

## LIVING WITH CORONAVIRUS

The Canonbury Society would like to thank all of the local volunteers, charities, neighbours and businesses who are helping local residents during the coronavirus crisis. We know that in times like these it's more important than ever to support each other, particularly those who are vulnerable.

Last week, Canonbury came out in force to take part in 'Clap for Carers' to show appreciation for the NHS and key workers putting their health at risk to provide vital services.

Here are some local contacts which might be useful:

- Canonbury Mutual Aid can provide a friendly phone call, help with shopping, collecting prescriptions, or dog walking. Contact: 020 3026 4438, canonburymutualaid@gmail.com
- Islington Council has set up the We are Islington helpline on 020 7527 8222.
- Shriji News offers a delivery service for vulnerable residents. Contact: 14 Canonbury Pl, 020 7226 2509.

- Budgens has set up an online delivery service with free delivery. Go to [appyshop.co.uk](http://appyshop.co.uk) to open an account and connect to our local store on Upper Street.

- St Stephen's Church is podcasting a service each week which can be accessed at [www.ststephenscanonbury.org.uk](http://www.ststephenscanonbury.org.uk) by clicking on Sermons.



Illustration by Jane Fior.

## FOCUS ON Highbury Corner Plan

JAMES COATES

Of all the local planning changes we have faced over the past year, the new road layout at Highbury Corner is the largest. We and other Islington residents' associations criticised the proposals and objected strongly to Islington Council and Transport for London. All to no avail. The scheme now implemented is the one proposed. It is part of a wider policy by the Mayor of London in the London Plan to give greater priority to cyclists and pedestrians and cut the use of private cars. Similar changes have been introduced at Old Street.

We do not object to measures to make local roads safer for cyclists, but we believe that the new layout fails to strike a sensible balance between their needs and those of pedestrians and bus passengers.

As predicted, bus journeys are slower than before, particularly the 271 northbound; the interchange with bus services for both pedestrians and users of Highbury and Islington station is worse. The 277 bus

service has gone altogether and there are long tailbacks of traffic at busy times in both Canonbury Road and St Paul's Road. This has led to rat-runs through neighbouring streets and increased pollution, particularly outside Canonbury Primary School. The closure of Corsica Street at its southern end has made access harder for residents in the streets north of St Paul's Road.

In the early days of the new layout, a main concern was the phasing of the lights at the junction between St Paul's Road and Canonbury Road. Several people reported that the pedestrian crossing over St Paul's Road is dangerous because pedestrians get a green light while traffic from Holloway Road is still passing through the junction. Some of these problems may turn out to have been teething troubles. TfL engineers were observing traffic flows after the new scheme started and the SCOOT traffic light control system has been applied, which is supposed to minimise delays over all the arms of the junction taken together.

### HAVE YOUR SAY

Traffic is very low now but when the coronavirus lockdown is lifted we will ask you about your personal experience of the new layout. Whether you are on foot, on a bus, a cyclist, in a car or taxi or you have observations on the volume, or speed of traffic in Canonbury you can have your say on Nextdoor, or email us at [contact@canonburysociety.org.uk](mailto:contact@canonburysociety.org.uk). We will then talk again to TfL and the Council.



Photo credit: TFL

# FROM OUR CHAIRMAN PHILIP WALKER



For the first time in our 49-year history, we held our Christmas Drinks Party in January. It was lively, convivial and well attended. Whether its success was down to the venue, the bar of Union Chapel, or being on the same night that the UK formally left the EU or the less hectic atmosphere after Christmas or a combination of all these factors, is hard to know. But it was reassuring to have such support from members on whom we rely to guide the committee's direction of travel.

The Summer Party was also a great success and our heart-felt thanks go to our generous host Greg Campbell. We'd also like to thank all the dedicated helpers who made both parties possible.

Our central raison d'être is to promote, safeguard and assist in the preservation of the conservation area for the benefit of residents, but I sense there is a growing demand for the Society to also become more involved in the day-to-day social aspects of living in Canonbury. We are already involved in Ward Partnerships, Safer Neighbourhood initiatives and of course our local charities. With so much changing in the world due to coronavirus, it is important to engage with our members and stay connected. I wish everyone a safe summer in Canonbury. I will try to do the same but I'm currently stranded in Australia, awaiting a plane home. It could be a long wait!

