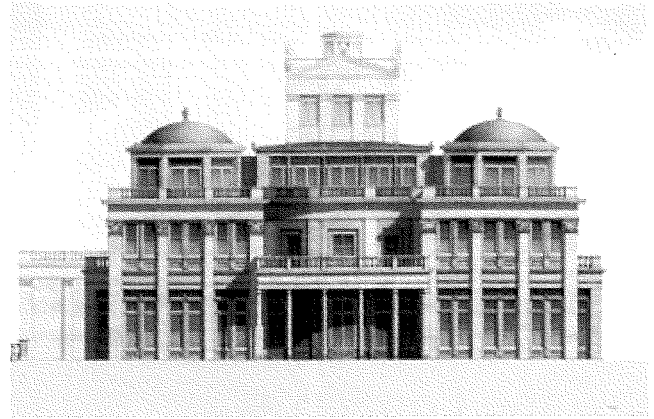
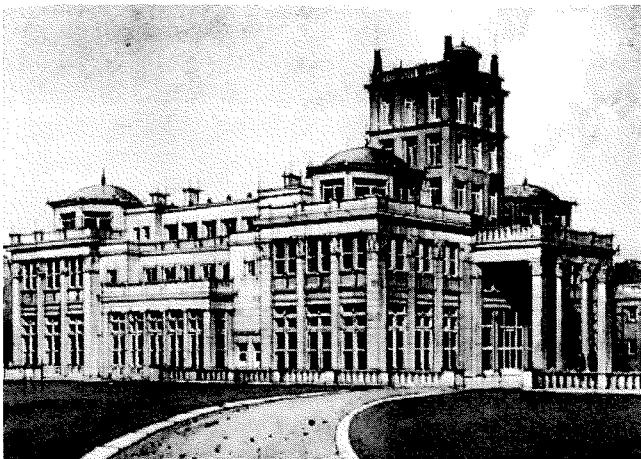
Athlone House

In the latest *Newsletter* of the Heath and Hampstead Society there is a blistering attack, which first appeared in the *Evening Standard*, by Sir Simon Jenkins on the plan to demolish Athlone House on the Highgate part of the Heath and replace it with what Sir Simon calls a Xanadu.

He notes that 'In the past four years the local council (Camden) has been blitzed with 15 planning applications for Athlone House, with various so-called "sweeteners". In planning law, these are meant to allow an outrageous planning breach, usually a high building, in return for some gift, usually inexpensive, delivered to the council. Such gifts were normally an underpass or roundabout adjacent to a tower, as at Centre Point. Now they are so-called "Section 106 agreements", usually for a school or public housing elsewhere in the borough.'

At the moment, he says, a Kuwaiti billionaire, Naseer Al-Kharafi is the new owner of Athlone House and is pushing for approval for a new building by architect Robert Adam. We reproduce here pictures of the

The present Athlone House.



The proposed new building

present house and the new proposal. The present building, Jenkins concedes, is not an architectural gem, but it fits within the view of that part of the Heath, whereas the new building will, he says, be a dominant palace, towering over the landscape.

According to the Heath and Hampstead Society the proposed building will be a storey higher than the present house and the tower at least two storeys higher.

Bernard Levin remembered

Gerry Harrison has reminded us that the much admired columnist, Bernard Levin (1928-2004), spent some of his younger days in Camden Town. Levin tells us in his book *Enthusiasms* (1983) that 'the first house I can remember living in, though it was not the first I did live in, was in Camden Town. When I went there the address was King Street, but the name was changed a few years later to Plender Street. I went about telling my schoolfellows that 'Plender' was Latin for 'King'.

'My school was called the Richard Cobden School, and a statue of the great reformer stood in Camden High Street a few hundred yards away. None of us had ever heard of him, let alone of the Anti-Corn Law League; for that matter few of us had ever heard of corn, and fewer still set eyes on it... Anyway, we believed that Cobden was a victorious general in the First World War. I once asked a teacher "If we beat Germany, why isn't Germany red on the map?"

'Plender Street in my memory is a wide thoroughfare, but this must be another example of the child's magnifying eye, for there were no wide streets in those parts, except the High Street. Looking out of the front window to the right, I could see a huge red-brick building; this was the furniture repository of Maples, a store which at that time, and in that milieu, was synonymous with the very farthest extreme of luxury... Looking up the street the other way, I could see market barrows; these were pressed into service as barricades when Mosley and his Fascists were on the march. I don't know what they were doing so far from their breeding swamps in the East End, for there were very few Jews in the area to hate, and even fewer Jewish shops to have their windows broken...'

Library cuts continued

As most members will know Camden Council is consulting with the public on cuts across its activities. Public libraries, of course, will bear a considerable share and a consultative document has been issued that may be viewed on the internet on www.camden.gov.uk/librarysavings. Alternatively, if you have no internet access, you can use a computer free of charge in a library to see it. Already protest meetings have made clear public opposition to such a large saving being borne by the library service.

The Council is not asking for our views on whether the total amount of the cuts is desirable, but on how the cuts should fall within the library system. Camden says it has to lose £80-£100 million from its budget over the next three years. The Council has decided that the budget for libraries should be cut from £8 million to £6 million by 2014. £400,000 savings are already being made in back-office efficiencies, but however £1.6 million more has to be found.

The consultative document asks you to make choices as to where you would prefer economies to be made. (It does not ask you to argue that the economies should not be made!) For example would you prefer to make one gigantic saving of £1 million by closing Swiss Cottage library, or else by closing two of the larger libraries, or three medium sized libraries, or five smaller libraries, or have a 40% reduction in opening hours?

There are other degrees of savings you can opt for. Section 3 gives you choices such as increasing library charges, spending less on managing libraries, spending less on local studies and archives....

No doubt members will have their own views on the library service as a whole, but we obviously have a special interest in Local Studies especially as the department was already reduced in staff in 2010. We do urge you to obtain a copy of this document and respond – the latest date is April 4th. We would urge you also to emphasise, if you agree, that you want no reduction in the relatively small budget of Local Studies and as well as filling in the appropriate response form you may wish to write this in a letter.

Section 5.3 makes an absurd calculation of what a visit of one member of the public costs each time they visit Local Studies. It tells us that a visitor using Swiss Cottage library costs £2.40, whereas it costs £16.79 at Local Studies. What it doesn't point out is that a visit to change your books at Swiss Cottage library might take about fifteen minutes whereas a visit to Local Studies might well entail hours of research.

Also as ominous but not spelled out yet is another Camden report which states that it will sell Cockpit Yard in which the archive store that serves Local Studies is located. We await with much interest the details of what is proposed for a new archive store.

Subscriptions Due

All membership enquiries are now being handled by Dr Henry Fitzhugh (56 Argyle Street WC1H 8ER; tel 7837 9980, email: henryfitzhugh@talktalk.net). Subscriptions are due on 1 March; members who do not pay by standing order should pay by cheque to that address if they have received a subscription invoice with this *Newsletter*. We would be extremely grateful if anyone paying by cheque would fill out the Standing Order Mandate and the Gift Aid Declaration at the same time. The May *Newsletter* will only be sent if subscriptions have been received by 25 April.

New website for Camden Railway Heritage Trust

An excellent website has just been established by the Trust. It's easy to navigate and full of information. It deals with the industrial history of the Camden Goods Yard and its periphery, featuring horse tunnels, the canal, the Roundhouse, the Interchange Warehouse and so on. The website is <http://www.crht1837.org>

Trees in Gloucester Crescent

Our member Sam Price writes about the trees in the back gardens of the houses on the east side of Gloucester Crescent (i.e the High Street side). He wonders if they marked a boundary of the Southampton Estate. There is, he says, a long curving line of plane trees in the back gardens of the Crescent houses. There aren't many left, and now four of them are threatened with felling as they are causing subsidence in some houses. Arboriculturists have said that they are younger than the houses, which seems unlikely since it would seem strange for all the new owners of the houses to have decided to plant plane trees in their gardens.

Mr Price can be contacted on samprice@tengc.net.

