



Trevor's school project, re-marked and signed many years later by astronaut and friend Buzz Aldrin.



Trevor being fitted for his Galactic Spacesuit at the HQ of clothing company Under Armour, in Baltimore USA.

Canonbury's Very Own Rocketman

Susan Millership

'Have you not met your neighbour Trevor who's been to space?' asked Sunil from behind the counter at Shriji News. I was non-plussed and thought maybe I had misheard.

But emerging from the back of the shop, Trevor appeared with his trademark baseball cap and long ringlets to confirm modestly that indeed he had breached the final frontier, experienced weightlessness and gazed down at Planet Earth from a spacecraft.

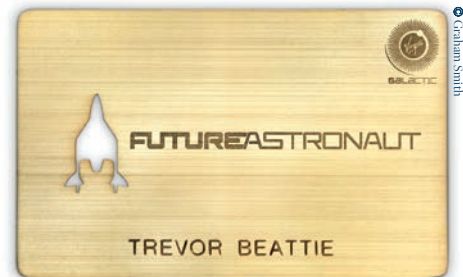
Obsessed by space travel since a boy in Birmingham, long-time Canonbury resident Trevor Beattie had one ambition which he pursued with a singular intensity, to be an astronaut.

Trevor was known as an enfant terrible of the advertising world in the 1990s, mas-

terminating the 'fcuk' campaign for French Connection, the 'Hello Boys' Eva Herzigova Wonderbra advertisements, and the Labour Party campaigns of 2001 and 2005. He then went on to set up a successful film production company.

But despite rising to the top of the advertising world, Trevor had to wait 18 years from purchasing his ticket to realise his dream of following space legends Neil Armstrong and Yuri Gagarin. In 2023, aboard Virgin Galactic 04, he took off from Spaceport America in New Mexico. 'We were flying on the shoulders of giants,' he said.

'Out of one window, I saw a dazzlingly blue Earth which burned so brightly. Out of another, a sandy-toned moon hung in ebony eternity,' Trevor wrote of his view from space. 'My lifelong dream was being made manifest before my very welling eyes.'



A friend of Richard Branson, Trevor had shared his dream with the Virgin tycoon and signed up as one of the first passenger astronauts, buying his ticket in 2006 'when it was considerably cheaper'. The same spaceflight today would be \$600,000.

Even so, the bank transfer to Virgin Galactic was so big, the manager came out to ask if he didn't mind him taking a photocopy as a souvenir. The transfer came at the same time as Trevor set up his own ad agency, BMB. 'The two best things I ever invested in,' he said. 'But it left me broke and eating beans on toast every night for a year.'

Was he frightened of the take-off after the various accidents and mishaps of space pioneers?

'Approaching 50,000 feet I started to worry,' Trevor said. 'Not about the imminent prospect of being yeeted (thrust) northwards via a solid rocket booster at 900 metres per second towards the infinite blackness of space. No, I was quite prepared for that. My chief concern was that the sweat from my damp digits would smudge the ink of a certain signature on the 100-year-old cheque I had in my hand.'

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Trevor looking down in awe at planet earth from Virgin Galactic 04.

FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

Philip Walker

In a world where some countries choose to ditch policies which are designed to reduce carbon emissions around the planet to zero by 2050, it is reassuring to see some progression in Leyla Boulton and Ann-Marie Hub's Green Conservation campaign www.greenconservation.org about. This focusses on the need to update and simplify the planning rules affecting listed and non-listed buildings



situated in conservation areas. Not only has Islington Council updated its *Climate Action* (formerly Net Zero) *Supplementary Planning Document* for consultation, but it has also launched a parallel consultation on new guidelines for the installation of heat pumps, solar panels and insulation in historic buildings and in conservation areas. A draft *Retro-Fit Handbook* on 'how to make your building more energy-efficient' has been issued. Although for many, the consultations have come rather late and a number of missed opportunities can be identified, it represents an opportunity for central and local government to issue clearer and more coherent guidance to

those householders wanting to play their part in reducing carbon emissions.

We are privileged to live in Canonbury, a beautiful area with many fine buildings, trees and local shops which we are eager to nurture and protect. Our central aim is to promote, safeguard and assist in the preservation of the Canonbury Conservation Area for the benefit of its inhabitants.

We held our annual Winter Drinks Party in the Union Chapel bar on 24 January. It was a convivial event and food was provided by the supported employment programme at the Margins project. Our summer garden party will be held in June/July. Details will be sent nearer the time – I hope you can join us.