# NEXTDOOR: CAT AVAILABLE FOR CLEANING

SUSAN MILLERSHIP

*LOOK AWAY NOW IF YOU HATE CAT AND CLEANING-RELATED POSTS... AVAILABLE BETWEEN NAPS FOR CLEANING. VERY REASONABLE RATES, DOESN'T DO IRONING*



Photo credit: Lyn Ambrose

Members of the Canonbury Nextdoor online site may chuckle at the above post which, though tongue in cheek, led a local resident to respond: 'This has reminded me why I really enjoy this forum for its well-meaning, good natured fun.' But for those who don't know Nextdoor, what is it and how does it work?

Signing up online is simple, and once your name and address are verified you are part of your local neighbourhood network. Your name and area appear when you post, but not your address. According to the platform, there are more than 600

members in Canonbury which represent nearly 30 per cent of households.

Nextdoor is a rich seam of local knowledge where users advertise items for sale and for free, pass on information about crime and safety, and give or ask for recommendations on a wide range of subjects. In recent weeks there have been numerous coronavirus-related posts but there still seem to be plenty of lost cats. Who would have thought that so many Islington cats have such poor navigational skills?

The longest local single thread was started by Paul Slaymaker in July 2019 when he asked whether the Highbury Corner traffic scheme had been successful. Nearly 700 posts later, the consensus was a resounding: 'No!'

And just a final thought for all cat-lovers using Nextdoor for cat posts, have you ever considered having a Catdoor, dedicated to all things feline?

# CANONBURY: LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION!

SHARON WHITE

Many Canonbury residents will have noticed the hive of activity in Canonbury Grove as a film crew swung into action in mid-November. The film, *The Last Letter from Your Lover*, is a romantic drama and is directed by Augustine Frizzell. Based on the best-selling novel of the same name by Jojo Moyes, it is a dual-narrative love story set between London and the French Riviera in 2003 and the 1960s.

The film stars Felicity Jones, Shailene Woodley, Callum Turner and Joe Alwyn. The director was very taken with Canonbury and keen that it was used for a scene — a 'walk-and-talk' as it is known in the film world, with two characters commencing from a parked 'period' car on Canonbury Grove and concluding on a bench on the New River. Filming also took place at other locations in Islington. Let's hope the Canonbury scene makes it to the final cut. The release date is still to be confirmed.

The production company thanked residents for accommodating the shoot by donating £300 each to Urban Hope and The Rose Bowl, £800 to The Friends of the New River Walk and £850 to The Canonbury Society. The production employed a young film-maker from Islington as a Location Marshal. Tim Reynard of the Islington Film Office was key in liaising with the production company to achieve these benefits for the local community.





# GARY POWER: A PAINTER FOR ALL SEASONS

SUSAN MILLERSHIP

His black jacket splashed with oil paint, working at an easel in all weathers, Gary Power is a familiar sight on the streets of Canonbury. Known for his bonhomie and engaging personality, Gary thrives on talking and interacting with people from all walks of life. Yet his paintings of Canonbury's squares, corners and period houses rarely have a human figure in them. Gary started painting in the Canonbury area a few years ago to be able to care for his partner, Eleni, who is disabled. He said:

*'I think of my life as a journey without distance. I am never more than 500 yards from my home but I always find a unique angle, unexpected perspective and shifting tones and wide abstract colouration in all seasons.'*

The Cross Street Gallery represented Gary and when that closed he staged a solo show on the brick wall opposite Canonbury House. The al fresco gallery was a hit with Canonbury residents; so much so that Martin, the Canonbury Tavern manager, invited Gary to exhibit his pictures on the pub's wood-panelled walls. The show was very well received.

The third of seven children, born into an Irish family with theatrical roots, Gary, 54, attended Archway Comprehensive School where surprisingly art was not his great strength. At 20, Gary rented a room in Belsize Park from Ruth Leibman, a passionate artist and art teacher who became his close friend and mentor. Within eight months Gary had won a scholarship

to Art School. After graduating in fine art, skyscapes became his passion culminating in a show at the Barbican. A great admirer of Van Gogh, Rembrandt and Corot, Gary's biggest inspiration remains Leibman and her quest for beauty and tranquillity in her paintings of Hampstead.

