

NEWSLETTER

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SHRIJI NEWS: THE 'HEARTBEAT OF CANONBURY'S COMMUNITY'

Ria Higgins and Ursula Yates

Cricket fans Sunil and Minesh Amin, and their wives Falguni and Dipali, hold a special place in the Canonbury community. Their shop, Shriji News, has provided newspapers and periodicals, as well as fruit, vegetables and a host of items from stationery to Indian sandalwood soap, for nearly three decades.

'The Amin families seem to know everyone without being nosey. They are always welcoming, invariably helpful, thoughtful and above all kind,' said Sir John Tusa, a BBC legend and arts administrator, expressing a view widely held amongst Shriji clients. 'We can even agree or disagree about cricket without rancour.'

The family have kept up ties with the state of Gujarat in the west of India, which they left to carve out a new life in 1990, returning from Canonbury to attend weddings, cricket matches and climb the snow-peaked Himalayan ranges.

Today, the Amins, who acquired the Canonbury Place lease in 1995, are flourishing: Sunil and Falguni's son is married and works as an aeronautical engineer and their daughter is a doctor of science and about to get married. Minesh and Dipali's son has an MA in finance and their daughter is studying law – they both won scholarships to attend North Bridge House. They all attended William Tyndale school.

During the Covid pandemic, Shriji News became a vital lifeline for Canonbury residents. The Amins were making deliveries to 60 households. 'We just wanted to do whatever we could,' says Falguni, 'Even if it was a pint of milk, we were happy to deliver it.'

With normal life came the resumption of the 5am newspaper deliveries (coordinated by the 'early bird' Sunil) and usual business with locals popping in for essentials and anything from a lottery ticket to a bottle of Chablis. 'Is there anything essential that they don't stock?' asks John Tusa.

The LTN traffic reduction scheme and the Sainsbury's Local has hit Shriji's passing trade, but North Bridge House school and the armies of builders, with an appetite for snacks and energy drinks, have brought new customers. Rent increases have also impacted Shriji News' margins so a heartfelt plea: whenever you can, shop local at our precious Shriji corner shop.

Tree Report

Ria Higgins

Does the early morning song of a robin or a blackbird ever catch your ear? Or maybe, a bunch of chirpy checky blue-tits looking for insects on a nearby tree? As we all know, we benefit so much from having trees; our birds do, too.

With that in mind, the nationwide Trees for Streets campaign encouraging individuals, groups and businesses to sponsor a new tree, is proving to be a big success. Last year, 1,700 were sponsored, double the number the year before. They cost £295 each; £195 if you water them yourself. Islington Council is fully behind it and the Canonbury Society has now sponsored two trees. The first, a Nyssa Sylvatica, was planted on Canonbury Place, and turns striking shades of yellow, orange and red in the autumn. We excitedly wait to hear what species our second tree will be.

The Canonbury Society tree team works to safeguard trees and encourage appreciation of them, as well as promoting the planting of trees. We review and monitor applications for tree work in the conservation area where many trees, including those in rear gardens, are protected by a tree preservation order (TPO).

Last, but not least, we would like to say a huge thank you to Gavin Rees who has been protecting trees for 20 years. He was a member of the Islington Council tree team for six years before moving recently to a new position closer to his home. Gavin is passionate and hugely knowledgeable about trees and was always happy to give the Canonbury Society tree team great advice. <u>Treesforstreets.org/islington</u>



The Canonbury Society sponsored the planting of a tree in Canonbury Place.

FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

Philip Walker

In last year's newsletter, we featured Leyla Boulton and Ann-Marie Huby's green conservation campaign to modernise planning rules affecting listed buildings and

THE GREEN

CAMPAIGN

Levla Boulton

CONSERVATION

those situated in a conservation area. This campaign resulted in the Council issuing a Net Zero Carbon Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) Scoping Paper for consultation in August 2023. We and others think



it lacks ambition but, nevertheless, it is a good start for facilitating a modern and efficient system enabling householders to play their part in reducing carbon emissions and achieving zero carbon emissions by 2050. I urge you to read Leyla's update below.