PLANNING UPDATE

James Coates

We have been greatly hampered over the last 12 months by the Council's failure to notify us of new planning applications in the Canonbury Conservation Area. Councilors tell us they are suffering from the same problem. As a result, we have been unable to monitor the Council's decisions on solar panels, double glazing and heat pumps, for both listed and unlisted buildings.

Instead, we have been considering the Council's proposals for a new Climate Action Supplementary Development Policy. The Council has published for the most part helpful guidance on retrofitting existing buildings, but the required contents of this new document, which must form part of every planning application, is complex and could only be prepared by (expensive) consultants. It will put people off and fail to achieve the improvements that we and the Council are seeking. We need a simpler arrangement.

The Council hope to take a decision soon.



A scene for episode 2 of the popular comedy series *Amandaland* was filmed in Canonbury. Shown here are Anne, Amanda and Felicity (Joanna Lumley).

The Politics of Millionaire LTN Cameras

David Ireland

First, the good news, sort-of. The twin Canonbury West Low-Traffic Neighbourhood cameras guarding entry into and out of Canonbury Square are no longer pulling in an annual million-plus income. Now the not so good: they're still earning over 7x the average annual London salary of nearly £50,000.

In the year ending March 2022, the two cameras – in Canonbury Place by the Tower, the other as you turn into Canonbury Square from Alwyne Villas – pulled in jointly no less than £1.36m. The following year, this fell to £384,613, and in the most recently recorded, 2023/24 year, £342,990. By comparison, *Islington Now* reported in March 2023 that the top-earning LTN cameras in its Highbury survey were in Highbury Hill and Aubert Park, each earning just over £1m, but over the previous two years. The two cameras at the start of Alwyne Road, with no planters, brought in nearly £60,000 in 2023/24.

Intuitively, one would think that in the first year, in Canonbury West, these would mainly be first-time offenders, who would be once bitten, twice shy. That these cameras are still raking in enormous sums suggests that large numbers of later passing motorists had no idea they were entering an LTN. Assuming all those caught by the four Canonbury Square/Alwyne Road cameras in 2023/24 made the £65 LTN fine 'prompt payment', that's over 6,000 drivers who didn't get the point.

Islington Council could reasonably respond that the cameras are advertised



Susan Millership

The cameras on Alwyne Villas earned £60,000 in 2023/24.

with three different signs: one saying 'no entry' to motorbikes and cars; one saying 'Except Permit Holders CBW' (which will of course mean something to disabled road users, if too few others); and a final speed camera sign (normally seen on motorways and A roads, though speeding is not the specific issue here). The council also argues it 'does not profit from traffic filter fines. Any revenue generated from the camera-controlled filters is re-invested into improving parking, highways, and road safety in the borough'.

Why do these still high LTN fines (the council prefers to call them 'payments'; in a similar fashion, it also likes to give LTNs the much cuddlier name of 'people-friendly streets') matter? LTNs have attracted strong feelings on both sides of the argument, but whether one's a fan or not, surely transparency should be a key feature?

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That signature read: 'Orville Wright.' An avid collector of space and aviation memorabilia, Trevor had bought the cheque at an auction because Orville had achieved the world's first powered flight with his brother Wilbur. It was written out for \$2.23 in 1923 – 100 years before Trevor's own flight in 2023.

In an extra twist, Trevor had folded the cheque into a paper plane and carried it to space with him, to fly weightless in honour of that earlier trailblazer. He also packed a school exercise book, in which he predicted he would become an astronaut, and a photograph of his late parents. His spacesuit bore the Union Jack flag and the City of Birmingham crest.

'To describe space as my lifelong obsession would be an understatement. While my classmates dreamed of being

George Best or John Lennon, I was looking towards the stars.'

The dream came true. 'That's the reality, I'm very proud of that. I was a poor kid, born on Brighton Road, Balsall Heath, and I'm standing in a spaceport in New Mexico and I'm going to space,' Trevor said.

After uncoupling from the mothership and ignition of his own flight in an 'air launch', Trevor gave the double thumbs-up sign. 'Being wildly accelerated from zero to supersonic in about three seconds meant that not only do I double-punch myself in the face, but both thumbs remain inextricably superglued there for the duration of the burn.

'Roaring vertically upwards at 3,000 mph into the wild black yonder. Then everything changes. A silence of unimaginable nothingness.'

Would he go again? 'I'd go tomorrow in a heartbeat.'



Trevor took a cheque signed by Orville Wright into space to commemorate the Wright brothers who achieved the world's first powered flight in 1903.