Always hunting for compositions in Canonbury, Gary muses:

*'Corners are impending dramas ... I pretty much never include people. Maybe it's because I like the idea of the viewer feeling they alone inhabit the scene, I myself only truly feel connected with life when I'm alone painting.'*

To see Gary's paintings, visit the Canonbury Tavern or take a look at Instagram @garypowercanonburyartist



Gary at work in Canonbury

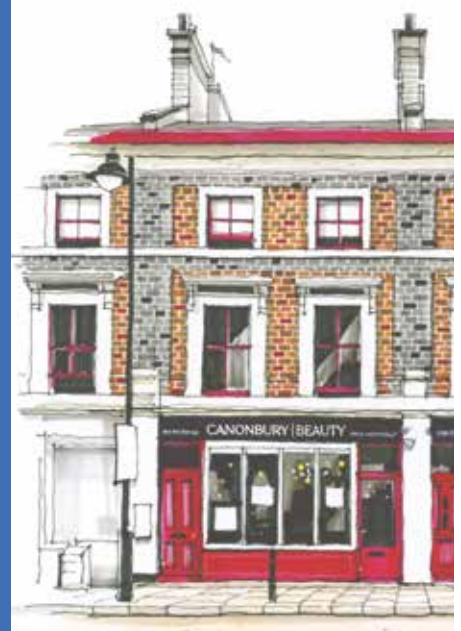
Photo credit: Susan Millership

## WELCOME TO CANONBURY BEAUTY AND CANONBURY HAIR!

You have probably seen that Mirela's two shops have become Canonbury Beauty and Canonbury Hair.

The new owners, Daniel Lee, who lives above one of the shops with his wife Rebecca, and Alexander Collins, work for asset management firms. Their vision is to rejuvenate the two businesses, introducing online booking and special offers, at the same time providing an oasis of calm and tranquillity.

**To welcome newcomers, mention this newsletter at your appointment to receive 15 per cent off (limited to one per person).**



# PROTECTING THE CANONBURY CONSERVATION AREA

JAMES COATES

Our bread-and-butter activity has once again been looking at planning applications to see whether they give cause for concern or, in some cases, we should support them. The cases are mainly for extensions or alterations to existing buildings in the conservation area or their surrounding walls and railings. There were rather fewer cases in 2019 (the Council notified us of about 30 and we considered 24 in some detail). Generally, the Council agreed with our comments on changes that were inconsistent with the character of the area or caused damage to trees. There were three appeals against the Council's decision to refuse approval. Two were dismissed by the planning inspector, but one, which we thought was probably justified, was allowed. We await the results of a further appeal.

One case that went to appeal in an earlier year was 1 Canonbury Place. This is an important listed building between Alwyne Villas and the Canonbury Tower (see picture). It was once the home and office of the architect Sir Basil Spence and then used as solicitors' offices for many years. We strongly supported proposals to restore it to residential use but these have so far come to nothing and the Northampton Estate have now sought listed building consent for extensive, and costly, restoration works for its present approved use category as an office. We hope that the matter will be resolved quickly because old buildings deteriorate rapidly when unoccupied and unheated.

Another appeal concerned the impact on immediate neighbours of a new housing development in Keene's Yard, whose objections we had supported. We have also supported local residents in their concerns regarding a major mixed development of offices and flats fronting Essex Road but backing onto Astey's Row. The Council has deferred a decision and asked for

modifications to the design. We have objected to the revised proposals which were due to go to a Council committee meeting.

As suggested at last year's AGM, we are putting a link to the detailed reports by the appeal inspectors on our website.



1 Canonbury Place Photo credit: James Coates

## FRIENDS OF CANONBURY SQUARE

BEATRIX PAYNE

Canonbury Square's beautiful East Garden is now open to the public with restored central flower beds and new turf on its lawns. It has been a challenging year with major gas works taking place under the East Garden. British gas network company Cadent completed its work in late December and, in the opinion of Friends of Canonbury Square (FoCS), they did a good job rebuilding the low walls, replacing the York stone and creating a planting plan. After a community vote, Cadent installed an Armillary Sphere as a central feature. It acts as a sundial and points to True North.

FoCS saw a major milestone reached in May with the West Garden's gates being locked at night by local volunteers to provide security. The Friends monthly gardening mornings have also gone well. To find out more go to [www.friendsofcanonburysquare.org.uk/](http://www.friendsofcanonburysquare.org.uk/)



Friends of Canonbury Square taking part in a monthly gardening session. Photo credit: Beatrix Payne



# THE FRIENDS OF THE NEW RIVER WALK

JACK LAMBERT



Walkers passing the newly-installed bench commemorating Canonbury gardener Paul Hendry on the New River.

Photo credit: Graham Watts

In heartening news for the much-loved New River Walk, the Council in February 2020 earmarked £450,000 for environmental improvements in the coming financial year. The Council have said they will consult with the Friends of the New River and the Canonbury Society over how it is spent.