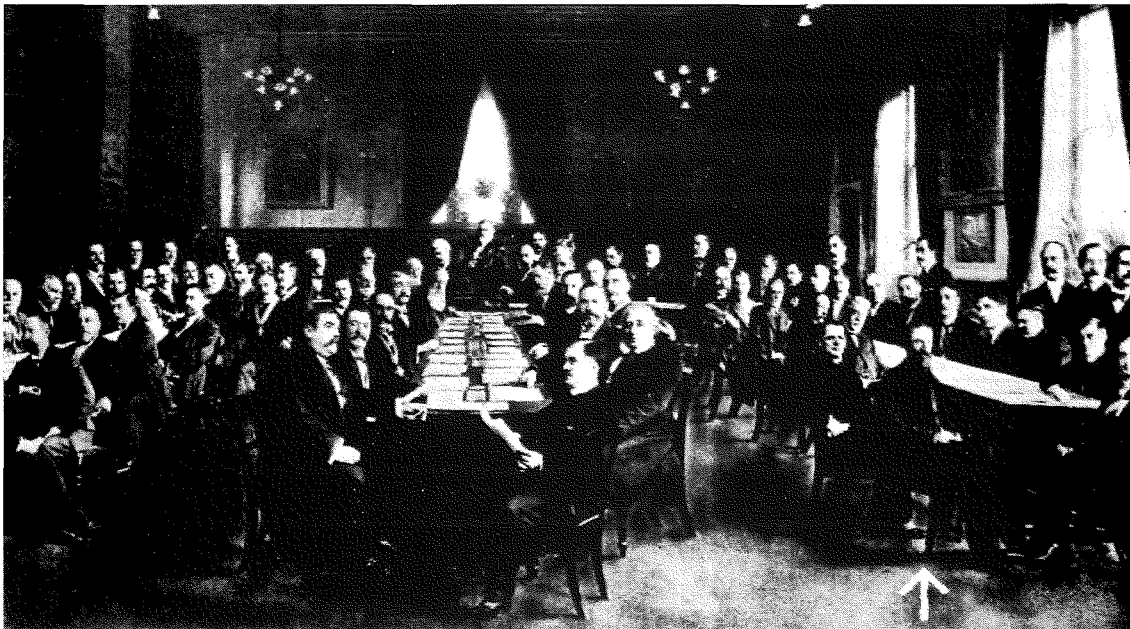


The German Young Men's Christian Association Hostel at 27 Ferncroft Avenue NW3, a postcard probably of c.1906 but, oddly, postmarked 1954. Presumably the hostel closed at the outbreak of the Great War. Can anyone enlarge on its origins?



Above is a picture kindly supplied by member Paul Matthews. It is of Gray's Inn Road at its junction with Ampton Street, c.1905. It shows the business premises of his great-grandfather, W H Matthews, who was not only a greengrocer, but also supplied coal and potatoes. Note the man at the top of the vertiginous ladder on the right without someone guarding it – no health and safety regulations there then!

Below is a picture of what is thought to be the first St Pancras Council meeting showing the bearded W H Matthews, centre at the back, as though chairing the meeting. He was the second mayor of St Pancras in 1902/3, a Mr Barnes having been the first Mayor for two terms. George Bernard Shaw sits bottom right, indicated by the white arrow. The Council then met in the Vestry Hall in Pancras Road. If this was the first meeting of St Pancras Council in 1900 why was W H Matthews in the chair? Paul Matthews suggests that as his great-grandfather was an alderman he may have been temporarily in charge at the beginning of the first meeting of the Council until they elected the first Mayor, to whom he then gave way. Aidan Flood, after consulting the minutes of the first meeting in 1900, tells us that Matthews opened the proceedings and introduced a Mr Cox-Sinclair who called for nominations for Mayor. It seems then that this photograph was taken at the very beginning of this procedure, for it does seem unlikely that such a special photograph would have been taken when Mr Matthews took up his mayoralty in 1903. Paul Matthews says that his great grandfather was the grocer mentioned by GBS as one of the Council leaders during the change from Vestry to Borough. Family tradition believes he was a model for a character in his play, *The Apple Cart*, possibly 'Boanerges'.



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May 2011

Abram Games, designer, and the Festival of Britain

*Thurs, 19 May, 7.30 pm
Burgh House, New End Square NW3*

Sixty years ago the country, and especially London, stirred from a collective grey and dismal post-war trauma, to put on a festival to rival that of 1851. It was no mean effort, for after circumventing hostile politics, it had to redevelop a site on the South Bank when building materials were short. But in the process the organisers commissioned a multitude of new

artists and architects. One of the former was the poster artist, Abram Games (1914-96), who had been an official war artist, and who designed about 100 wartime posters, of which the most famous was probably the 'Join the ATS' image. He won the commission to design the logo for the Festival of Britain and it is one of the images that remain in the memories of those of a certain age who went to the Festival and explored its brave new world.

Our speaker in May, to celebrate both the work of Games and the anniversary of the Festival, is the artist's daughter, Naomi Games. Her new book on her father will be on sale at the talk.



The AGM and the Kentish Town Baths

*Wednesday 15 June, 6.30pm
Charlie Ratchford Resource Centre, Belmont Street, NW1*

Our 41st Annual Meeting will feature a talk by Ian Dungavell on the history and restoration of Kentish Town Baths. As most members are probably aware, the future of the Baths in Prince of Wales Road, was a thorny topic in local politics. Sometimes threatened with demolition or conversion into something else, a concerted and prolonged campaign to have it restored to one of its original functions as a swimming pool was eventually successful. In this, one of our members, (Councillor) Gerry Harrison, was influential. We must be grateful, despite the seemingly very high cost of the work, that so handsome a building is still with us and open to the public.

Ian Dungavell has been Director of the Victorian Society since 2000. The building he is dealing with was opened in 1901 and is therefore just within the range of 'Victorian'.

The meeting, as noted above, begins at 6.30, with refreshments, the AGM will be at 7pm and Ian Dungavell's talk is at 7.30. We had hoped to have held the meeting in the actual building, but alas there was nothing suitable. Nominations are invited for officers and council of the Society. Present incumbents are as follows:

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The Annual Outing

Saturday 6 August

This year we are going to the legendary Bletchley Park near Milton Keynes. Please be aware that there is quite a lot of standing and walking involved.

We have booked a package deal which includes a Guide for the day, refreshments on arrival and before departure, and a buffet sandwich lunch in our designated area (thus avoiding the queues in the public restaurant). The total cost, including the coach and tips, will be £35.00.

The Guide will give us a short introductory talk, followed by the first part of the tour. This takes place around the outside of the wartime buildings in the grounds, with a detailed history of the codebreaking activities. This is followed by lunch. The second half of the tour includes a visit to Block B Museum which tells the complete Bletchley Park story. It houses the Abwehr Enigma Machine, Lorenz machine, Bombe Rebuild, Alan Turing statue, World War II aviation display and much more. There will probably be some free time before departure, but not enough alas to go and admire the architecture of Milton Keynes.

A booking form is enclosed with this *Newsletter* and you are welcome to bring friends.

A DVD OF PRIMROSE HILL

An excellent new DVD, *Primrose Hill Revealed*, is now available. It includes a 1972 mono photographic record of the Conservation Area with a 2010 digital colour photo of every building in that area. Both are edited and referenced, with a street index and an interactive map. And there is an historical section of some 300 engravings. Well worth the money at £10 plus £2 postage. Cheques to be made out to the Primrose Hill Conservation Area Advisory Committee. Send to them at 45 Princess Road NW1 8JS.

The Library Cuts (continued)

Following our information in the last *Newsletter* re possible cuts in the local history service, your council approved the following letter, dated 17 March, to Cllr Tulip Siddiq who is Camden's Cabinet Member for Culture and Heritage.

The council of the Camden History Society considered last week the Consultation Document on cuts in library services.

Our unanimous view is that whatever cuts have to be made in the library service there is no justification for any further cuts to be made in the Local Studies & Archives Centre. In 2010 the Centre lost, because of budgetary pressures, the senior and most experienced member of its staff. Despite this saving in departmental expense no additional investment, IT or otherwise, has since been injected into Local Studies.