Still on the subject of planning, it was a relief to see Islington Council's 15-year Local Plan finalised and launched on 28 September 2023. There is sensible guidance on design and heritage and other aspects of living in the Borough of Islington.

We are indeed privileged to live in Canonbury, a well located and beautiful

area. Let's not forget that the Society's central aim is to promote, safeguard and assist in the preservation of the Canonbury Conservation Area for the benefit of its inhabitants.

Our Winter Drinks Party took place in the Union Chapel bar on 26 January. It was a convivial and fun event and food was provided by the supported employment programme at the Margins project. We will send you details of this year's Summer Party shortly. I hope you can join us and we look forward to welcoming current members as well as new ones.

Awards galore!

Beatrix Payne

A back-of-an-envelope calculation shows volunteers for Friends of Canonbury Square (FOCS) gave a whopping 1073 hours of their time during 2023 in gate locking, pruning, compost spreading, planting, lawn mowing and attending meetings.

According to London Borough of Islington Parks Partnership Manager Sally Oldfield, this donation of time in Canonbury Square enabled the Islington Green Space team to focus their work on creating and supporting precious green spaces in areas of the borough where volunteer power may be more limited. Hats off to the FOCS team!

This hard work also resulted in Canonbury Square Gardens being awarded a coveted Green Flag in 2023, recognising the labour and achievements of the Friends of Canonbury Square team. The Green Flag was the highlight of a year in which FOCS was additionally given Silver Gilt awards by both Islington In Bloom and London In Bloom.

Away from gardening, FOCS trustee Lachlan Moyle initiated a regular social get-together - or Stammtisch, which in German means 'regulars table' – at the Canonbury Tavern from 8pm on the last Tuesday of every month. The aim is to enable volunteers to chat and connect with each other. Everyone buys their own drinks and joins in the chat at the FOCS designated table.

In December 2023 FOCS adopted the historic phone box on the corner of Canonbury Square. The occasion was marked by installing and decorating an abandoned Christmas tree in the phone box. FOCS are working on other ways to use the box for community benefit so watch this space, or get in touch with your ideas.

We look forward to seeing you for morning gardening in Canonbury Square, or an evening drink at the Canonbury Tavern on the third Saturday and last Tuesday respectively of every month.



THE LOST PIXIES OF CANONBURY

Paul Whitehouse

There are always things that cause upset and outery in any local community. Here it might be the introduction of Low Traffic Neighbourhoods. A responsible move to restrict the impact of the infernal combustion engine on our leafy, Canonbury streets? Or simply 'virtue signalling' that has exported the problem elsewhere causing traffic mayhem?

This debate will run and run or, more accurately, grind to a halt some distance from Highbury Corner. But there is another burning issue which has been neglected by some, though not by me or our younger residents.

As I walk through the neighbourhood, the tragic demise of the Canonbury Pixies often electrifies my mind, pushing aside everyday concerns, mundane and not so mundane.

The Pixies had moved into an abandoned tree stump on the corner of Alwyne Villas after an anonymous and imaginative soul 'did it up' with a small, red front door, a crooked brick chimney, magic wands and painted pebbles promoting Peace and Joy. Build it and they will come. Pixies, elves and fairies swiftly moved in.

Where are they now?! Since being ruthlessly evicted by the Council from their beautifully appointed home, we've heard nothing about their fate. I appreciate there are more important things for adults to be preoccupied with, but for my daughter and her friends a daily encounter with a Pixie in years gone by gave the day a certain magic. And it's a fact that a bit of magic is a good thing.

Now responsible journalism requires robust investigation and I was scrupulous

The creator of the Canonbury Pixie house prefers to

in my research. Just check out this recent exchange between my daughter, two of her friends and me.

Me: Daughter and friends? Them: Yes?

Me: Did vou like the Pixies? Them: Er, yes.

There, unequivocal. Their younger selves would definitely have been more enthusiastic. Invariably, as we passed by, a voice from within the stump (ahem) would announce their presence with a deep 'hallo' and a high-pitched 'alright' to the delight of my daughter and her posse. This delight was occasionally tinged with bemusement as they weighed up the likelihood of real Pixies living in a tree stump against that of a daft dad doing silly voices.