## THE NEW RIVER WALK NEEDS YOU

Following last year's success with many local residents participating, Parks Ranger Chris Ingram is planning a further series of Saturday working events in both sections of the Park starting when the warmer weather returns. Watch for details on notice boards in the Park, the Canonbury Society notice board opposite the Tower and on our website: [www.canonburysociety.org.uk](http://www.canonburysociety.org.uk). Helpers will need to wear sturdy work clothes and shoes, but gloves, tools and guidance for tasks will be provided by the Parks Ranger.

In late January, Council staff started hand dredging rotting leaves from the bottom of the Douglas Road pond.

## ROSES FOR WILLIAM

On October 9 2019, I watched with my wife Liz as Chris Ingram planted five Iceberg rose bushes near the double gates in memory of William Greaves — volunteer, local resident and Charter Member of the Friends. He was also a keen fly fisherman who thought

nothing of donning his chest waders and getting into the water during volunteer sessions.

By mid-December one of the rose bushes had produced a perfect white blossom, on the very day of William's birthday. A photo was sent to his widow Suzanne at her care home and she was delighted. Clare Walker has generously agreed to prune and water the roses. The Canonbury Grove Residents Association (of which William was Chairman) has officially disbanded and has now donated their bank balance of £100 to The Friends.



## TREES

The Tulip tree planted on 26 February 2019 to replace the original Whitebeam planted by Herbert Morrison to mark the opening of the new park in 1954 has thrived, and in late November displayed beautiful golden leaves.

## WILDLIFE

The moorhens built visible but safe nests in both sections of the Park starting in February. The first chicks appeared in late April. Despite reasonable numbers of adult mallard ducks and drakes there were no reports of ducklings. However, there were many sightings of foxes and their cubs.

A pair of sparrow hawks nested near the Canonbury Road end of the Park and produced two chicks in April 2019, which fledged successfully in August. A heron, possibly a descendant of the original one from 1998, still makes very occasional visits.

The large carp, originally introduced in full view of the heron in 1998, have multiplied over the years and some have now migrated to the longer, shallower Douglas Road section of the Park (perhaps with help from visitors with nets as there is no water connection under Willow Bridge.) Terrapins were to be seen on warm days sunning themselves.



# THE LANGUAGE OF FRIENDSHIP

ROSEMARY BROWN

You can't have a voice if you don't know the language. Through my volunteer work helping asylum seekers and refugees to learn English in Islington, I have discovered the crucial role language plays in integrating people fleeing war and persecution, and uniting communities. The severe shortage of English classes in the UK means that some are forced to wait three years or more for lessons. I was awarded a Churchill Fellowship to address this shortfall by researching how organisations in Greece and Ireland are mobilising local volunteers to welcome refugees through language lessons.

I launched my fellowship on the 'frontline' of the tiny Aegean island of Samos where more than 7,200 asylum seekers struggle to survive in a transit camp built for 648. Hunger, disease, and tension feature in the daily lives of vulnerable people trapped by a hopeless asylum process. A network of organisations provide food, health care,

clothing, tents, education and compassion. Samos Volunteers, where I worked for three weeks, offers language classes, activities and laundry services amid the chaos.

In Ireland, I spent three weeks 'on the ground' with Failte Isteach (Welcome In) where 137 groups with more than 1,200 volunteer tutors are fostering integration by delivering over 72,000 hours of free tuition annually. My aim is to see how we might replicate that model here through my fellowship 'The Language of Friendship: Refugees Learning with Locals'.

Some actions to tackle the refugee crisis can only be taken by governments, but much can be achieved by volunteers to assist those who have survived such devastating inhumanity. If you would like to help, check out [Speak Street](http://speak-street.com) ([speak-street.com](http://speak-street.com)), [Islington Centre for Refugees and Migrants](http://islingtoncentre.co.uk) ([islingtoncentre.co.uk](http://islingtoncentre.co.uk)), and [Samos Volunteers](http://samosvolunteers.org) ([samosvolunteers.org](http://samosvolunteers.org)).



Rosemary Brown with Samos Volunteers.  
Photo credit: Samos Volunteers

## CANONBURY CHARITIES EDUCATE AND INSPIRE

SARAH STRANG

The charities below support and inspire young people and adults facing disadvantage in our community. To find out how you can help visit the charity websites.

**THE MARGINS PROJECT:** runs events staffed by trainees on the paid Supported Employment Programme which is hosted by the Union Chapel. This provides an opportunity for people who have experienced homelessness and crisis to get back into work. With paid positions in the café and office, Margins focuses on improving well-being, building self-esteem and getting people ready for jobs.