There were three passengers and Mission Commander Kelly Latimer on the two-and-a-half-hour flight. In advance, Trevor had discussed the mission with the NASA astronauts who he had got to know. Buzz Aldrin is a personal friend.

'I asked one of the moon walkers to give me one piece of advice when I'm up there and he said: 'Just look out of the window son, look out of the window.'

You can see a short video about Trevor's space journey here: vimeo.com/923810618

Inspired by Canonbury

Susan Millership



At a loss during the 2020 Covid lockdown, award-winning photographer Alexandra Simms was inspired by the beauty of Canonbury roses. Collecting roses from gardens (with permission!) and photographing them, Alexandra started Canonbury Press to produce high-quality notecards and stationery with rose illustrations. It was these photographs which became the foundation of the collection.

Before founding Canonbury Press, Alexandra worked as a freelance photographer with clients such as the National Theatre and The National Gallery. She also focused on her own art photography and has had work exhibited three times at the Royal Academy of Arts Summer Exhibition.

Alexandra and her family have since moved to the Kent countryside as Canonbury Press grew and needed more space. The Press uses paper ethically sourced from English and Italian mills. All the stationery is printed in the UK and hand finished in the studio. The closest shop to Canonbury that stocks Canonbury Press cards is *Know & Love* at 176 Stoke Newington Church Street, London, N16 0JL. You can also buy cards online at canonburypress.com



Friends of the New River Walk Need You!

Ursula Yates

If ever a landmark is misnamed, it is the New River. It is not *New*; it was built in the early 17th century by Sir Hugh Myddelton, to bring drinking water into London from Ware in Hertfordshire. It is not a *River*; it is a constructed water channel. But Islingtonians know the New River as the hidden waterway creating the illusion of not being in the middle of a big city. The quiet pathway presents a variety of trees and plants and birds that allow the gear shift from a brisk walk to a slower amble.

However, by 2020 the New River Walk was in a bad state. The water pumps did not function well, resulting in a build-up of silt. There was an accumulation of debris from people and animals. Large areas of green duckweed formed on the water surface, particularly in hot weather. In January 2023, Islington Coun-

cil started improvement works to dredge and desilt, install a new pump system and create new plantings to support wildlife habitats. They also cut back vegetation and felled numerous trees. More than £425,000 was spent on the works.

It soon became clear that the renovation of New River Walk hadn't gone to plan, particularly in the shorter Western section. One of the main issues was that there was much more silt than anticipated and to reduce the costs of removal, wooden revetments containing the surplus silt were constructed. We have received numerous complaints about these large and dominating revetments and other aspects of the works from our members.

Inspired by the success of the Friends of Canonbury Square working with the Greenspace team at Islington Council, it is hoped that something similar can be done with the New River Walk. A new Friends of the New River Walk (FNRW) committee is being formed, and we are confident that with new ideas and new energy, real improvements can be achieved.

The FNRW Committee's first objective is to work with Greenspace to remove the silt completely or move some of it to the Eastern section where there is more space to make the 'revetments' less invasive. In both cases, we would be seeking volunteers to do the literal 'heavy lifting' of such a task. We also welcome support and expertise in recovering the former character and beauty of the walkway. If you are interested in becoming more involved, please email contact@canonburysociety.org.uk



The natural curves of the New River have been replaced by cumbersome revetments full of silt.

Susan Millership

IDENTIFYING A SURPRISE VISITOR

Sharon White

It was a wet and windy night in October when I noticed something on my kitchen floor that looked like a small gecko. My first thought was that it had somehow hitched a ride in a bag or suitcase from an earlier holiday. What to do? We scooped it up into a container and examined it more closely. Although dark in colouring on its head and back, its belly was bright orange.

We turned to the website of the London Wildlife Trust (LWT). A quick search came up with a common lizard. 'Bingo' we thought as we read the description which said that males have bright yellow or orange undersides.

We decided to put our visitor outside in a wood pile. My husband did this and then called me to say there was another, bigger lizard enjoying the rain on our tiled patio.

When I mentioned this to various Canonbury friends, a few said they had seen newts, but never lizards. I also found another creature (sadly dead) in our conservatory, where we have a heated floor. Back to the LWT website to search for 'newt'. Up came the smooth newt also known as the common newt, described as grey-brown with neat black spots all over and an orange belly (male and female). Further searches suggested that newts have blunter faces than lizards.

Keen to know for sure whether we had newts or lizards, I emailed the LWT, attaching the photos of our first sighting and they confirmed it was a youngish male smooth (or common) newt, saying the orange belly will get more vivid as the breeding season (February to June) looms. Also, newts have four toes on their front legs whereas lizards have five clawed toes.