It should be pointed out that the cost per user calculation contained in the Consultation Document is invidious as regards Local Studies. Anyone changing a book at Swiss Cottage might spend less than half an hour there, but someone researching at Local Studies could be all day in the Search Room, sometimes days on end. There are also many enquiries that come in by email, post or telephone, which require a member of staff to work on them. Such enquiries are the equivalent of visits but are not included in the Document's calculation. We would emphasise that Local Studies is a research centre - books and illustrations are not borrowed, and its contribution to research can only be significant if there is a competent and qualified staff very familiar with the collection. It is not a department that can be managed by temporary, unqualified or volunteer staff, although volunteers have been welcomed to do useful back-up work there under supervision for some time now.

It also needs to be kept in mind that the staff not only supervise the collection and help guide researchers, but spend a significant amount of time merely keeping up with fresh additions to the archives. These would include local newspapers - the indexing of significant items under, quite often, several themes; the enormous range of ephemera such as programmes, pictures, annual reports, newsletters, Council publications, local reminiscences etc, which need to be archived for the benefit of future generations. Knowledge of Camden 100 years ago would be very much sparser today without the efforts of local historians and librarians to preserve such items from the very beginnings of the public library service.

Also, in recent years more and more archives from other Council departments have been transferred to Local Studies because those departments have neither the space nor staff to deal with them. These archives need to be kept for legal reasons or purposes, and they also ensure that Camden's own unique archival heritage is preserved. But in order to make archives accessible to both Council staff and outside researchers they need to be indexed and housed properly. It is worth pointing out that at the moment Local Studies holds the plans (about 300,000) for every Council building erected in the past 100 years. This alone is a formidable workload. Making such documents available to appropriate Council members of staff means that the Council avoids the frequent expensive operation of having to appoint architects to draw up new building plans for any work because they can't find the original documents.

Although some of the archives in Local Studies, such as census returns and rate books dating back to the early 19th century, are now on micro film, very little of the rest of the collection is copied or digitised. Thus, probably 99% of the collection is irreplaceable. This being so the Council should instead be encouraging efforts to mechanically copy as much of the collection as possible, and as soon as possible, either to protect material from frequent use, or else to have a copy safe in the search room and also somewhere else should some disaster strike the library building. This is commonsense. We have often pleaded with the Council to provide a budget for a consistent digitisation of the illustration

collection, which for the most part is unique and could if properly marketed provide income. However, though other parts of the library service, and indeed other Council departments, have received investment in IT, none has come to Local Studies. And if any serious attempt is to be made to rectify this situation then qualified staff are essential for its success, and certainly a reduction of working hours would jeopardise such efforts.

Camden's history is one of the most important of any part of London and its conservation and guardianship should be a matter of pride for each generation that has that responsibility. Any loss of quality or consistency at any period will leave a lasting scar. You can, if really necessary, reduce a book stock in a lending library temporarily and then increase it in better times, but the loss of archival material or a means of retrieving it is a loss for ever.

At the moment Camden Local Studies has an excellent reputation for its staff and service and, incidentally, is the only library department which is increasing its number of visitors. This is not something to be thrown away lightly. In my experience public libraries are almost invariably the 'Cinderella' of borough council services and, again, quite frequently local studies are themselves the 'Cinderella' of library services. Though Camden has in the past been supportive of Local Studies, there is a great danger of reduction of standards if cuts are made in the present strength and working hours of the department. **John Richardson.**

So far, there has been no acknowledgement.

Things to Come

Please put the following in your diary:

21 Jul: English Heritage Listing in Camden (Emily Gee)

6 Aug Annual Outing, to Bletchley Park

15 Sep: Was Queen Square a hotbed to grow hospitals? (Peter Woodford)

20 Oct: Brickmaking in 19th-century London (Peter Hounsell) [*Change of date since last Newsletter*]

17 Nov: Anthony Heap's 1930s and 1940s diaries (Robin Woolven)

14 Dec: The London letters (1712-13) of Samuel Molyneux, later MP (Ann Saunders)

Walks along the Fleet

There are to be walks along the route of the river Fleet from Hampstead down to Blackfriars. They will be led by Robin Michaelson, a City of London guide. The first of these, on 14 May, begins at Whitestone Pond and finishes at St Dominic's Priory Church in Southampton Road, Kentish Town, but is already fully subscribed.

The second walk is on 22 May and there remain a few places available – the number of participants is limited to 25. This walk will begin at 11am at Blackfriars, where the river enters the Thames, and will continue north as far as St Pancras Old Church, finishing at approximately 1pm. The cost per person is £5.

Those interested in the second walk please email Frank Harding at f.harding@heathandhampstead.org.uk.



Apology

In the last *Newsletter*, discussing the future of Athlone House, a picture captioned as the existing building was, in fact, another view of the proposed new building. Our apologies. Above is a view of the existing building, probably made soon after its construction in the 1870s.

Nothing New...

Andrea Debnam (in impeccable handwriting) notes:

Camden residents may have seen a four-part television series on Channel 4 this February called *The People's Supermarket*, where a chef called Arthur Potts Dawson starts up a co-operative food store in premises in Lamb's Conduit Street, Holborn. The series ended with a visit from David Cameron claiming the venture as an example of his 'Big Society'. In fact this is not the first co-operative food shop to be located in this central London street. Mackail's biography of William Morris, always a treasure trove of fascinating information, refers in Chapter XIX to an earlier venture.

The Socialist League was founded on 30 December 1884 and William Morris was a member of the Provisional Council. The first issue of their *Commonweal* newspaper appeared in February 1885. In 1889 the Farringdon Road offices were given up and *Commonweal* was issued from small premises in Great Queen Street. The newspaper then moved to an address in Lamb's Conduit Street, "where some of the members of the League kept a small grocery store under the sounding name of the Socialist Co-operative Federation".

Helping at Willow Road

Some members, especially those who are enthusiasts of the architecture of Erno Goldfinger, may like to volunteer as room guides or reception assistants at 2 Willow Road, and also at Fenton House, both in Hampstead and both owned by the National Trust. During the periods when the houses are open to the public there would be opportunities to learn more about the properties.

Please contact Heather Fleming, Volunteering Development Intern on 7435 3471 (Fenton House) or 7435 6166 (Willow Road), or email heather.fleming@nationaltrust.org.uk

St Pancras Finds

By the time you read this the foundations of the Research Centre at the back of the British Library will probably have been dug, destroying all that remained on the site from past times. Before this happened archaeologists from the Museum of London were on the scene for a few days in mid April. The Romans passed the site by and early settlements seem to have been along the banks of the nearby river Fleet near St Pancras Old Church. Lord Somers later built his Town of poor quality houses at the end of the 18th century. These were swept away by the Midland Railway when it established a Goods Depot to supplement St Pancras station.

The archaeologists found little of the Somers Town houses. Most of their findings related to the Goods Depot. This was built on two levels, just like the passenger station, with the trains coming in at a high level after crossing the Regent's Canal. Trucks were lowered on hydraulic lifts to ground level for off-loading onto carts and lorries. The foundations of the Hydraulic Power station were found. This fired boilers for generating steam. Rows of rotting sleepers marked the tracks for travelling cranes, and the bottoms of the massive columns were all that was left of the upper storey. The massive walls of the goods yard were still in evidence on the north and west sides, although it is not certain how much of them will remain on the site.

Roger Cline

The St Giles Rookery

Jessica Skippon is working with artist Jane Palm-Gold who has prepared an exhibition, *London's Underworld Unearthed: The Secret Life of the Rookery*, which will be at the Coningsby Gallery in Tottenham Street, W1 from 17 May to 4 June. Included with the artwork are finds from the Museum of London Archaeology dig at the central St Giles site.

There will also be a talk by Professor David Green, and the launch of the Museum's book on their work at the site.

Ms Skippon has a press release which shows some of the finds and also outlines the project more fully. If you would like to receive this, please telephone her on 7209 8001, or else email her on skippon@blueyonder.co.uk.