**THE MANNA:** caters for marginalised and vulnerable adults and their drop-in sessions provide food, showers and basic services for more than 200 people a week. They also organise outings to places like Kew Gardens and to art galleries and museums.

**URBAN HOPE:** youth workers run lunchtime clubs at local schools. They work with students who are not engaging with other lunchtime activities and offer mentoring for individual students. In partnership with local primary schools Urban Hope also runs transition projects, supporting pupils as they move to secondary school.

**BIG ALLIANCE (BUSINESSES FOR ISLINGTON GIVING):** runs a Mentoring Works programme, connecting volunteer mentors from some of Islington's largest businesses with secondary schools in the borough.

**FRIENDS OF THE ROSE BOWL:** helps to support the work of the Rose Bowl which provides a safe and caring space for children to come after school. Youth workers run educational activities and encourage children to do their homework.



Celebratory evening with youth workers at Urban Hope.

# ROSES AND FOXGLOVES: A COUNTRY HOUSE IN CANONBURY

DAVID IRELAND

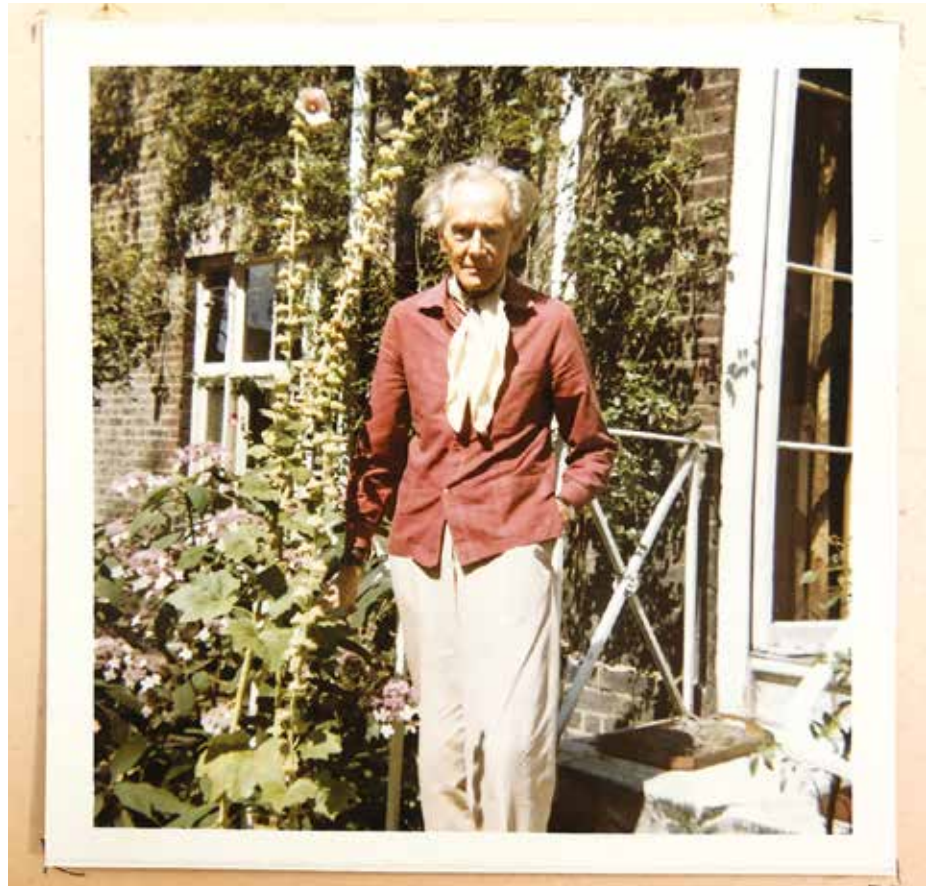
Waspish diarist James-Lees Milne, a key figure in developing the National Trust, clearly had a soft spot for Canonbury, as he writes in July 1971:

*'Lunching with Raymond Mortimer in Canonbury Place was just like being in the country. The pink dining-room window gives on to a long narrow garden with a huge London plane tree on a lawn. Outside roses scrambling and foxgloves, grass and leaves all fresh and green.'*

Mortimer lived at 5 Canonbury Place for nearly 30 years with architect Geddes (Paul) Hyslop. Described as the 'doyen of critics', Mortimer, in the 1920s, had a passionate relationship with Harold Nicolson, Vita Sackville-West's husband.