Planning and Energy Conservation update

James Coates

Our main interest in 2023/4 has been the servation Areas, including solar panels, heat pumps and double glazing. It is now possible to cover your roof with solar panels that

look like slates and to install slim-line double glazing that does not significantly affect the appearance of historic sash windows. We shall approved some cases and not others. We shall probably remain cautious about changes that have an adverse aesthetic effect on the appearance of listed buildings (both inside and out).



embedded PV cells that look like slate.

how to make it easier and cheaper for charge an electric vehicle close to their home in off-peak hours. We will also be looking into the complex rules regarding the siting of heat pumps to minimise the noise nuisance to neighbours.

Islington council has still not produced the first draft of its Net Zero Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) Zero Carbon Supplementai Planning Workshop. in response to our petition demanding architecturally sensitive retrofit of listed and conservation area homes. Although we are frustrated by delays, we are heartened that the

council is trying to listen. An early alarm bell, however, went off with Islington's updated Local Plan, which alongside any useful elements mentioned by Philip, also requires individual home refurbishments to comply with costly BREEAM sustainability standards designed for developers, or an 'equivalent'. Karen Sullivan, head of planning, has agreed to look into our proposal for a simple alternative. But the absence of a sensible council proposal shows a persistent lack of joined-up thinking.

We will reserve judgment until we see how far the draft SPD meets our demands for a system that clarifies upfront what will be allowed when it comes to installing double glazing, solar panels, insulation and heat pumps on beautiful but draughty homes like yours in Canonbury and mine in Barnsbury.

The government and Islington could and should build on the pioneering precedent already implemented by Conservative-controlled Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC), using local listed building consent orders (LLBCOs). But the relatively low uptake by locals of RBKC's simple conditions for the installation of solar panels and double glazing suggests that what is also needed is information on whom to trust and how to retrofit. This was a key demand from Islington residents at a June 23 meeting organised by the council to inform the SPD.

Islington has the opportunity to become a national trailblazer of how to do local planning reform with local support.

Useful links

- Leyla's recent *Financial Times* article on the campaign, https://on.ft.com/3uBJ239
- greenconservation.org
- rbkc.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/ sustainably-retrofitting-your-home



work in the shadows, but if you want to see more of her work go to www.instagram.com/pixiehouse_by_t



Now I know this little scenario doesn't address pollution, climate change, political upheaval, and war (wrongful eviction though, possibly). The exquisitely decorated tree stump probably didn't mean much to the passing banker, council official or construction worker but, on a few glorious occasions, the Pixies brought joy and a smile to the face of local children. Can't ask for more than that really.

The Pixies are sadly missed, and as the more astute of you will have realised, possibly more by me than my daughter, her friends and the rest of the neighbourhood's children all put together.

Paul Whitehouse is an actor, writer, presenter and comedian.

The Canonbury West Neighbourhood Watch Team



Information about the Canonbury West Neighbourhood Watch, can be found at ourwatch.org.uk/scheme/155187/ canonbury-west

Ward Panel meetings, every three months, provide an opportunity for residents to meet informally with local councillors and Community Safety officers. www.islington.gov.uk/about-thecouncil/have-your-say/ward-partnerships

Information about **future dates** and venue will be available from the website noted above; by telephone 020 7354 3524 or email rosebowl@isledon.co.uk

Our parents were horrified!

Joan Dannatt, as told to her son, Adrian

It was an absolute slum! With my husband, the architect Trevor Dannatt, we discovered Canonbury when we went to a play at the Tower Theatre in March 1954 and then took a stroll afterwards; we contacted the local estate agent Mr Reese and came the next weekend, we saw four houses that Saturday and nearly bought one in Canonbury Square. Our whole street, St Mary's Grove, was full of very big houses which had suffered bomb damage and total neglect, all divided up amongst many tenants.

