

THE ARLINGTONIAN

August 2012 The newsletter of the Arlington Association

Fun and games in the square

The next major event on this year's busy Arlington calendar is the Summer Fete, to be held in Arlington Square on Saturday 1 September from 1.30 onwards.

After the huge success of our Diamond Jubilee Big Lunch party, the Fete is another great opportunity for all the community to come together and enjoy another fantastic fun day. Invite your friends and relations: everyone is very welcome.

There'll be a fancy dress competition on the theme of animals and insects, with TV presenter Dallas Campbell (*Bang Goes the Theory*, *The Gadget Show*) as our celebrity judge. Look out for competition details on the Arlington Square notice board next to the Community Garden.

There'll be music from accordionist Joe Corbett, and the Whittington Steel Band, who entertained us royally at the Jubilee party, will be back by popular request. Other familiar favourites will include the Human Fruit Machine, tombola and face painting. And we'll be organising children's games – our own Arlington Olympics (no javelins or funny bicycles, just rope, sacks, eggs and spoons).

There'll be plenty of food for sale and retail therapy available at stalls selling plants, quality bric-a-brac, children's toys and books with special support from Profile Books.

We have some terrific raffle prizes generously donated by local companies, including a £100 voucher for a meal at Frederick's in Camden Passage, a meal for four with a bottle of Prosecco at the Hanbury Arms, a

year's membership of the Estorick Collection, a month's membership at Sequinpark women's gym, a bottle of champagne and Next vouchers from estate agent Faron Sutaria, vouchers from Oasis hair and beauty and Crystal dry cleaners, and wine from Saponara delicatessen and restaurant.

Any profit we make will go towards plants for the square, and we hope we can also make donations to local good causes: the Arlington Project garden (see page 2) and a local youth club.

The provisional timetable has the Fancy Dress judging at 4.30, the Arlington Olympics starting at 4.45, and the raffle draw at 5.20. Then from 6pm the party continues in the Hanbury Arms with music from the Boomtown Swingalings.

Keep up to date with any changes and additions to the programme at www.arlingtonassociation.org.uk.

Can you help?

Our stalls aren't fully stocked yet, so we'd welcome donations of books, bric-a-brac (no clothes), tombola prizes (anything from baked beans to vintage Champagne), plants, toys and homemade cakes. Bring your donations to the square from 11am on the day, or contact us to arrange collection.

We also still need volunteers to man stalls, move tables and act as stewards. We'd like as many as possible so that everyone can enjoy the Fete and no-one needs to be on duty for more than an hour or so.

If you can help us in any way at the Fete, please contact us by email at arlingtonassociation@hotmail.co.uk.



Food, fun and frolics at the Jubilee party in June: the Big Lunch, girls vs boys tug-of-war, the Whittington Steel Band

New to the team

We're pleased to welcome two new members to our local Safer Neighbourhoods Team. PCSOs Tina Fagbohunge and Sam Dean have recently joined the established team of PCs Haroon Ahmed and Mark Robinson under the leadership of Sergeant Liam Redrup.

The SNT hope to be attending our Fete next month (operational duties permitting), giving us all an opportunity to meet them and get advice on crime prevention.

Join us in the garden

As well as creating the Community Garden (see page 2), volunteer gardeners are still renovating the whole of Arlington Square, spending one Saturday morning every month gardening. In the last 18 months or so, they have spread 20 tonnes of compost and planted nearly 11,000 bulbs, plants and shrubs.

Since the last newsletter, we have edged the newly-replanted rosebeds with 400 lavender bushes and planted

220 verbena and geranium perennials among the roses. There's much more to do – and you can join in.

We have two more gardening Saturdays this year. Come and join us on 8 September or 6 October from 10am to noon in the square. You don't need green fingers. Beginners and children are welcome. We'll supply the tools, the know-how and refreshments. Fresh air, good gossip and healthy exercise guaranteed.

The mayor praises our community spirit

Our new Community Garden in the corner of Arlington Square was officially opened on 21 April.

The then Mayor of Islington, councillor Phil Kelly (*right*), unveiled a plaque in the Garden and told the assembled crowd of volunteers, friends and neighbours how important the borough's green spaces are and how valuable, in the current economic climate, is volunteers' work to conserve and improve them.

As part of the opening ceremony Valerie Hansard, co-founder of the Arlington Association and its first chair, planted a tree to celebrate the Association's 10th anniversary, the Mayor ceremonially cut a 10th birthday cake and Councillor Martin Klute's jazz trio helped the celebrations go with a swing.

In spite of the earlier drought and



the monsoon weather that followed, the Community Garden continues to thrive. The six raised beds (*above right*) are overflowing with herbs, flowers, vegetables and fruit trees planted by local children and gardening volunteers.