TRAVELS OF A LONDON SCHOOLBOY

In 1980 the Society published in paperback form *The Diary of a London Schoolboy 1826-1830*. The boy was John Thomas Pocock (1814-76) who was brought up at 2 Kilburn Priory, just in Camden, the son of builder and surveyor, George Pocock. The diary, edited then by Christina Gee and Marjorie Holder, is an engrossing and moving account of family life in London at that time. John Pocock eventually emigrated to both Australia and South Africa - he settled in the latter. This book has long been out of print.

Then, in 1996 a hardback, edited by the late Tom Pocock, and entitled *Travels of a London Schoolboy*, was published by Historical Publications. This was an extended version of the diary, which took in his travels abroad. Here we see John noting shops, coffee houses, social encounters, new transport, and the travails of the sea journeys he undertook.

This book has been unavailable for some time now, but a stash of about fifty copies has been found in a warehouse and are offered for sale to members at the reduced price of £10 per copy including postage. Proceeds will be given to the CHS. To order please telephone Countryside Books on 01635 43816, write to them at 2 Highfield Avenue, Newbury, Berks RG14 5DS, or else email info@countrysidebooks.co.uk. The book is 208pp with 37 illustrations.

THE GERMAN YMCA IN HAMPSTEAD

In the last *Newsletter* we published a postcard of the German YMCA hostel at 27 Ferncroft Avenue, which appeared to be an early 20th-century picture but, oddly, was postmarked 1954. Dick Weindling notes that in a history of the German YMCA in London, in fact it did not open in Ferncroft Avenue until 1952, which explains the postal date. The website he consulted was:

<http://www.german-ymca.org.uk/about-us-history.htm>.

SPANN'S BUILDINGS

Peter Cope has written re Spann's Buildings in St Pancras - he has ancestors who lived there from 1808. He wonders if anyone could tell him more about the houses and when they were built.

Any help to peterfcope@hotmail.co.uk

(Spann's Buildings were near St Pancras Old Church. A Samuel Spann appears in the Vestry minutes in 1802 and 1803. JR)

This Newsletter is published by the Camden History Society.

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newsletter

of the CAMDEN HISTORY SOCIETY

No 246

Jul 2011

A REPRIEVE – of sorts!

On 8 June a meeting of Cabinet members of Camden Council conceded that the proposal of the Culture & Environment officers and Chair to possibly outsource the Local Studies and Archives service to outside the borough, was not to be proceeded with. The Camden History Society had sent deputations headed by Gillian Tindall, David Mander and Isobel Watson to both the Scrutiny Committee on 6 June and to the Cabinet meeting, to state our strong objections to the proposal. We knew from unofficial sources that the plan was to put Local Studies within the London Metropolitan Archives in Clerkenwell and that discussion between Camden and the LMA had taken place.

In the event the Cabinet meeting proposed the following:

'That authority be delegated to the Director of Culture and Environment in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Culture to change the model for providing Local Studies and Archives services to an outsourced or shared service model following a full options appraisal, *such future archive service being located in the borough* and that the savings target be reduced from £135,000 to £75,000'

So, you can see that the word 'outsourced' survives. What that can mean in practice is not clear because we can think of no institution in Camden that would have the capacity to take Local Studies and its Archives, so that it is still a public facility. Certainly there is no possibility of a shared arrangement with Islington. In the end it seems that Camden can make no saving even if another set of premises are found, so what is the point of causing so much distress and

anxiety? And, it should be noted, that in Camden's Consultation Document which asked library users to indicate options for saving money, the sum of £50,000 was suggested for reducing expenditure in Local Studies, but here we are with a proposed saving of £75,000. Goodness knows how that may be achieved without grievous loss of staff.

We should continue to make our point that local studies are not of peripheral importance. This has not been recognised in Hammersmith & Fulham, where the borough council has closed the Local Studies service and made an arrangement with the LMA to offer a limited public service - archives will be open for two days a month. In Hackney the Archives closed in February ostensibly to move to a new purpose-built library in Dalston Lane, but there does not seem to be any urgency for that to happen and no opening date has been given. We must make sure that this attitude to Local Studies on the part of borough councils does not take root in Camden - it nearly did, and had it not been for the continued pressure of this Society and supporters it is doubtful if the part reprieve would have been achieved.

In connection with this we also wrote to the Corporation of London to make the point that they should not, via the LMA, be encouraging Camden to renege on its responsibilities.

We would like to thank everyone who wrote in to oppose the original proposal, and especially thank Gillian, Isobel and David for representing us so well. A working party is to be established by Camden to discuss the future of Local Studies on which we hope to be represented.

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Listing buildings in Camden

Thurs. 21 July, 7.30pm

Burgh House, New End Square NW3

The criteria and process for listing buildings is the subject of our July talk, which will have a special emphasis on Camden. Our speaker will be Emily Gee, a Camden resident and member, who works at English Heritage. So, come armed with your suggestions!

The Annual Outing

There are still some places available for the coach trip to Bletchley Park on Saturday 6 August. Full details and a booking form were given in the May *Newsletter*. If you no longer have the form, please ring the organiser, Jean Archer, on 7435 5490.

The Annual General Meeting

The AGM in June heard a splendid talk by Ian Dungavell on the history of the restored Kentish Town Baths, full of detail and interest. It is fortunate that the issue of the building's restoration came about before the economic downturn, otherwise the outcome might well have been far different.

The Council officers and council elected were:

PRESIDENT: Prof. Caroline Barron

VICE PRESIDENTS: Malcolm Holmes, Dr Ann Saunders and Gillian Tindall

CHAIRMAN: John Richardson

VICE-CHAIRMAN: Christopher Wade

SECRETARY: Jane Ramsay

TREASURER: Dr Henry Fitzhugh

PUBLICATIONS EDITOR: Dr Peter Woodford

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY: Dr Henry Fitzhugh

RESEARCH TEAM LEADER: Steven Denford

PUBLICATIONS (Postal sales) Roger Cline

PUBLICATIONS (bookstall etc) Sheila Ayres

MEETINGS CO-ORDINATOR: Dr Peter Woodford

PUBLICITY OFFICER: Vacant

LOCAL STUDIES LIAISON: Tudor Allen or his deputy

Council Members: Sheila Ayres, Steven Denford, Ruth Hayes, Lester May, Clare Melhuish, Jeremy Noble, Michael Ogden, Susan Palmer.

Christopher Wade at 90

Members will be surprised that Christopher Wade has reached the venerable age of 90, for he looks very much younger. He has been not only instrumental in the saving of Burgh House for the community, and the founding of the Hampstead Museum, but he has been prominent in our Society since shortly after its foundation 41 years ago. He pioneered our publications programme and has given many talks to both the Society and to other organisations on the history of Hampstead. We have sent him our congratulations.

Things to Come

Please put the following in your diary:

15 Sep: Was Queen Square a hotbed to grow hospitals? (Peter Woodford)

20 Oct: Brickmaking in 19th-century London (Peter Hounsell)

17 Nov: Anthony Heap's 1930s and 1940s diaries (Robin Woolven)

14 Dec: The London letters (1712-13) of Samuel Molyneux, later MP (Ann Saunders)

19 Jan: The Garrett ladies of Gower Street, designers. (Elizabeth Crawford)

16 Feb: The Victorian Workhouse in Camden and London - horses in Victorian London (Peter Darley)

15 Mar: The history and significance of the Mary Ward Settlement (Karen Butti)

19 Apr: Arts and Crafts protagonists in Queen Square and surroundings (Monica Gros-Hodge of the Art Workers' Guild)

Addition to the Website

At the AGM the Treasurer, Henry Fitzhugh, announced that membership of the Society now stood at 378 - the highest he has known since becoming Treasurer. This was undoubtedly aided by the success of our website.

A new addition has been an index, compiled by David Hayes, of all the streets mentioned in our celebrated series of 'Streets' books, showing which volume they appear in. This is of particular use in looking for a street in the south of the borough where boundaries are not so obvious.

A Workhouse Saved

The early Strand Union Workhouse in Cleveland Street, long derelict after use by the Middlesex Hospital, has been rescued from demolition after a spirited campaign led by Dr Ruth Richardson. It has now been listed and will probably be converted into residential use. Almost certainly her discovery that a young Charles Dickens lived just around the corner, and probably used the place as a model for his book *Oliver Twist*, must have been an important factor in reversing a previous planning permission for its demolition. The Dickens Fellowship is supporting efforts to get a blue plaque on his house.