Above: A smooth or common newt.

Below: The captured newt showing off its orange belly.

Newts are, of course, associated with water and breed readily in garden ponds. But they can be found on land too, particularly during the colder months. Newts overwinter in soil and in damp, sheltered spots, such as beneath rocks, plant pots and paving slabs. As the weather starts to warm, they then travel over land to breeding sites. Perhaps the most telling difference between newts and lizards is their speed. If you've managed to get up close, chances are you've found a newt!



Gypsy Jazz and Magical Carols

Beatrix Payne

Canonbury Square gardens hosted two fantastic social events this past year. In June, Friends of Canonbury Square held its biennial free tea party with Cornelius Corkery and his Gypsy Jazz team giving some swing to the get-together. December's inaugural carol singalong was a magical event as the Union Chapel Singers drew in passers-by to sing festive favourites. A big shout out to all the volunteers who made both events go so well.

Monthly gardening sessions were well attended with at least 15 volunteers turning out every month to sweep, weed and prune. This work has been recognised with the prize of a second Green Flag, as well as a Gold award from London in Bloom. Many thanks to the volunteers from Good Gym. Our plant display in the historic phone box won an award for Hidden

Gem from Islington in Bloom. Our steadfast team of gate lockers – undoubtedly the unsung heroes of our community – stepped up every night and morning in rain, sleet and snow to keep safe and open Canonbury Square's public spaces. The end-of-month pub get-togethers at the Canonbury Tavern have provided a welcome social, and drinking, opportunity away from the mulching and weeding. Many thanks to those who bought the Friends of Canonbury Square 2025 calendar, proceeds of which will go towards plants and equipment.

There are many reasons to feel anxious about our world. But the volunteers who support the work of Friends of Canonbury Square have, through their commitment, created something of great value – full of peace, tranquility and beauty. This counts as much for the social connections they have enabled, as the Square's thriving plants, shrubs and wildlife.

Feel free to join us in Canonbury Square to garden (no experience necessary) on the third Saturday of every month; have a drink at the Canonbury Tavern from 8 pm on the last Tuesday of every month and sing along to festive favourites at the outdoors carol singing session on the evening of Monday 15 December 2025.



It was a busy year for Friends of Canonbury Square with volunteers working tirelessly, and two very successful events – the summer tea party with live music and Singalong Carols in December.



An Epic pilgrimage to Mount Kailash

John Tusa

The two Shriji families are known for running a corner shop that is the heart of the Canonbury community. They are friendly, caring, efficient, knowing and discreet and the shop is, above all, local. Last autumn, the 'younger' family, Minesh, Dipali and their son Harsh and daughter Reeya, made an epic pilgrimage that most would never dare to undertake. It was to Mount Kailash, a holy place in the Tibetan Himalayas for Hindus, Buddhists and Jainians.

According to Hindu texts, Lord Shiva resides there. He spends his days practising yoga and meditation with his divine family. In mythology, Mount Kailash is considered the cosmic axis, the birthplace, and the center of all creation.

Mt Kailash is not particularly high when compared to other peaks in the Himalayas, a mere 21,000 feet. But there is a lot about it that is mysterious. It is 6,666 miles from Stonehenge. And precisely the same distance from the North Pole.

Minesh and Dipali wanted to make the pilgrimage as an expression of their Hindu faith. Dipali especially wanted her British-born children to have the opportunity

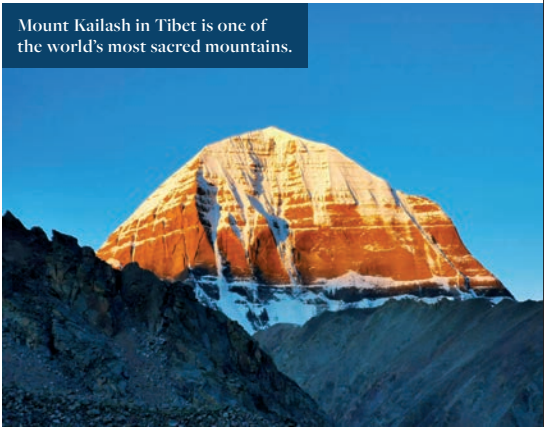
to experience something of that faith for themselves.