Artists Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant, lived across the road, at 26a Canonbury Square, from February 1952 to the summer of 1955. Writing to Angelica, her daughter, in 1952, Vanessa tells of their visit to Canonbury Place:

*'We went on Saturday to see Raymond's and Paul's new house, which is simply amazing. It's like a rather large country house with a huge garden and wonderful 18th century rooms, the latest Regency style with every modern comfort ... They made us feel very small here.'*



Raymond Mortimer in the garden at 5 Canonbury Place in 1970. Courtesy of Abbott and Holder Ltd.

## TREE TEAMS UNITE

ROSEMARY BROWN

Strategies for safeguarding and increasing our tree population was the theme of a New Year summit between 'Tree Teams' from the Canonbury Society and Islington Council. The challenge of managing trees in the borough and how we can participate was mapped out by Arboricultural Manager Jon Ryan, tree officer Gavin Rees, and new case officer Stephen Downing. The Canonbury Society was represented by Phillip Walker, Judith Parker, Ria Higgins and Rosemary Brown at the meeting on 9 January 2020.

The Society's tree team monitors applications for tree work in the conservation area where many trees, including those in rear gardens, are protected by a tree preservation order. Steps were agreed to improve our access for reviewing the applications which are mandatory for all tree work including felling, pruning, lopping or uprooting.

Some 40,000 trees are growing in the borough. Tree canopy cover in Canonbury is 34.8 per cent, compared with 25 per cent in the borough and a 21 percent average across London. The Council is aiming for 30 percent canopy cover in the borough by 2050. Residents are encouraged to plant trees to ensure a constant stock of mature trees.

A comprehensive report will be released soon setting out local tree statistics and Council targets as well as the many benefits trees bring. Watch our website for information.

London Plane trees are the most common street tree in the capital. A Plane tree in St Mary Magdalene's Churchyard was valued by CAVAT (Capital Asset Value for Amenity Trees) at £1.6 million, making it the highest value tree in Britain. It is thought to be 300 years old.





# CANONBURY SOCIETY: 49TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2020

WEDNESDAY MAY 23

Please note that if, due to coronavirus, we are still restricted in terms of movement and gatherings, we may need to resort to a virtual or other format for the AGM. Please visit our website for details or look at our noticeboard opposite the Tower in Canonbury Place.

## OPENING DATES FOR THE NATIONAL GARDEN SCHEME GARDENS IN CANONBURY 2020

Note that upcoming garden events may be postponed or changed due to restrictions of movement and gatherings. Please visit our website for further details.



Canonbury Shared Garden, Gary Power 2017

# CANONBURY SOCIETY SUMMER GARDEN PARTY

SUNDAY JULY 5

THEME: THE ROARING TWENTIES

We are hoping that the lockdown will be over and that we'll be able to join our neighbours from 1-4 p.m. in a Canonbury garden. Please see our website for further information nearer the time.



Illustration by Jane Fior

## CANONBURY SOCIETY COMMITTEE MEMBERS 2020

1. Philip Walker – Chairman
2. Jack Lambert – Planning, and Chairman of Friends of the New River Walk
3. Sharon White – Treasurer
4. Rosemary Brown – Secretary, events
5. David Ireland – Events
6. Susan Millership – Newsletter, events
7. James Coates – Planning
8. Sarah Strang – Charities
9. Sarah Ross Goobey – Membership Secretary
10. Mo Talukder
11. Marcella Menzies
12. Judith Parker

Many thanks to our webmaster Gill Hopkins for her continuing support, and to Graham Watts for co-editing the newsletter. Also thanks to our many committed volunteers who help our events go smoothly – Ursula Yates, Frances Seiber, Krystyna and Harriet Ireland, Andrew Thomas, Ian and Sophie Carson, Caryn Mackenzie, Ria Higgins, Reeya Amin, Liz Walker and many others.

The Canonbury Society

# JOIN UP!

Member benefits include invites to our Summer and Winter parties, and the AGM. The minimum annual subscription is £1, but further donations are welcome. To join, fill in the form below and make out a cheque payable to 'The Canonbury Society'. Or, go to our website and download the membership form there.

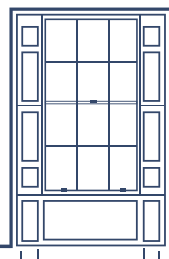
NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

TEL \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_

PLEASE SEND TO: The Hon Treasurer, 3 Alwyne Road NI 2HH



IWe wish to pay my/our annual subscription for 2020

IWe wish to join the Society as new members

IWe enclose £ \_\_\_\_\_