LMA Closures

London Metropolitan Archives are themselves not immune to cost-cutting - see page 1. They are to close on Fridays, and Saturday opening will be reduced to one Saturday per month.

Spann's Buildings

In *Newsletter 245* we included a query from Peter Cope as to the nature of Spann's Buildings near St Pancras Old Church.

Steve Denford replies:

Spann's Buildings were laid out over part of St Pancras Wells, a popular 18th-century spa which closed in the mid 1790s. A 1797 map shows the first buildings on the spa's northern edge alongside the churchyard of St Pancras Old Church, called Church Hill. This was then continued along the east side of the spa grounds by Essex Place built c.1801, and extended southwards by Spann's Buildings, which seem to have begun c. 1803 – but ratebooks would confirm this. In its early years the street seems to have been a centre of clay pipe manufacture. On later maps, e.g. the parish map of 1849, the houses look quite small.

For several decades the street overlooked open ground to the east, part of the lands of the Agar family. From 1840 Mrs Agar and her son William jnr let out their land in small parcels on 21-year leases, primarily to working men, who built cottages overlooking Spann's Buildings. The one-storey cottages were often built by the lessees on their days off work, i.e. Sundays. Agar Town got a terrible – and I believe unjustified – reputation as a foul Irish slum and the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, who became the ground landlords, sold most of it to the Midland Railway, who demolished it in 1866 to construct its line into the new St Pancras station.

Before this however, the southernmost portion of Agar Town, including Canterbury Place which had been built in 1840 facing Spann's Buildings, was sold in 1860 to the Imperial Gas, Light & Coke Company, which had had a major gasworks just to the south of what is now Goods Way from the mid 1820s (a pretty smelly affair). Here they built in 1861 a huge gasholder. Spann's Buildings seem to have survived a few more years but two more gas holders followed and all three were listed in the 20th century. They were pulled down for the Eurostar works and are to be re-erected in the new King's Cross Central development to the north of the Regent's Canal. Spann's Buildings itself appear to have been demolished at the same time as Agar Town.

THE RAF IN HOLLY HILL

Jane Ramsay has enquired if anyone has knowledge of an RAF Central Hospital in Holly Hill, Hampstead in 1918. Steve Denford says that he doesn't think the RAF Hospital was there as references to it are always in Finchley. However, the RAF's Central Medical Board was based in Holly Hill, probably in 1918, but certainly in 1922 and up until about 1925.

NEAVE BROWN AND THE DESIGN OF ALEXANDRA ROAD ESTATE

An exhibition devoted to the building of the Alexandra Road estate in Hampstead is at the Local Studies Centre at Holborn Library until 22 July. It depicts the work of the architect Neave Brown, during the 1970s – it is now listed as Grade II star. It was one of a number of developments made possible by the enthusiasm of former Camden Borough Architect Sydney Cook, who wanted to get away from the then stereotype of local authority housing.

HELEN ALLINGHAM

There is to be an exhibition at Hampstead Museum in Burgh House devoted to 'The Life and Art of Helen Allingham' using exhibits held by the Museum. The watercolour artist (1848-1926) lived in Lyndhurst Road and Eldon Grove in Hampstead in the 1880s. The exhibition runs from 21 July until 11 November. On 28 July there will be a talk on the subject at Burgh House (7pm) to be given by Annabel Watts. (Admission £5).

CAT'S MEAT SQUARE

Steve Job writes:

I am a relatively new member of CHS and have been for some months researching the site of Westminster Kingsway College (Gray's Inn Road/Sidmouth Street), previously Prospect Terrace/Wellington Square. It was known locally from at least the 1870s until demolition of the houses in 1906 as 'Cat's Meat Square', and was one of the worst slum areas in St Pancras, featuring as evidence in the 1885 Royal Commission on Housing of the Working Class. Interestingly, it appears to be one of the few examples of a true back-to-back terrace in London, purpose built in c. 1815, as opposed to infill. A set of A&J Bool and Henry Dixon photos of 1897/1904 were unearthed at the Local Studies in Holborn which vividly illustrate this. The replacement block put up by the Borough was bombed in 1940 with the loss of 32 lives.

I wonder if anyone can help me in discovering the origin of the name 'Cat's Meat Square'? (Steve Job's email is jobsw@hotmail.com)

CINEMAS IN HARINGEY

Cinemas generally have managed to survive the reality of other attractions, much to most people's surprise. In Haringey, however, they have mostly not been so fortunate, making the latest publication of the Hornsey Historical Society specially valuable. *Cinemas of Haringey*, by Jeremy Buck, is a 140-page paperback which lists 80 cinemas throughout the whole borough. They include such oddities as Summerland cinema at Muswell Hill, built on the steep slope of the hill, using that slope to make raking for seats. Opened in 1912, it was still there, but not functioning in the 1950s.

Copies of this excellent book (£9.99) can be obtained from the Society's HQ at the Old Schoolhouse, 136 Tottenham Lane, N8.

A MYSTERY WALL PAINTING

Sophie Stewart is a wall painting restorer, who is currently researching a very interesting work located on the outside of two adjoining houses at 17-19 Glenilla Road, Hampstead. It shows a portrait of a young girl which from her bob haircut appears to date the depiction to the 1920s or 1930s.

Unfortunately, she can find no information about the subject or the artist. The *Streets of Belsize* notes that no. 19 was owned by H G Wells' elder son George, a professor of zoology. Indeed, the present owner of the house has mentioned that the local rumour was that Wells snr once lived in one of the houses and the portrait is of one of his many mistresses.

Sophie has also checked the electoral lists and George Wells and his wife Marjorie lived at No 19 in 1930, but by 1935 had moved on, the new residents being Sigismund David Waley, a prominent civil servant and his wife Ruth Ellen. The residents of No. 17 in both 1930 and 1935 were Meredith Dyson Perrins



and Madeline Augusta Perrins.

Anyone with information please contact Sophie on sophieestewart@netscape.net. (Yes, two 'e's in Sophiee!)

A familiar sight still - Albany Street Barracks in 1905.



This Newsletter is published by the Camden History Society.

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of the CAMDEN HISTORY SOCIETY

No 247
Sep 2011

The Victorian Working Horse and Horse World of London

Thurs. 15 Sept, 7.30pm
Burgh House, New End Square, NW3

For all its inventiveness as regards new modes of transport, including railways, trams and steamships, Victorian London remained at heart a horse-drawn society, and its dependence on the horse set important limits to social and economic development.

Taking all the varied forms of horse-drawn and horseback activity together, British society required about one horse for every ten people in the late Victorian period. In London there would have been some 400,000 horses at the turn of the century.

Excluding most horseback activity, which was primarily for sport, leisure and ceremony, the Victorian working horse in harness performed a variety of duties, including carriage of goods and people, municipal services, powering machinery,

moving outside loads and national defence. Examples of these, to be included in Peter Darley's talk in September, are taken from Camden Goods Depot, from Camden and its immediate neighbourhood, and from further afield.

The breeding of horses and their supply will be described, together with a broad overview of the horse world of London.

NB: This is a change of talk since the last Newsletter. Peter Woodford's talk on Queen Square will now be given in 2012.

The Bricks that built Victorian London

Thurs. 20 Oct, 7.30pm
Charlie Ratchford Resource Centre, Belmont Street
NW1 (street opposite the Roundhouse)

London grew at an unprecedented rate during the nineteenth century. In addition to the thousands of

Horsepower in the Shunting Yard. A painting by David Shepherd.



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new houses, churches, shops, offices and public buildings that were built, there were significant infrastructure projects, starting with canals and dock schemes, and followed by the railway mania of mid-century.

All this construction needed materials, especially in London, and prodigious quantities of bricks. It was estimated that in the 1890s London was consuming 800 million bricks a year. Our speaker in October, Peter Hounsell, has been researching London brickmaking for some time, and his talk describes how the demand for bricks was met. Gradually, of course, the ground in inner London which was used for brickmaking was itself built over, and the industry, especially with the expansion of railways, moved much further out.