They spent five days in Kathmandu in Nepal getting acclimatised. Crossing into Tibet, they travelled through four villages to the start of the pilgrimage. The path around the base of Mt Kailash is 33 miles long and takes three days to walk. Path is perhaps the wrong word, as it often involved scrambling over huge boulders. Supported by horses and drivers carrying basic kit, the going was tough. (Strict Buddhists throw themselves down after each step they take. They emerge with faces, hands and legs scratched and bloodied.) For the family, a 3 am start in the dark ended at 6 pm. One day they recorded 31,000 steps. The moment they lay down on basic beds, they were asleep.

What did Harsh and Reeya feel, so far away from Canonbury life?

Harsh: 'In London, you are always thinking of the past and the future. On the pilgrimage, I was only in the reality of the present. It was like meditation.'

Reeya: 'At home, life is about careers and money. Here you were a person, aware of what really makes you happy, what a wonderful world we live in.'



Both felt a strange energy despite physical exhaustion. 'Everything had changed.'

Both were struck that the horsemen who looked after them had nothing of value, except their horses. With the trek finished, they just rode off into the inconceivable distance. On the walk, the four moved separately; Minesh some way ahead, then Harsh, then Reeya, then Dipali bringing up the rear. The gaps didn't matter. 'We walked separately, and all came together at the end.' Harsh and Reeya agree on this: 'You all make a different journey. But you end the journey united. You begin to understand the difference between what is important and what is not.'

JOAN DANNATT AT 100; A SPARKLING NIGHT

Adrian Dannatt

My mother Joan Dannatt was born on 26 January 1925 and recently celebrated her 100th birthday, in person, with an exhibition of her art.

Joan has created art all her life, most notably as a printmaker, one of the first entries, aged seven, in her storied *Catalogue Raisonné* being a handmade book of linocuts accompanying handwritten poems. She studied art at Reading University and worked closely with the Golden Cockerel Press, one of the most famous limited-edition publishers of the 20th century, where she assisted renowned artists William McCance and Agnes Miller Parker. With the looming threat of Nazi invasion this bold typographic trio planned to create a hidden clandestine press on which to publish their resistance propaganda.

Joan moved to Applegarth Studios in Hammersmith, once the atelier of Roger Fry, where she created fabric designs for Heal's and Primavera whilst continuing to paint and draw. From 1947 she worked as an art advisor for Walter J. Thompson, the prestigious advertising agency, commissioning fine artists for her clients' campaigns. Every

month she would choose one painting from the nearby Cork Street galleries to exhibit in the agency on Berkeley Square, many of which were then sold to the firm.

Reluctantly, she stepped back in 1962 to look after her troublesome second child (*c'est moi!*). She returned full time to the



Iris & Window, one of Joan's paintings on show at The Place.

etching press, working with the celebrated Peter Freeth and helping set up the Camden Printmakers group. A wide range of her work, chronologically and technically, was on show at her centenary celebration, from drawings and watercolours to full-scale oil paintings.

The Place, run by contemporary art-collector Stuart Evans and his son Tom, was the ideal venue, intimate and bohemian, local yet cosmopolitan, not unlike the packed opening night crowd. Toasts were made, wine flowed, *canapés* devoured, the full 100 candles blown out and a notably long artistic life, more than 90 years of active creative endeavour, rightly recognised.



'THE INTREPID BEATRIX'

David Ireland

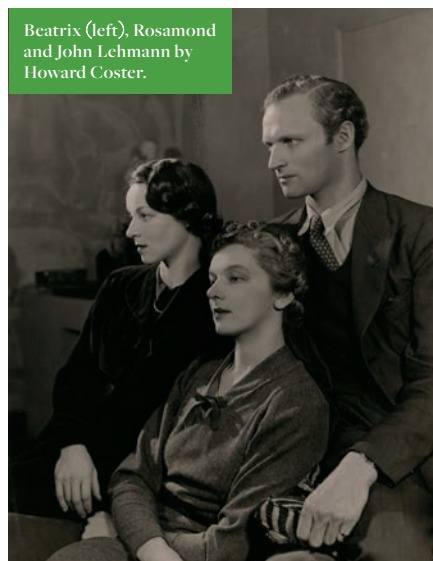
In July 1930, three years into her relationship with English actress Beatrix Lehmann, American socialite Henrietta Bingham walked into the showroom of Bentley Motors in London's Cork Street and bought a 1930 six-and-a-half litre Bentley Speed Six Mulliner drophead coupe, the same model that had won the 24 Hours Le Mans race that year and the year before. Together, Beatrix and Henrietta set off in their high-performance car for Stockholm. They then drove to the decadent Weimar Berlin, onto an avant-garde pageant in Munich and back to Paris, via the Alps. Their relationship petered out after Christmas 1931, but a framed photo of Beatrix stood on Henrietta's dresser for the rest of her life.