The semi-detached house we chose was one of the

smallest, divided into three flats, it had been on the market for four years; there was an old boy on the top floor who spent his last years creating a concrete village in the back garden, he'd made everything to the smallest detail, a sign of 'Hovis for Tea', and even a little blue light above a police station. The village was in a terrible state so we spent weeks dismantling it, but in the old Elizabethan garden wall we kept finding traces of his sculptures, one a cat face with whiskers.

We bought the house in 1955 and then starting from around 1960 most of the street was demol-

ished and replaced by low Neo-Georgian housing, so we went from being the neighbourhood's smallest house to one of the biggest. The developers couldn't get rid of the elderly sitting tenant in the basement of the big house opposite who would shuffle up and down the road with

his string shopping bag. One Christmas, I left a festive dinner-for-one on his doorstep, complete with a small bottle of wine, but sadly on Boxing Day an ambulance took him away and shortly after that the house was demolished.

Bringing the whole street down was terrible, with so much noise and dust and rats making straight for our house; our daughter Clare was three and in her high chair in the kitchen when a rat scuttled in



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it Mary's Grove in the bitter winter of 962–63. Joan describes Canonbury in the now as looking like 'an 18th-century villag

causing her to scream terribly. We were completely infested, but luckily in those days there were still very efficient rat catchers. Everything was covered in the thick grey dust of demolition, we could see exposed staircases filled with cans and newspapers and rubbish. It was a genuinely rough, poverty-stricken area, the police were always being called out, and officers used to go down St Mary's Grove after dusk in twos!

Trevor's family were chartered surveyors in Blackheath and were horrified. None of the family wanted us to

live here, and my family up in Highgate lent us the money reluctantly. Our well-heeled friends were very nervous about accepting our dinner invitations. I suppose we really were in the first wave of what they now call 'gentrification'; Basil Spence, the architect behind Coventry Cathedral, moved to Canonbury Place the year after us, and there were other architects like Gordon Wigglesworth, Jane Fior and her husband Robin, the graphic designer, the Keynes family, a delightful

PASQUAROSA: FROM MUSE TO PAINTER

Ria Higgins

You can tell when an artist is obsessed with colour because they want it to leap off the page. They want every colour to sing, every shade to dance. The Italian artist Pasquarosa Marcelli is one such artist and she captures this perfectly in a small vase of flowers (pictured) using deep purple, forest green and bold dashes of candy pink, crimson and buttery yellow. The oils are creamy, rich and delicious.

Born in Italy in 1896, Pasquarosa is relatively unknown here, but she deserves far more acclaim because she managed to do something quite extraordinary for any female artist of her time. In 1929, at the age of 33, she had an exhibition in Mayfair. The Italian ambassador opened it and the critics loved

it. Her story is even more extraordinary when you learn she came from a poor family, started out as a model for several artists, fell in love with one of them, and then, without any formal training, became a painter herself. Hollywood would love it.

Now, nearly a hundred years later, the Estorick Collection in Canonbury Square is holding a retrospective of her work. It features over 50 paintings and drawings, and it is clear from the start that she found no greater pleasure than capturing colour-filled scenes from her home life. A sewing basket, a teapot, a jug of wine; rugs, books, mirrors and unopened letters. Simple objects fill the canvas. Flowers do, too. Like many great artists, she saw beauty in everything.

The exhibition runs at the Estorick until April 28, 2024.

social circle and we all became close friends. At that time, for every house done up by its owners, the estate agent would decorate the house next to it, paying for the external painting, just the front, so it looked as if the area had come up twice as fast.

Trevor did some work on the house, especially the kitchen and garden paving. He designed the chimney pieces using an old Italian marble company up the Holloway Road who mostly made gravestones. The next-door house was still divided up, on the top floor was an ancient mother with two daughters who both worked in a spinning factory. It next became a single-family house with the arrival of Mr Shand who was in the wine trade, then a doctor moved in, then a man from the council who went to prison, then the Potters, and even the head of BP David Simon, who became Baron Simon of Highbury, and now the Sykes - very different indeed to our original neighbours!

Living in the basement on the other side was the Huntley family who we were very close with, he was the local window cleaner and they looked after Clare when I went back to work as an Art Advisor and Buyer at the advertising agency J. Walter Thompson. Later, with a few other Canonbury mothers I started a play group at the back of the Union Chapel which lasted many years.

