



The Amwell Society campaigns to protect and promote the area and its architectural heritage and to encourage a sense of community.

The Society serves Pentonville Road, Penton Rise, King's Cross Road, Farringdon Road Rosebery Avenue and St. John Street and all the streets within the area.

The Society is open to all residents.

For information about becoming a member, telephone 020 7837 0988.

Chairman – Gerard Sproston
Secretary – Elizabeth Thornton
Treasurer – Jane Wainwright
Newsletter editor – David Sulkin

Christmas 2009

BBC BOOK AT BEDTIME - *RICEYMAN STEPS*

Make a date. Monday 30th November until Friday 11th December at 22.45 BBC Radio 4. If you've never read Arnold Bennett's 1923 novel *Riceyman Steps* here's your chance to have it read to you by Robert Powell and with new technology you can Listen Again if you drift off to sleep or even miss an episode completely.

"Bennett writes magnificently of the little movements of the spirit in its daily routine". Margaret Drabble.

Satire and pathos are grippingly combined in Arnold Bennett's masterpiece of London life. Set between 1919 and 1920, it's an intensely focussed story displaying a scalpel-like characterisation of the lower middle-classes struggling to maintain status, respectability and income against all sorts of unruly human instincts and desires. The story takes place in and around a secondhand bookshop on the King's Cross Road; it charts the courtship and marriage of a bookseller, the miserly Mr Earlforward, to the vivacious but lonely widow, Mrs Arb, and follows the triumphs and setbacks of their relationship and shared passion for thrift which is eventually to prove their downfall. Economy becomes a corrosive desire which contrasts dramatically with the spontaneous greed for life embodied in the warmth of their 'general' maid, Elsie and her tender love for the shell-shocked Joe.



Gwynne Place in 1924.

The novel won the James Tait Black Memorial Prize in 1923 and was described by Joseph Conrad as "Bennett triumphant".

If you are passing the Farringdon Travelodge, King's Cross Road, look up at the green plaque erected by the Society marking the site of the fictional bookshop.

Jill Waters is a local resident and the producer of this Book at Bedtime.

Don't forget our local guide "A Village in London" is still available for sale. £3.00.

The front cover illustration is by local artist, Jean Elrington. These little books make excellent Christmas gifts for your neighbours and can be bought from the Amwell Book Company's shop and from Unpackaged in Amwell Street.

Profit goes to the Society.

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Another natty present is a subscription to the Amwell Society.

A family subscription costs £10 for three years.

£6.00 for three years for seniors.

Out of town subscriptions on request. 020 7837 0988.

AMWELL STREET CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION



Come and enjoy the Amwell Street Shopping Evening for a local shopping experience. **Monday 7th December 6.00pm – 8.00pm.** Participating shops include:

- **Amwell Book Co.** Late night opening.
- **Filthy MacNasty's** Festive good cheer.
- **Flor Unikon** Hot glögi. Win a Christmas flower display.
- **Through The Looking Glass** Punk carols & tea.
- **Myddeltons** Late night shopping & Christmas nibbles.
- **Unpackaged** Food & wine tasting plus Eco Present ideas.
- **Wallace Sewell** Pre-Christmas Sale with scarves from £15.
- **Lie Down I Think I Love You** Late night opening and wine.
- **The Hairdressers** Drinks, chocolate and seasonal good cheer.
- **Timorous Beasties** Discounts on selected fabrics and free badges.
- **Amwell Veterinary Practice** Refreshments for customers and friends.
- **Local choirs** will perform during the evening to add to the festive mood.

**Come in Victorian costume & get
10% off in many stores**



LOOKING FOR CHRISTMAS PRESENTS?

Lost London 1870 – 1945 by Philip Davies
Opera for Everybody – the story of English National Opera
by Susie Gilbert

Philip Davies' *Lost London* is published by English Heritage. This spectacular collection of 600 photographs from the former London County Council archive has been held by English Heritage for the last twenty-five years but has never before published in such depth. This unique record of the lost buildings and streets of London is not simply a nostalgic lament but the key to a new London vernacular that reinforces the character and identity of the capital's oldest neighbourhoods and resonates with a deep sense of place. Price £29.99. ISBN 978 0 9557949 8 8 Hardback, 368pp. There is a special offer. To order your copy for £25 including post and packing in the UK mainland, call Littlehampton Book Services on 01903 828503 and quote reference LLCB02. This offer is valid until 31st December 2009 or while stocks last.

Susie Gilbert's *Opera for Everybody* has been five years in the writing. This substantial volume traces the origins of Vic-Wells/English National Opera from the time of Emma Cons and Lilian Baylis [subject of the 2009 Amwell Society AGM talk], through the WW II when the company vacated Sadler's Wells and toured England under the direction of Joan Cross with the financial support of CEMA – the fore-runner of Arts Council England. The premiere of Benjamin Britten's *Peter Grimes* in 1945 represented a turning-point for the company when it was being courted to move to the Royal Opera House and – as was suspected – subsume its commitment to opera in English for the widest possible audience. The move was resisted.

Another sea-change is described in detail when the company moved from Sadler's Wells and took up residence at the London Coliseum - a bold move led by the courageous and inspiring General Director, Stephen Arlen, who sadly died shortly after the move had taken place in 1968. The book charts a course through what has become known as 'The Powerhouse Years' under Peter Jonas, Mark Elder and David Pountney [1980-1995] and brings us right up-to-date with the new age under Artistic Director, John Berry and Conductor, Edward Gardner. Price £25.00. Published by Faber and Faber. ISBN 978 0 571 22493 7

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TRIP TO GREAT AMWELL

The Society has been invited to visit the other Amwell Society in Great Amwell, Hertfordshire in spring 2010. Great Amwell is the source of the New River and it was this river and the Chadwell that fed the ponds at the New River Head which was conceived by Sir Hugh Myddelton in 1604.