Beatrix, always known as Peggy, after a favourite pony, or 'Boy' by her doting father (her mother had not wanted a third

daughter, and briefly abandoned the family), lived at 23, Alwyne Villas, from around 1960 to 1979. Along with her two siblings, writer Rosamond and editor John, she made up 'a formidable clan who rode through the arts like the Valkyrie', according to critic Cyril Connolly. As a child, 'the intrepid Beatrix' would be the one to risk a very fast catamaran, or to plunge into brambles, recalls John.

A brilliant mimic from an early age, she went to RADA, leaving in 1924 at the age of 21. She first understudied tearaway Tallulah Bankhead and then acted on and off for 55 years. Her heyday was 1938–40, notably as Lavinia in Eugene O'Neill's *Mourning Becomes Electra*. The leading critic James Agate commented: 'She has for some time been knocking at the door marked 'Great Acting Only.' Her brother took their mother to see it: 'It had such an overwhelming effect on my mother that she fainted and had to be carried out of the theatre.' Beatrix was

Beatrix (left), Rosamond and John Lehmann by Howard Coster.



© National Portrait Gallery, London

also a hit in O'Neill's *Desire under the Elms*, although she curiously told her brother, 'I rather hate O'Neill. He's so smug.'

She was, though, a frequently resting actress since she was uncompromising on what roles she'd take, and unabashed about her sexuality and her politics. As the biographer Adrian Wright suggests, 'One may imagine that for Binkie Beaumont, that impishly named but ruthlessly influential West End impresario, the thought of an outspoken, sexually ambiguous communist was just a little too much.' Beatrix had many famous friends, including Christopher Isherwood in Berlin and Ralph Richardson, who once took her and her dog up in a light aircraft. But as biographer Selina Hastings argues, 'Beatrix's personal life could fairly be described as disastrous, a number of unsatisfactory affairs, with both men and women.'

While Alwyne Villas was home, she had many screen roles, notably in *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*, the 1965 adaptation of John Le Carré's best book, with Richard Burton; the 1966 musical comedy *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*; and as an acclaimed Juliana Bordereau in 1974's *The Aspern Papers*. Her stage career also latterly revived.

Despite feeling unwell, Beatrix managed the first week of T.S. Eliot's *The Family Reunion* in March 1979 – co-star Edward Fox called it a 'feat of the greatest courage and brilliance' – before collapsing, with what was later diagnosed as a brain tumour. Back in her 'little house in Canonbury' (as Hastings put it), she was nursed by her final partner of 15 years, actress Shelagh Fraser, but died on 31 July. She left her house to Shelagh, but this was contested by Rosamond, who also banned 'that Fraser woman' from the funeral, blocked a memorial service (since Beatrix had been 'pagan') and a putative biography by actor Trader Faulkner. A bitter sweet life.



Beatrix Lehmann as Aunt Georgina in *Just William*.

about her and only later discovered her great reputation as a writer but have subsequently never hesitated to boast: 'Oh yes, I've taken tea with Rosamond Lehmann.'

Back then Canonbury had a certain actorly *gravitas*, not least thanks to the Tower Theatre, where many a subsequent celebrity first broke their leg, but also with such immediate neighbours as Kenneth Griffith, that fiery Welshman of 'Spion Kop' and our own Simon Ward, known for his performance as Young Winston. The most curious thing is that I never saw Beatrix again, not once by chance in the street or square, although admittedly we met only a few years before her demise in 1979; but happily her career had blossomed after our professional encounter (sadly the same could not be said for mine) with some of her best known roles coming at the very end of her altogether extraordinary existence.

Taking Tea with a Thespian Dowager

Adrian Dannatt

I have an infinitely rich memory of being lucky enough to meet Beatrix Lehmann way back in 1977; she was playing a stately Aunt by the name of Georgina in the TV series *Just William* in which I was appearing as the eponymous naughty boy himself. She gave a tremendously grand performance, a full-throttle thespian dowager comparable to the last of that generation, the late Maggie Smith, as befitted someone whose first film role had been back in 1935. If slightly frosty whilst on set, back in the LWT Green Room she raised an impeccable eyebrow of amusement to discover that I too lived in Canonbury. Back then one never met *anyone* who had even heard of 'Islington' let alone actually also inhabited its most obscure backwaters.