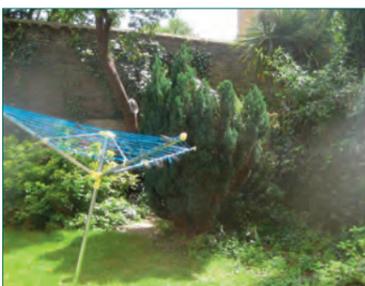
The corner has become a popular meeting place for local families.

There are fun information packs by Kate Johnstone explaining the nectar-rich crops, and residents are encouraged to take snippets of herbs for their cooking. It's hard to believe that this time last year, this corner of Arlington Square was a neglected dumping ground covered with literally tonnes of rubbish.

O come, all ye neighbours

We hate to be the first to mention the Festive Season, but you might want to make a note of the date of this year's Arlington Association Christmas Party.

We'll be celebrating in the Hanbury Arms from 5pm on Sunday 9 December. The Arlington Singers (a scratch choir fortified by a sherry or two) will lead a singalong of seasonal tunes and Christmas carols. Do come and share the mince pies and the Yuletide spirit. Everyone in the area is very welcome.



Square from above

We recently came across this aerial photograph dating from the 1940s showing Arlington Square as it was shortly after World War Two. No railings or gates, no paths, no flowerbeds, just an open space with a few trees scattered along three sides. It's impossible to tell whether the rectangle is filled with grass or is simply bare earth. St Philip's church still stands at the north corner of the square (it was demolished in 1953) and there are hardly any cars.

If you have any other old photographs of the area, we'd love to see them and perhaps use them, with



your permission, on the world wide interweb. Check out the Area History section of our website, www.arlingtonassociation.org.uk.

Helping out the Project

The Arlington Project provides residential accommodation and care for six adults with learning disabilities. Based in two adjacent houses on Arlington Square, it is at the heart of our community.

Under the guidance of Paul Thompson and Gordon McArthur, your Association is working with the residents and staff to turn



their neglected garden into a beautiful spot for them all to enjoy.

The flowerbeds have been enlarged, enriched and planted with bulbs and shrubs, and there's a new gravel path. An overgrown gazebo has been renovated and planted with climbing roses and a grapevine.

Sadly Peter Carter, a Project resident and keen gardener who had joined one of our gardening Saturdays in the square, died in July after a short illness. We shall miss his cheerful smile. We plan to plant a small tree in the Arlington Project garden in his memory.

Far left: the Project's garden, before and after. Left: Paul, Gordon, support worker Cathy and some of the residents

Open to visitors

If gardens could blush, Arlington Square would surely be a modest shade of pink. "It's a beautiful open square, isn't it?" said Patricia Yates, a director of VisitBritain, our national tourist board. "London has wonderful open green spaces where people can come and relax – and this is a show-piece of that."

Her opinion was endorsed by the UK's foremost visitor attraction expert Christopher Howard: "It's excellent. I can see that, thanks to the clever planting, there's going to be interest all year round."

These eminent authorities were just two of around 170 visitors who inspected Arlington Square as part of Open Garden Squares Weekend on 9–10 June. This was the first time our square had taken part, joining 208 London garden squares and open spaces for the special weekend that celebrates the best that London has to offer. Other gardens included 10 Downing Street, Kensington Roof Gardens, the Chelsea Physic Garden and the garden on the roof of the Queen Elizabeth Hall.

Our visitors came from as far as Hertfordshire, Kent, Cambridge, Colchester and Croydon and included representatives from the Metropolitan Public Gardens Association, who

helped fund our work in the square, and folk from the National Gardens Scheme and the London Parks and Gardens Trust. All our visitors were full of appreciation and praise for the square and our new Community Garden. Some insisted it was the highlight of their day's square-bashing.

On the Sunday, Islington Friends of the Earth added to the fun promoting this summer's Bee Cause raising awareness of the importance of bees, their recent dramatic decline and the need for bee-friendly flowers.

We're very grateful to the volunteers who helped prepare the square for the weekend, restoring the rose beds to their pre-Jubilee party splendour and adding yet more plants to the circular and perimeter beds.

Gordon and Paul proved to be excellent garden tour guides, and we handed out specially prepared explanatory leaflets about our work in the square and answered visitors' gardening questions.

We didn't enter Open Squares to make money but, thanks to the sale of plants, gorgeous olive oil from James and Maria's Catalonian farm and Jeffery's calorifically dangerous brownies, we made a small profit which we will spend on beautifying the square with even more plants.



Above: Alison Rice with VisitBritain's Patricia Yates. Below: Christopher Howard



Top-class music at St James'

Islington's nine-month Proms season is bringing top-quality music to St James' church on Saturday evenings. Fr John Burniston and a small steering group launched the ambitious ten-concert season at the Prebend Street church in March, and a series of highly professional performances have delighted audiences.