The visit will include a walk round the village and a pub lunch. Any members who'd like to join the trip, please e-mail David Sulkin david@davidsulkin.co.uk - if you haven't yet done so. The date and means of transport has yet to be decided.



St. John the Baptist, Great Amwell

RICHARD DAWES FRAMING SERVICES

Studio 22-21, Wren Street, London WC1X 0HF. Frame-making, mount-cutting, plinths, perspex boxes, canvas stretchers. 07946 797610

GRANDMA CHESTER'S TRIFLE

This is a simple yet delicious recipe and very nice at Christmas-time as an alternative to Christmas Pudding.

- 2 packs of trifle sponges
- 1 can of raspberries in water or light syrup
- Raspberry jam
- Wineglassful of good dry sherry. La Ina or Tio Pepe.
- 1.5 pints of full-cream milk
- Birds custard powder
- ½ pint double cream
- Halved walnuts
- Glacé cherries

Split the sponges in half with a sharp knife and 'butter' them with raspberry jam. Make 'sandwiches' of the sponge cakes and lay them in the bottom of the glass bowl. Open the raspberries and pour them evenly, with the juice, on to the sponges. Pour the dry sherry over the sponges and the raspberries.

Make 1.5 pints of custard using the custard powder. Some people think this Victorian patent invention – fail-safe custard - is a bit in-for-a-dig and that proper egg custard is superior. That may be true, but Birds custard ensures success every time for this recipe. Follow the instructions carefully. Use a little more powder than recommended as you need the custard to set nice and thick.

Watch the custard carefully as you stir it in the saucepan. As soon as it thickens, pour it over the sponges and raspberries and put aside to cool. When the custard is cold and set, whip the double cream so that it is thick and spread it over the custard. Lay the walnuts and cherries, cut in half, in a pattern on the cream. You can make this recipe in advance - the night before for lunch the following day or early in the morning for dinner.

Like Delia Smith's recent recipes, this trifle is made from handy, cupboard ingredients. The trifle looks good in a cut-glass bowl.

GERMAN PLANE LANDS IN GARNAUT PLACE



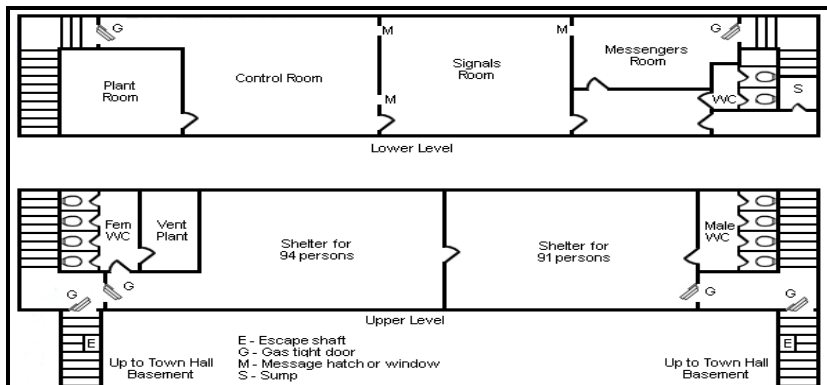
This extraordinary view was suggested for inclusion in the newsletter by a Society member, David Miller. Thank you David. A German plane sits in Garnault Place – on top of the two-tiered subterranean control centre. How the pilot managed to land in the street in one piece is a kind of miracle.

In 1939-1940 a temporary civil defence reporting centre was set up in the basement of the town hall while a permanent two-level control centre was excavated by 'cut and cover' beneath Garnault Place. There had been some objections from the Ministry of Home Security about the cost of the new control to a small borough like Finsbury but with several key targets in the area, notably the Metropolitan Water Board HQ on the opposite side of Rosebery Avenue, the construction was authorised.

The Finsbury Borough Control was opened in late 1940 and was considered to be one of the best reporting centres in the London County Council area.

The two-level bunker was reached down steps from the basement of the town hall. The upper floor of the Control was designed as a two room air raid shelter for town hall staff [one room for 94 people and the other for 91] with the Control centre located on the lower floor. External walls are 6' 6" [2m] thick.

The borough Control was closed after the war and was used for storage but with the threat of nuclear attack in the early 1950's it was reactivated in 1952. In 1959 it was designated a sub-area Control to the area control housed in Islington Town Hall's old WWII control centre. The Control centre was used for Civil Defense activities well into the 1960s.



A plan of the two-level bunker, now flooded which is under Garnault Place and was built just before WWII by Finsbury Borough Council

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

We're delighted to welcome a bumper crop of new members to the Society.

- Jesper Brehmer, Margery Street
- Peter Gregson, Claremont Sq.
- J&J Lyon, Wilmington Square
- Raj Patel, Amwell Street News
- Bridget Fox, Morton News
- Oliver Gossage, Lloyd Street
- Craig Ford and Rachel Ford Thomas, Bevin Court
- Paul Rixson, St. Paul's View
- Kate Eden, Michael Jenner, River Street.

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MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL OUR MEMBERS



COMMITTEE 2009 - 2010

The committee for 2009 – 2010 is made up of residents representing the whole of our area.

Giles Colchester, Donald Cross, Gill Davies, Douglas Doughty, Susan Friesner, Seamus McGrenera, Darian Mitchell, David Parfitt, François Smit, Gerard Sproston [Chairman], David Sulkin, Victoria Swift, Elizabeth Thornton [Secretary] and Jane Wainwright [Treasurer]. Barbara Holliman is ex-officio.