As a result, I was invited round for tea, all of a three-minute walk even with my runty adolescent legs, which proved an utter delight. Not only was her house a thoroughly old-fashioned bohemian mess, which I guess must have been genuinely Edwardian, but there was the added glamour of her sister. Although clearly frail and somewhat ghostly, this sibling had a notable presence and, though she could hardly see, had just broken a long literary silence with her novel *A Sea-Grape Tree*. Of course, being a mere callow youth, I knew nothing

Canonbury: a crucible of architecture

Adrian Dannatt

Canonbury is glibly characterised as a 'Georgian' enclave but much of its building is later, possibly Georgian in spirit but not so technically nor historically. My father the architect Trevor Dannatt would jest: 'The cliché that modernist architects all live in Georgian houses is not true; I live in an *early Victorian* one!' Though Sir Basil Spence, famous exemplar of modernism did indeed live in a fine Georgian mansion round the corner. A chunk of Canonbury is early Victorian, roughly 1837–1860, yet I have always been intrigued how a persistent 'Georgian' fantasia plays out in the post-war architecture of our domain, making it a micro-crucible of neo-classical and post-modern design.

Our tradition emerged right after World War II with Louis de Soissons from Montréal. He mastered a very English idiom in his buildings, most notably in Welwyn Garden City, but also some discreet and elegant housing in Canonbury Park South. In 1946–47 he created some 30 'cottages', semi-detached pairs with Georgian features, bay windows, hipped roofs and original 'y-front' glazed doors.

In 1954, the 6th Marquess of Northampton sold sections of his Canonbury Estate to Western Ground Rents and Oriel Property Trust. De Soissons had originally proposed a larger master plan for the redevelopment of the whole area, but he was never consulted on the buildings which were eventually put up after bulldozers destroyed swathes of large, rundown Victorian houses. Instead, the designer was a mysterious Mr Nash, surveyor for Western Ground Rents. Could this perhaps have been a knowing pseudonym, de Soissons himself having restored many Nash terraces, a wink at Georgian architectural history? For there is certainly a comic contrast, an exercise in comparison for architectural students, between the houses of the great John Nash and this postwar 'Nash' of Canonbury.

In 1954, our Nash rebuilt Alwyne Square and subsequently put up similar housing on St Mary's Grove, John Spencer Square, Grange Grove and surrounding streets. These small houses were distinguished by their utilitarian neo-Georgian modesty. Built roughly between 1960–1970 they are partly pastiche and overtly exercises in cost-cutting efficiency, thus a pattern of alternating bow windows, less is cheaper, and incongruous modernist flat roofs, though those on Hopping Lane and Prior Bolton Street have the luxury of appropriate pitched roofs.

I have always been fond of them, not least because they resulted in our own house becoming one of the grandest on the street! I like the way they are clearly derived from some post-war North American suburban ideal, closest to being 'Georgian' in the sense of that Southern state, the enclaves of Atlanta, most notably as their front gardens feature no fencing or separation from the street. I believe these American style open front lawns



The White Rabbit House on St Paul's Road was transformed by architects Gundry & Ducker in 2019. The house is part of a terrace of mid-1960s neo-Georgian houses.



© Andrew Meredith

are unique in London or as the estate agents put it, 'the kerb appeal is incredibly special'. Despite their aesthetic and practical limitations, these houses proved very popular and now change hands for over £1.3m. They have inspired all sorts of extensions and improvements, most notably the 2019 White Rabbit House on St Paul's Road by Gundry & Ducker.

These lowly builder-built enclaves led to the much more serious neo-classical construction of 22–30 Canonbury Place, designed by eminent architect Raymond Erith starting in 1963 and finished in 1970 (three years before Erith died), by his son-in-law, the equally well-known Quinlan Terry. These are designed in a much more determinedly English classical tradition, though the last house at the western end with its grand white wooden verandah does again summon something of the hot summer nights of the American Deep South. (The portico was brought from King's College Hospital on Denmark Hill.)

This was where the grandson of Erith, George Saumarez Smith grew up, going on to be one of Britain's most eminent neo-classical draftsmen and architects. Erith and Terry also created the Victoria Line ventilation shaft, the 'Tower of the Winds' in Gibson Square in around 1970.

The *Annus Mirabilis* of 'post-modern' architecture has been posited as 1972 and Terry's terrace surely shades into the 'po-mo', as does the neighbouring 1985 infill house by Christopher Libby at 33A Canonbury Square, whilst Libby's houses from the same period on Canonbury Lane and Compton Avenue are overtly post-modern with their outsize pillars and pediments. Interestingly, the newly-built house at 47 Canonbury Square is completely like the others, an exact Georgian replica, probably as demanded by the planners. Thus, whether in straightforward reconstruction or conceptual citation and quotation, Canonbury has proven an experimental field for every form of neo-traditional, faux-vernacular or, dare one say, just plain excitingly reactionary architecture.