There is a very early reference to brickmaking in Hampstead, for in 1496 the Abbot of Westminster contracted to produce 400,000 bricks from his land at Belsize. There were brickfields in Gospel Oak, as indicated today by Kiln Place. It is suggested that the brick church near the junction of Gordon House Road and Highgate Road was the last building to be erected using the local bricks.

Things to Come

Please put the following in your diary:

17 Nov: Robin Woolven on *Anthony Heap's 1930s and 1940s diaries*. At Burgh House

14 Dec: Ann Saunders on *The 1712-15 Letters of Samuel Molyneux, later MP*. Charlie Ratchford Centre.

19 Jan: Elizabeth Crawford on *The Garrett ladies of Gower Street, designers*.

16 Feb: Ruth Richardson on *Charles Dickens and the Cleveland Street workhouse*.

15 Mar: Karen Butti, architect. *The History and significance of the Mary Ward Settlement*

19 Apr: Prof. Michael Port. *The pre-Fire Survey of the Palace of Westminster, 1834*.

The HS2 and a proposed new museum

The latest projected route of the HS2 rail line has managed to avoid Primrose Hill 'village', but now goes beneath Gloucester Avenue instead. This, as you may imagine, is not popular with the Gloucester Avenue Association which is suggesting to the government a further realignment, but also coupling it with a proposal to transform the flooded vaults which lie beneath the West Coast Main Line in Camden Goods Yard. These vaults were once related to the Stationary Winding Engine, built by Robert Stephenson in 1837 to house machinery to haul the early London & Birmingham trains up on an endless rope 12,240 ft long, from Euston to connect with engines in the goods yard. They were in use only for seven years. The vaults are rated Grade 2*, and are finely built brick chambers dating back to the begin-

ning of the London railway age. At 22,000 square feet they are, say the association, who are working closely with Peter Darley and the Camden Railway Heritage Trust, ideal for a museum to celebrate the life and career of the railway engineer, Robert Stephenson, who lived nearby when the line was being constructed. The two organisations are proposing that the construction of HS2 should be realigned so that it goes beneath the existing main line and that the museum project should at the same time celebrate Stephenson's achievement in the very place where the line first reached London.

If members wish to learn more and see the actual submission that is being made to the government, please contact Martin Sheppard of the Gloucester Avenue Association on 7586 0817 (Martin.L.Sheppard@gmail.com) or else contact Peter Darley on 7586 6632 (CRHT@aol.com)

The North-Western Poly

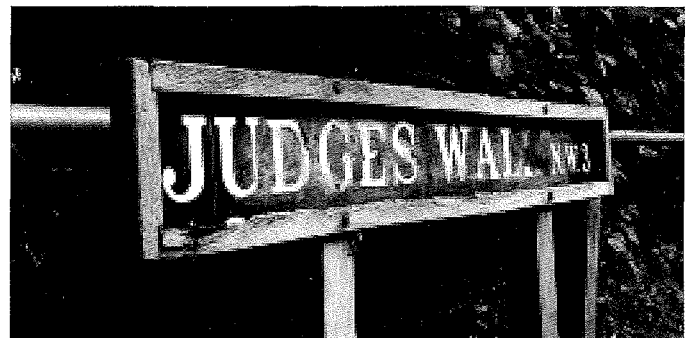
As many members may know, a developer wishes to demolish the assembly room of the former North-Western Poly at the junction of Kentish Town Road and Prince of Wales Road. It is at present used by Pizza Express. The proposal to demolish it was refused by Camden Council but the developer, who intends to build an out-of-keeping block of flats there, has now appealed to the Planning Inspectorate.

The handsome assembly room, which may of course be viewed if you would like to have a pizza there, was built by W E Riley in 1929.

For further details contact Alan Morris of the Prince of Wales Residents' Association at 1 Prince of Wales Road NW5 3LW. (alanmorrisuk@hotmail.com)

A MYSTERY TYPE FACE

Steve Lee has written to ask if anyone knows the type face used on Hampstead's distinctive black street name tiles. We have put the question to Ivor Kamlish, our designer, who has not been able to find a type-face that precisely provides the answer. Indeed it seems that the type is not always consistent. His nearest guess is Walbaum, which was current when the tiles were first designed, but there are many characteristics in the signs which are different. He suggests that they are possibly hand designed and not strictly to any standard type face at all.



Walking on Water: London's hidden rivers revealed

by Stephen Myers

Paperback, 224pp, illustrated.

ISBN 978-1-4456-0067-3 Amberley Press £16.99

Stephen Myers was brought up near the banks of the New River and developed an interest in water supply and engineering that resulted in him working round the world as a water engineer. He brings something totally different to this subject by looking freshly at many detailed aspects of water supply not previously covered by other historians. Certainly he looked in detail and with knowledge at many original plans and records held by Thames Water. As a result he often explains some aspects fully in a way that does not appear in any other book on London's rivers.

He deals only with seven rivers north of the Thames of which three rise within Camden - the Fleet, Tyburn and Westbourne. He outlines in particular the influences the rivers played in the development of London and suburbs from the Romans onwards and individual changes that led to them gradually being culverted and forming part of the major sewage and waste water network.

His style is refreshing, readable and well researched. Unfortunately, he used a publisher who does not really edit manuscripts and as a result the way the book is organised, with a number of themes and individual histories of rivers, has led to an unnecessary amount of duplication of some information throughout the book.

His use of London maps has been good but I feel that more use of local, often more detailed, larger scale and accurate parish maps could have been helpful to him for routes of the streams and their tributaries. Some errors do occur. Reference is made to an explosion in the Fleet in 1846 but shows an illustration of the collapse of the Fleet into the working of the Metropolitan Railway in 1862 which he does not refer to. He considers that the Holebourne (hence Holborn) was the name given to a tributary of the Fleet rather than the main stream and the evidence of this being Stow's *Survey of London* 1598. Most historians would disagree with that and also that the name Oldbourne was anything other than an incorrect form of Holebourne or Holborn.

He ends with an imaginative proposal suggesting ways of using the clean water from the streams, before they become sewers, to create areas of open waterside walks and to supply water to lakes in the Royal Parks. He is planning a further publication which will enable readers to follow on foot above ground the routes of the seven rivers.

Malcolm Holmes

Theatrical Queries

Jean Cooney is enquiring if anyone knows what happened to the tops of the caryatids in the Bedford Theatre, Camden Town when it was demolished. We publish here a photograph of these, which appeared in a splendid magazine called *Theatrephile* (edition Vol 2 no 5 (1984-5), which, alas, ceased publication in the 1980s. It shows the last days of the Bedford, its auditorium strewn with rubble, but it does show the caryatids still intact. The author of the article, Colin Sorensen, says that the photograph was probably taken from the same viewpoint that Sickert would have had in his famous sketches of the theatre. However, he asks ominously, "why wasn't at least one of the superb caryatids saved?"

The Bedford closed in 1959, then lay derelict, and was demolished in 1969.



Joseph Frame is researching for a thesis on the Camden Palace and its social history and significance. The building, now a nightclub, still stands at the southern end of Camden High Street. He is interested in talking to anyone who went there when it was a theatre. Any such member should contact him on josephframe@gmail.com.

AN OMISSION

We apologise for the fact that in the list in the July *Newsletter* of Council members elected at the AGM in June, Richard Knight's name was omitted. Richard is very much an active member of the Council.

Celebrating 40 years

Our friends at the Hornsey Historical Society are celebrating their 40th anniversary. In doing so, they have published a book of images taken by the North Middlesex Photographic Society a hundred years ago. That Society's output is now safely in the hands of the Hornsey Historical Society.

Ken Gay notes in his Preface to the book, *A Vision of Middlesex*, that no local history society devoted to Hornsey had existed at the time the Photographic Society was taking these pictures, although in 1909 a letter in the *Hornsey Journal* had suggested that such a society should be formed. A supporter of this proposal was George Potter of Highgate, whose large local history collection is today deposited in the British Museum. Another supporter was William Marcham, the co-author of *Survey of London* volumes on St Pancras, and also of a transcription of court rolls for Hornsey.