Dr Cranitch was the wonderful local GP, who had his surgery in Canonbury Square. There was no appointment system, you had to tear off a numbered ticket by the door and wait your turn. The doctor was a wonderful home visitor with his old-fashioned leather briefcase; he was a much-loved figure from the Irish Catholic community, with many children and when his wife tragically died in a flu epidemic the community would deliver a meal every evening for the whole family.

When our son Adrian was born the doctor would visit every day and Clare, aged five, would open the door wearing a nurse's uniform. Adrian was born at home here in the house, in the sitting room, with a wonderful midwife who then went on to deliver the children of Lukas Heller, busy at the time writing Whatever Happened to Baby Jane?!

The winter after Adrian was born there was an incredible deluge of snow, one of the biggest winters on record, with so much snow Canonbury looked like an 18th century village again. We kept him in his pram, even in the house, the only place to keep him warm, and he was very knock-kneed when he finally emerged! Back then what was called a 'pea souper fog' would descend, engulfing the area making it almost impossible to see anything. People would walk hesitantly along the pavement with torches, hanging on to the railings, it was very dangerous. Before coal was banned we would have a delivery once a year through the coal chute at the side of the house. Of course

Futurists and aperitivos in the heart of Canonbury

The Estorick Collection is known internationally for its core of Futurist works, as well as figurative art and sculpture dating from 1890 to the 1950s. Futurists Umberto Boccioni, Giacomo Balla and Gino Severini are represented alongside other well-known artists such as Giorgio de Chirico, Amedeo Modigliani and Giorgio Morandi.

The Eric and Salome Estorick Foundation was established in 1994. The Estoricks' son Michael suggested buying Northampton Lodge in Canonbury Square to house their Collection. The gallery opened in 1998. Today, the museum comprises six galleries over three floors plus a café and bookshop. Roberta Cremoncini joined the Estorick as assistant curator in 1997, and became director in 2001.

The Estorick Foundation is a charity and has no regular public funding. Income from admission ticket sales and memberships is vital to the museum. Memberships range from £20 a year for individuals

to life membership of £500. The Collection welcomes volunteers and provides training in gallery work, the Collection's history and its artwork.

Alongside the permanent exhibition and special exhibitions there is the Caffè Estorick serving Italian coffee, cakes, wine and lunches from Wednesday to Sunday. On Thursdays the café opens until 8pm and during the summer months you can enjoy an authentic aperitivo in the evening sunshine. The museum runs Family Art Days and also

there is a special play area for Under 5s.

ase of Flowers by Pasquarosa Marcelli c. 1916.



FOU

there was no central heating, we had two Pither Stoves and electric bar fires. Yes, we were tough!

The neighbourhood was alive with travelling tradesmen, including onion men on bicycles coming over from France and knife sharpeners. The row of shops on Canonbury Place included Wrights Stores, where items could be bought 'on the tab', the greengrocer Mr Crudgington and next to him a grocer Mr Woolnough. Later, there was an antique shop set up by Dan Klein and of course the newsagents Ron and Gladys Newton, eventually replaced by the charming Amin family. I would order a weekly Selfridges delivery, a huge van with fog lamps, bringing everything from baby vests and garden spades to clear the snow to Santos coffee beans and other tasty treats. At the time, Canonbury seemed a very long way indeed from Selfridges, an exotic distant outpost, an entirely different world. We are so grateful that a visit to see the play The Moon In the Yellow River led us to live in this unique and wonderful place.

special workshops for children in the holidays. There is a free Family Trail to help explore the galleries and on the last Friday of the month The Collection is open from Wednesday to Sunday. For further information go to www.estorickcollection.com



Bust of Woman in bronze by Giacomo Manzu 1952. Estorick Collection

Canonbury's very own Sir Humphrey: 'Yes, Minister'

David Ireland

For fans of the TV series Yes, Minister and Yes, Prime Minister, chronicling the comic tensions between Permanent Secretary Sir Humphrey Appleby, Private Secretary Bernard Woolley, and (Prime) Minister Jim Hacker, Canonbury has its own insider view

into the Machiavellian world of British politics from James Coates. He was a Private Secretary for three of his 35-year civil service career and then a senior civil servant dealing with ministers.