Local Charities 2025

Rosemary J Brown

The Manna at St Stephen's Church welcomes homeless and marginalised people three days a week for showers, laundry, clothing, food, internet access, a mailing address, and storage along with encouragement to 'put back in'. They also offer small group activities of art, poetry, gardening

and walking. Donations of men's clothes and phone chargers are appreciated and volunteers are welcome. themanna@ststephencanonbury.org.uk

Friends of the Rose Bowl provides vital funding to create a sense of community and opportunities for disadvantaged young people aged 8–21. The Rose Bowl Youth Centre fosters a safe, inclusive space for creativity, learning, and personal growth. Activities include play, crafts, sports, music appreciation, cooking, CV writing, interview preparation and life skills. A food bank and support for families are also provided. friendsoftherosebowl.org.uk; justgiving.com/friendsoftherosebowl

Islington Giving raises funds for Islington-based projects, working to reduce loneliness, increase opportunities and build connections for local people. They believe in the power of mobilising communities to create change and much of their funding decisions are made by local residents. This year they are celebrating 15 years of Islington Giving – keep an eye out for upcoming events. islingtongiving.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. Catering training is offered. unionchapel.org.uk/projects/margins

Islington Street Associations inspires residents to make their streets more friendly and supportive – places where people connect with their community, enjoy activities together and look out for each other. islingtonstreets@gmail.com



Islington Giving's resident-led Community Panel brings together people of all ages, backgrounds, and life experiences from across Islington to make funding decisions.

Tips on securing your home against burglars

In recent months, there has been a spate of burglaries and attempted burglaries on houses and garages in Canonbury. The timing often coincides with people being away. Items stolen have included jewellery and passports.

A WhatsApp group with neighbours is a good way to share information, and video footage from Ring cameras has proved useful. Investigate any neighbours' alarms that have been activated and if a robbery is in progress dial 999.

The police advise having secure window locks that lock with a key, restrictors on sash windows, sensors on doors and windows to detect tampering, motion sensors, and internal keyless door locks are helpful to slow down the burglar if they get into your property. Keep sheds locked and grow thorny bushes and roses over fences and walls to make access harder. A loud alarm bell and cameras are also useful deterrents. If you have a monitored alarm company, make sure you have local key holders or a key holding company.

There have been many reports of suspicious people knocking on doors offering roofing work or pretending to be delivering items so please be vigilant.

Information about the **Canonbury West Neighbourhood Watch**, together with a contact link for the scheme coordinator, can be found at ourwatch.org.uk/scheme/155187/canonbury-west



Local plant sales

Islington Gardeners' sale and Islington in Bloom promotion, Sunday 27 April 14.00–16.00, at Olden Gardens, Whistler Street, N5 1NH. islingtongardeners.org.uk

De Beauvoir Gardeners' sale, Sunday 15 May 11.30–13.00, across from St Peter's Church, Northchurch Terrace, N1 4DA. debeauvoirgardeners.org/programme-2025



A few NGS open gardens

10 Furlong Road, London, N7 8LS 1, Sunday 1 June 13.00–16.30. Tea. Adults: £5, Children: Free.

Arlington Square Gardens, N1 7DP – a group of gardens opening Sunday 29 June 14.00–17.30. Teas. Adults: £10, Children: Free. findagarden.ngs.org.uk

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 minimum annual subscription is £3.00, but further donations are welcome.

Many of you will have paid your annual subscription when you purchased tickets for the Winter Party. If you haven't paid your subscription, please pay directly into the Society's bank account. See website for details.

Or, write a cheque to The Canonbury Society and send it to The Hon. Treasurer, 3 Alwyne Road, N1 2HH, along with your contact details.



**THE
CANONBURY
SOCIETY**

54th AGM

Members will receive details of the AGM on 21 May via email. 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 2025

Philip Walker: Chairman
Jack Lambert: Planning
David Ireland: Events
Gilly Angell: Traffic
James Coates: Planning, Traffic
Judith Parker: Traffic, Trees, Website
Marcella Menzies: Membership

Rachael Henry: Safer Neighbourhoods
Ria Higgins: Trees, Website
Rosemary Brown: Trees, Events, Newsletter
Sharon White: Treasurer
Ursula Yates: Secretary, Events
Co-opted members: Susan Millership
Sarah Ross Goobey, Beatrix Payne