The book covers images from such places as Enfield, Edmonton, Finsbury Park, Tottenham, Hornsey, Highgate and Hampstead. They were taken between 1903 and 1920 and the largest number cover Highgate and Hampstead. Included in the book is a picture of Weatherall House in Well Walk, which originally contained the Long Room of the second Hampstead Spa. The house was badly damaged in the last war,

demolished by the Council and replaced by a rather boring block of housing in 1950.

A copy of the book may be bought from the Hornsey Historical Society, The Old Schoolhouse, 136 Tottenham Lane N8 7EL for £15 plus £2 p & p. Or you can order online on www.hornseyhistorical.org.uk.

The softback is A4 landscape, 120pp. ISBN 978-0-905794-42-6.

A KEATS WALK

Margaret Stobo writes:

I've just been on a wonderful walk around Hampstead focussing on Keats' life and work. Most imaginatively planned and led by Anita Miller (some of you may know her readings at Keats House) the walk included forays into many delightful nooks and crannies of the village as well as a venture onto the Heath. Anita is an extremely well-informed and enthusiastic guide giving us insights into Keats the man and including readings from his poetry and letters. A lovely way to spend a morning.

The walk started at Hampstead tube and finished a little over two hours later at Keats House. The charge is £6 including entry to the house. There will be another walk on 4 October. Booking through Keats House (7332 3858) KeatsHouse@cityoflondon.gov.uk.

Weatherall House, Well Walk in Hampstead. One of the photographs in the book.



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newsletter

of the CAMDEN HISTORY SOCIETY

No 248

Nov 2011

Anthony Heap's 1930s and 1940s diaries: an observer of the bombing of London

Thurs. 17 Nov, 7.30pm

Burgh House, New End Square NW3

Anthony Heap (1910-1985) was a clerk in the Borough Treasurer's department in St Pancras (now Camden) Town Hall. He lived locally in Somers Town and then in a series of flats south of the Euston Road. He was a keen observer of London and was politically active on the right wing of the spectrum.

He kept a diary from 1928 until shortly before his death, which eventually found its way into the London Metropolitan Archives. Here it was discovered by Robin Woolven who has made a specialty of the 2nd World War in Camden, and he set out to transcribe it - no mean task, for it takes up about 500 pages of A4. Its chief attraction was his account of the bombing in London. After raids Heap

would emerge from shelters in the morning and explore what had happened, not necessarily in his own locality, but much further afield. Sometimes this coincided with his duties at the town hall, for he was responsible for going out to pay the ARP wardens. It is the volumes of the 1930s and 1940s which are the fascinating subject of Robin's talk in November.

The London Letters (1712-13) of Samuel Molyneux, later MP

Wed. 14 Dec 7.00pm

*Charlie Ratchford Resource Centre, Belmont Street, NW1
(road opposite the Roundhouse)*

Two traditions will be followed at our Christmas talk. First, we shall be serving wine and mince pies, hence the earlier starting time. (Please note: it is on a Wednesday instead of the usual Thursday.) Second, our speaker is Dr Ann Saunders who has entertained us annually in December for some time now with talks on unusual subjects.

*The bombing of Somers Town Coal Depot in what is now Phoenix Road.
The photograph is dated 5 July 1944. (Photo: The National Archives)*

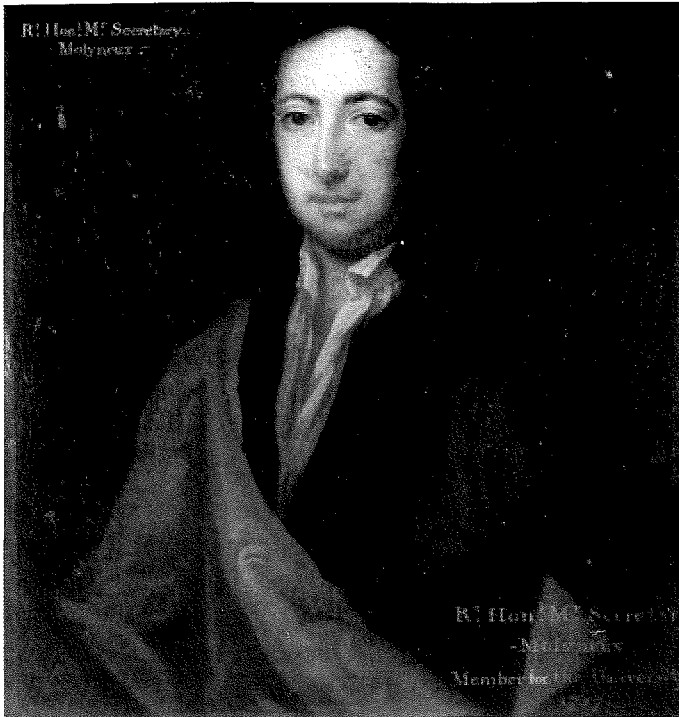


The Society's Website

www.camdenhistorysociety.org

buy our publications online • check on events to come and past • download currently out-of-print publications • consult index to our Review and Newsletter • access to Hampstead Court Rolls • view sample pages from our publications

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*Samuel Molyneux 1727, by an unknown artist.
(copyright National Portrait Gallery)*

The letters of Samuel Molyneux (1689-1728) were written by him to his uncle back in his native Ireland. He had arrived in London in 1712 where he was immediately elected FRS in recognition of his work in astronomy. Ann has also traced the career of this brilliant young man, who went on from London to Antwerp where he met the duke and duchess of Marlborough, who sent him on a diplomatic mission to the Court of Hanover. When in 1715 the Elector of Hanover ascended the throne of the United Kingdom Molyneux was appointed secretary to his son, then the Prince of Wales and later to become George II.

Molyneux's career at Court – Privy Councillor and one of the Lords of the Admiralty – culminated in his becoming MP for Bossiney and St Mawees in Cornwall. Meanwhile he continued his work in astronomy and the making of ever more powerful telescopes, tried out on the roof of his house at Kew which subsequently became a royal residence. But in 1728 he fell down in a fit in the House of Commons and died shortly afterwards.

The talk will therefore deal not only with the intrinsic interest of the early letters but will lead right up to the tragic events preceding his early death.

Molyneux visited the new St Paul's Cathedral before the dome was painted, and talked to 'Mr Wren' who was still wrestling with final details. And as a foretaste of today he remarks "you may I think in London visit Europe and meet natives of all the Countries in the World".

Copies of a book on the Letters, with a commentary by Paul Holden, edited by Ann, recently published by the London Topographical Society, will be on sale at the meeting.

Things to Come

Please put these dates in your diary:

19 Jan: Elizabeth Crawford on *The Garrett ladies of Gower Street, designers.*

16 Feb: Ruth Richardson on *Charles Dickens and the Cleveland Street workhouse.*

15 Mar: Karen Butti, architect. *The History and significance of the Mary Ward Settlement*

19 Apr: Prof. Michael Port. *The pre-Fire Survey of the Palace of Westminster, 1834.*

The mysterious type face

In the last *Newsletter* we posed the question of what is the typeface used on the attractive black and white Hampstead street name plates? Ivor Kamlisch could only find Walbaum as a near guess of a font contemporary with the introduction of the name plates, or else it was hand drawn. However Elizabeth Valentine has also consulted a type expert who says it isn't Walbaum but belongs to the Clarendon generic style. A further clue is that Jocelyne Tobin has written to say that she has a memory of Hampstead's former MP, Henry Brooke, telling her that his father, an artist, claimed to have designed it. We are following our enquiries, as the police would say.

The LAMAS Conference

This year's LAMAS Local History Conference is on Saturday 19 November from 10am to 5pm. It will be in the Weston Theatre, Museum of London. Tickets are available from Pat Clarke at 22 Malpas Drive, Pinner, Mx HA5 1DQ. The cost is £8 for LAMAS members, and £10 for non members. Cheques (with a sae) should be made out to LAMAS.

The theme of this year's Conference is Sporting London. The talks are as follows:

Sports and Pastimes in Medieval London, by Eileen Bowlt.

From Feats of Arms to Amateur Sports: Changing Attitudes to Exercise in Tudor and Stuart London, by Rosemary Weinstein.