James had first-hand experience of Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, and a host of Secretaries of State including Barbara Castle and Michael Heseltine, in areas such as roads, drink-and-drive legislation, railways, and listed buildings in London. With Nicholas Ridley, Michael Portillo and Malcolm Rifkind delicate negotiations were needed for Eurostar to be an Anglo-French project, half built and designed in Britain, and to secure agreement from the Treasury to build a high-speed link from the Tunnel to London. In 1992, James was made a Companion of the Bath (CB) for his service.

James regards Yes, Minister as 'close enough to the truth to be very funny' but says the basic aim was 'giving Ministers factually correct advice and stopping a Minister getting egg on his face: civil servants told Thatcher the poll tax was a bad idea, and tried to dissuade her'. Its introduction would turn out to be a fateful decision.

Thatcher carefully cultivated the image of a thrifty housewife, but James found her more nuanced and political. He was commended for saving £100 million a year by cutting the rent bill for civil servants in London. But when Thatcher commented, 'aren't the



buildings in Whitehall looking lovely?', after a restoration programme, and he replied 'yes, but it was very expensive', she responded, 'but people like it'.

James Coates the late Queen Elizabeth II

The late Queen Elizabeth was keen on sustainability but when receiving his CB, James told her, 'I deal with the effects of transport on the environment' [his last job]. Her Majesty's eves glazed over and she signalled an end to the exchange with: 'That sounds very complicated.'

This environmental role came at the end of a civil service career which ran from 1960 to the mid 1990s (James has also been a stalwart of the Alwynes for many decades) but the first Minister of Transport he came across, Ernest Marples, had many ideas which have a very contemporary ring. Marples came up with the 'Pink Zone' in November 1959, to prevent cars clogging the streets at Christmas/New Year (what could be seen as a precursor to the congestion charge), looked at road pricing (something will have to replace vehicle excise duty and fuel duty) and an LTN-ish 'main roads for traffic, side roads grouped in environmental areas'.

James's civil service experience has proved invaluable to the Canonbury Society over the years, particularly in the areas of planning, conservation and traffic flow.

Tempestuous Times for Friends of the New River

Rocco Falconer

It has been unusually tempestuous along the New River Walk. Islington Council undertook to renovate both sections to contend with increasing levels of silt and resulting problems. The unsightly period of works has happily ended, but the sticky business of what to do with excess silt unfortunately has not.

The Council did not anticipate the sheer amount of silt. Consequently, the 'revetments' or water flower beds have turned out to be much larger and character-changing than planned. The changes significantly alter the character of the New River, and narrow the watercourse causing drainage issues.

We have requested that the Council remove the revetments but to no avail. Whilst they admit the revetments are larger than planned (for budgetary reasons), they are not prepared to remove them. This leaves us in a pickle: pursue this matter with the force that perhaps the New River Walk deserves, or resign ourselves to what has happened.

I have very recently stepped into Jack Lambert's titan-esque shoes as Chairman of the Friends of the New River Walk. Any help on this matter would be most gratefully received. We are a small community but would like to have our voice projected. Our current strategy will be to seek, perhaps with threat of legal action, permission to organise the movement of some silt from the southern to northern section, where more space should make the 'revetments' less invasive. Even to get the Council to agree is a gargantuan task. If we do get the go ahead we would need strong volunteers to help with moving the silt. We would also warmly welcome support or brainpower in the challenge to the actions of the Council to try and recover the former character of the walkway.



Towering above Canonbury

Ursula Yates

For hundreds of years, Canonbury Tower was the highest building in Islington. And it is still the oldest. The tall red-brick structure is familiar to residents passing along Canonbury Place, but few have been inside, or know the astonishing history of the building. Expert guides from Islington Guided Walks offer 90-minute tours twice a month, on Fridays at 11am or Wednesdays at 2pm.

Like Canonbury itself, the Tower got its name because it was owned by the Prior and Canons of St Bartholomew's Priory in Smithfield. The Tower, built in the early 1500s, was part of the Priory's country retreat. The Tower is now owned by Spencer Douglas David Compton, 7th Marquess of Northampton. It has been in the same family since the 16th century.

The tours touch on the lives of its many famous residents including Thomas Cromwell of Wolf Hall fame, Henry VIII's fourth wife, Anne of Cleves, Francis Bacon and the writers Washington Irving (Sleepy Hollow) and Oliver Goldsmith (The Vicar

'THE GLORIOUS CANONBURY STREETS ARE STILL HOLDING THEIR OWN ...'

Barbara Weiss

Neatly bound by a ring of busy A-roads, for me leafy Canonbury has always been consciously proud of its own historic identity, an intriguing and self-contained enclave. Home to some of Islington's most beautiful Georgian and Victorian architecture, and known for its spacious private gardens and restful green squares and public spaces.

It was not always so, as Canonbury, along with the rest of Islington, experienced a lengthy period of decline. It is, however, easy to understand why the area has undergone such a major process of renewal and gentrification since the late 1960s, when the Victoria underground line first connected it to central London. Today, thanks to the consistent rigour of Islington's planning department, the first impression of Canonbury is simply that of an intact, well-preserved Conservation Area. But one should not underestimate the amount of renovation work carried out over the years behind the impeccable façades, a clear reflection of the changing sociological and demographic profiles of new owners, their growing ambitions and aesthetic taste.

It is a fact that historic houses are far more flexible than most modern ones, but as an architect working for several decades in Islington, I have been fascinated by the evolution of successive trends imposed on Canonbury's traditional terraces and semi-detached villas, some more successful than others.

Early renovations saw the arrival of the loft conversion - eking out extra bedrooms and of the first en-suite bathrooms, with tiny, primitive shower cubicles, the new must-have accoutrement. Shortly after came the 'power shower'. This was a time when Conservation Area regulations were relatively relaxed, making it possible to alter windows and doors and to build mansard roofs. The exciting central focus became new bold fitted kitchens open-

ing onto the garden - and the shiny appliances that went with them. This was followed by the era of the extension, one that saw a significant number of incongruous brick and glass boxes bolted on to the back of terraces and semi-detached houses. Rather erratically, some applications sailed through planning, others were refused; others appealed. Canonbury was suddenly awash with new open-plan 'family rooms', allowing parents to multitask while overseeing their offspring; the formal 'dining room' became a relic of the past; laundries, wine cellars, saunas and exercise spaces were all in demand; built-in joinery the new rage. Lawns and flower beds were ousted in favour of designer paving, barbecue stations and tasteful seasonal planters tended by contract gardening companies. Fast-forward to now and Covid has ushered in the working-from-home era. We are back to cellular studies appropriate for Zoom calls, one per adult, or sleek shed offices in the garden. Cinema rooms cater for family enjoyment; while smart appliances and vast showers are the new status symbols in vogue. Today's architects are also being asked to

advise on a myriad of new areas from solar





of Wakefield). The finale is from the rooftop looking at the wonderful views of Canonbury and beyond. You can book a tour at canonburytower.eventbrite.co.uk



panels and heat pumps to charging points and new sustainable materials. The parameters have changed but through all this, the glorious streets of Canonbury are still holding their own and largely remain true to their history. Amongst architects, Islington Council is known as one of the toughest conservation authorities in London - while it does not make our work any easier, we must be infinite ly grateful to them as custodians of the past.

Barbara is the director of Barbara Weiss Architects www.barbaraweissarchitects.com



CANONBURY FEEDERS BOOST SMALL BIRD NUMBERS

Susan Millership and John Stewart

Are you an ornithologist, a twitcher or just a bird lover who looks out of the window and points out the LBJs (little brown jobs)?

Whatever your degree of expertise, the good news is that you will see more tits in your garden this year because they are one of



Blue Tit numbers are up 14 per cent from 1979.

the few species in Britain that is on the rise, and this is due to more people feeding them in the winter months and putting up bird boxes.