Cricket: the History of Lord's from 1787 onwards, by Stephen Green.

'Rowing is a way of Life': The Root and Branch of Rowing on London's River, by Christopher Dodd.

Leaps and Bounds: Young Women Gymnasts in East London 1917-21, by Carol Bentley.

London Olympic Yesterdays, by Murray Hedgecock.

Refreshments can be purchased in the Museum's restaurant and cafés. Picnic areas will also be available for people who want to bring their own food.

Jack Whitehead on the web

Many members will know Jack Whitehead's readable and full-of-facts publications on local history. He has now brought them up to date and has put them all together on a web site to save the time and expense of reprinting them. The books include *The Growth of Stoke Newington*, *The Growth of Muswell Hill* and *The Growth of St Marylebone and Paddington*. Other publications include essays on parts of Islington, some geological and building materials walks, and the Rio Tinto Zinc Geological Garden in Maida Vale. The website is particularly adapted for teaching local history in schools. Interested members should log in to locallocalhistory.co.uk.

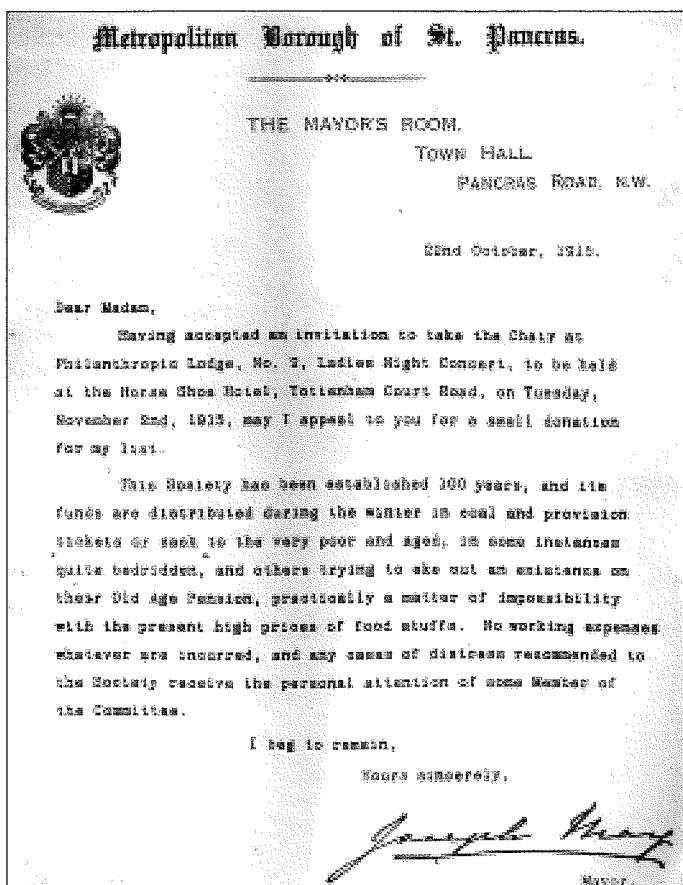
NON-POLITICAL POLITICIANS

Ralph Dickson is after information on non-political and progressive candidates for the local government elections in Hampstead shortly after it had become a London borough around 1900. He has come across mention of these in *Local Studies*, but wonders if members have any personal information. His address is 40 Boyne Avenue, NW4 2JN

A Mayor's Appeal

I acquired recently the item of ephemera below. It is an appeal from the Mayor of St Pancras, Joseph May, to an unnamed lady/organisation to support the annual mayor's appeal for those in need. It is dated 22nd October, 1915, but the references to the very poor and aged, in some instances quite bedridden, and others 'trying to eke out an existence of their Old Age Pension ... with the present high prices of food stuffs' have a present-day resonance.

John Richardson



St Pancras Burial Ground

During the construction of the Channel Tunnel rail link to St Pancras station, it was once again necessary to disturb what was left of the old parish burial ground to the south and east of Old St Pancras church. On this occasion the excavations and removal of remains were done in an orderly, professional and respectful manner, unlike the first disturbance when the line into St Pancras station was built in the 1860s. Then the disorderly exhumations, partly supervised by the young Thomas Hardy, attracted loud protests from an outraged public.

To the north of the church was the extra-mural burial ground of St Giles-in-the-Fields, which today forms the bulk of St Pancras Gardens.

A new book published jointly by Gifford, who led the archaeological excavations in St Pancras burial ground in 2002-3, and the Museum of London archaeological service, describes not only the results of their excavations, but gives a readable account of the history of the burial ground and nearby area. The whole project was financially made possible by High Speed 1.

For a report-back by archaeologists, the book is an unusually lavish production. It is hardback large format, 231 pages, many of them in colour. Complex artworks show where burials had been, or what they consisted of. There is even a CD inside the back which covers more facts and figures. There are a good number of illustrations that I have not seen before - some held by the church itself.

The recent excavations concentrated on what is known as the Third Ground, opened in 1793, and in which the archaeologists recorded 1302 burials three dimensionally - 119 were identified by coffin plates. By 1859 over 100,000 people had been buried in the St Pancras and St Giles burial grounds, to the great detriment of the neighbours.

What is probably a red herring, is contained in two maps. One is a modern map on page 2, drawn for the book, which shows the route of the new line across St Pancras burial ground. This indicates that to the north is the former 'St George's Bloomsbury and St Giles burying ground'. This was a great surprise to me because as far as I knew the ground to the north was never used by St George's which had its own ground off the Gray's Inn Road by quite early in the 18th century when the church was built. Then I noticed that on Tompson's map of the parish in 1804, shown on p. 29, that the ground to the north is indeed called 'St George Bloomsbury and St Giles Burial Ground', which is no doubt where the new book's authors got their information. The Tompson map was published only a year after the St Giles Burial Ground was opened and consecrated. So, either initially the two parishes had made an agreement to share, or Tompson had made a mistake.

The book is a good example of archaeological work made interesting to the layman. The authors, Philip Emery and Kevin Woolridge, are to be congratulated, as indeed are the sponsors, HS1 for seeing the whole, expensive job through and making sure that the results are out there for reference.

St Pancras Burial ground – Excavations for St Pancras International, the London terminus of High Speed 1, 2002-3 may be ordered from Oxbow Books, 10 Hythe Bridge Street, Oxford OX1 2EW (01865 241249), or from the Museum of London Archaeology Service. Price, inc. post, £27.95. The ISBN is 978-0-9569406-0-5.

John Richardson

MADAME BUHLER'S CAFE

Peter Miles is researching the life of the British-Swiss painter Robert Buhler (1916-89), whose mother, Lucie Buhler, ran a newsagent's/coffee shop at 56 Charlotte Street (slightly outside Camden's boundary) from 1936 to 1941, when the premises were destroyed by bombing. Lucie Buhler then opened a new café in Old Compton Street. The old café was a haunt of art students and teachers from the Slade. If any member has information on it, please contact Mr Miles on peter.miles@firenet.uk.net or else telephone on 020 8800 1737. He has some information which he could let you have if requested.

Herbert Slator's bootmaking business at 17 Warden Road, Kentish Town, date unknown. Presumably the gathering must be of customers rather than staff.



Camden History Review 35

With this *Newsletter* you will find the new *Review*, edited by David Hayes. It is, as always, designed by Ivor Kamlish whose pictures of produce from the Cumberland Basin Horticultural Society adorn the front cover.

There is a wide range of articles. Patrick Nother tells us about the religious change and controversy in early 18th-century Holborn and St Pancras. Robin Woolven presents a fascinating item from St Pancras, with the fall, due to dubious activities, of John Sporni, Mayor of St Pancras in the late 1930s.

Marjorie Gretton's article is based on the unhappy life of T S Eliot's first wife, Vivienne Haigh-Wood, in South Hampstead. Shirley Neale deals with the life of John Pritt Harley (1786-1858), an actor of Upper Gower Street who, amongst other things, was a collector of walking sticks. Peter Woodford explores how the area around Queen Square came to be populated by institutions, particularly medical ones, in the 19th century.

David Hannah deals with the splendid oasis of horticulture that occupies part of the former Crown Estate at the Cumberland Basin.

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