Below are a few of our favourite winter birds.

Blue Tits are feisty and colourful. You'll often see them dangling off feeders. They have very short, thin black beaks. Watch out for:

- Blue Tits like nest boxes, so in spring keep an eye out for chicks
- Domestic cats are a major cause of mortality.

Great Tits are similar in plumage to the Blue Tit but they have a black cap, throat, and stripe down their chest to their tail. They are aggressive feeders and their numbers are up 54 per cent from 1979:

- Males have a thick line down their belly, females have a fainter line
- Their long thin beaks are thought to have evolved very fast to access food in feeders.

internet access, a mailing address, and storage in a setting that encourages them to contribute their talents. Donations of men's clothes, books, phone chargers and carrier bags are appreciated. Volunteers are welcome. Email themanna@ststephenscanonbury.org.uk

The Margins Project at Union Chapel supports those experiencing homelessness and other crises by providing nutritious meals to over 70 people twice a week, advice and service referrals, as well as access to showers and laundry. Paid catering training is offered. unionchapel.org.uk/projects/margins_



An Islington Giving consultation session.

Long-Tailed Tits have black/white/pinkish colouring. They gather in lively flocks of around 20 birds and twitter to one another.

- Their dome-shaped nests consist of moss, lichen, spiders' webs and feathers
- Females lay 6–14 peanut-sized eggs. Only 20 per cent of nests are successful. Pairs may help another couple if their nest fails.

Local plant sales

sale is on Sunday

28 April at 2pm at

Garden, N5 1NH:

Islington Gardeners'

the Olden Community



Long-tailed tits only recently started using bird feeders. Numbers are up 79 per cent in the last 25 years.

SUMMER PARTY

All three love garden feeders. So, to help boost small bird numbers, buy feeders, fill them up and let the show begin!

Visit <u>www.vinchousefarm.co.uk</u> for bird food and feeders. They donate to the British Trust for Ornithology.

Charities 2024

Rosemary J Brown

Islington Giving raises funds for local projects working to reduce loneliness, increase opportunities and build connections. Fostering ways of connecting people and their communities to create change, much of their work involves resident-led panels who decide how to distribute funding. islingtongiving.org.uk

The Friends of the Rose Bowl (FORB) supports the Rose Bowl Youth Centre, one of the few local youth services engaging more young people than in pre-pandemic times. FORB funds outward-bound residentials, podcasts and sleep-overs as well as counselling, careers advice, a food bank and family support. You can arrange a visit at info@friendsoftherosebowl.org.uk / friendsoftherosebowl.org.uk

The Manna at St Stephen's Church welcomes homeless and marginalised people three days a week for showers, laundry, clothing, food,

53nd AGM 2024

Join us on 23 May at

7pm at The Canonbury

Tavern. There will be a

guest speaker. You are

warmly invited to stay

on for a drink, have a

chat and meet some

new neighbours.

Committee Members 2024

Philip Walker: Chairman Gilly Angell: Traffic Rosemary Brown: Trees, Events, Newsletter, Membership James Coates: Planning, Traffic Rachael Henry: Safer Neighbourhoods

Ria Higgins: Trees, Events, Newsletter David Ireland: Events

Islingtongardeners.org.uk De Beauvoir Gardeners' sale is on Sunday 12 May from 11–12.30pm outside 21 Northchurch Terrace N1 4EB:

debeauvoirgardeners.wordpress.com/

JOINING THE SOCIETY, AND PAYMENT OF SUBSCRIPTIONS

To download a membership form, visit the Canonbury Society's website. Benefits include invites to our Summer and Winter parties and the AGM. The annual subscription is £3.00, but further donations are welcome.

Jack Lambert: Planning Susan Millership: Newsletter Editor, Traffic, Events Judith Parker: Traffic, Trees Sharon White: Treasurer, Membership Ursula Yates: Secretary, Events, Newsletter

Co-opted members: Rebecca Taylor, Sarah Ross Goobey, Beatrix Payne

THE

CANONBURY

SOCIETY