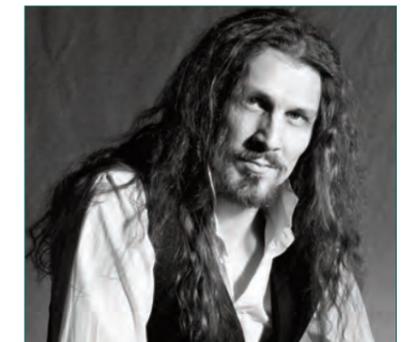
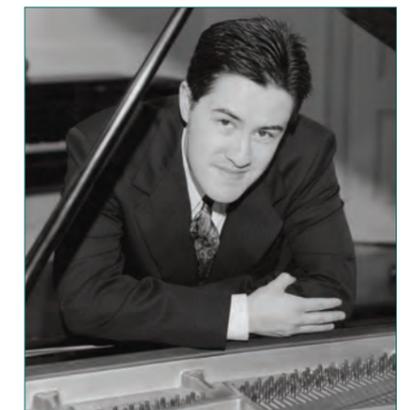
Fr John says: "Blessed with an excellent acoustic, we have been delighted that St James' has worked for all kinds of groups, from early music consorts and Irish ceilidh bands to mixed choirs and top quality piano recitalists.

"Thanks to the generosity of our performers, and sponsorship from the Arlington Association and the Duchess of Kent pub, we have been able to more than cover our costs, and we hope that there will be enough interest in mounting a second series next year."

The standard of performance has been extremely high, as anyone who has been to a concert knows.

There are four more concerts to come. Pianist Andrew Brownell (*right*) – "one of the most significant pianists of his generation" says *Musical Opinion* magazine – offers us a celebrity piano recital on Saturday 22 September. Matthew Tomko (*below right*) was described by Antonín Dvořák, the composer's grandson, as an "impressive, dramatic and nuanced" performer. He'll be singing old American songs at St James' on 23 September. Then there will be a Kids Prom featuring talented local children on 6 October, and the season ends with a concert by the Hermitage String Quartet on 24 November

Tickets cost between £4 and £10 and are available in advance from St James' Vicarage, 1A Arlington Square, or at the door on the night.



A brief history of our houses

Some of our older readers may recall that the pub on the corner of Arlington Avenue and Bevan Street was called the Clothworkers' Arms. And some may also know the reason why: not because cloth was ever worked in these parts, but because much of our area was once owned by The Clothworkers' Company. Their archivist has helpfully provided a history of the Company's holdings here, which will appear in due course on our website. Here, to whet your appetite, are some edited highlights:

Around 1540, after the dissolution of the monasteries, The Clothworkers' Company acquired a 34-acre estate in Islington. Then in 1562 Dame Ann Packington bequeathed a further 60 acres to the Company, which became known as the Packington Estate (sound familiar?).

Although the Clothworkers owned the land, both the estates were "copyhold" (we don't know: ask a property lawyer), and the Lord of the Manor was actually the Dean and Chapter of St Paul's Cathedral – hence the names of

St Paul Street, Canon Street, Prebend Street etc.

For nearly 400 years the estates were let out to farmers. But the building of the New North Road in 1812 and the opening of the Regent's Canal in 1820 made the land more valuable. In 1845–6 the estates were enfranchised (see lawyer, as above), which meant the land could be leased to developers for residential building.

Property boom

The most notable of these was Henry Rydon, who sub-leased land to various builders including W. T. Catling (he built half the west side of Arlington Square), John Hill (most of the east side), Edward Rowland, Thomas Evans, and Job Palmer. In all, they built 335 houses on the estates between 1847 and 1858. The church of St Philip the Evangelist was built on Arlington Square in 1855.

The map reproduced here, by kind permission of The Clothworkers' Company, shows the layout of the Packington and Islington Estates in 1870. By now Arlington Square had acquired curving paths, lawns and peripheral planting.

Rydon and Co had been granted 80-year leases, and when these expired in 1927 The Clothworkers' Company took over the maintenance of what became their Corporate Estate. By now, it consisted of 1,052 properties, including houses, factories, shops, pubs and a cinema.

In 1945 the company sold the whole estate, which had suffered bomb damage in World War Two, to the London and Manchester Assurance Co, whose name appears on the birdbaths in Arlington and Union Squares.

There's much more that can be told, but we've run out of space here. You'll have to wait until the complete history appears on www.arlingtonassociation.org.uk. Meanwhile, our thanks again to The Clothworkers' Company, who welcome serious researchers. For further information, or to make an appointment to consult their archive, please contact archivist@clothworkers.co.uk.



Union Square's new look: how to have your say

As part of their redevelopment of the Packington Estate, the Hyde Group has given £174,000 to Islington Council for improving Union Square Gardens. (This was a condition of Hyde's planning permission.)

Landscape architects Breeze, who are based in Highbury Grove, have been asked to come up with some ideas on how the square could be improved to encourage greater use by local people. And Hyde Housing are now inviting the neighbouring community to give their opinions of the designs.

The plans for the garden square will be on display on Friday 14 and Saturday 15 September, from noon to 4pm in the Arc Centre, 98B St Paul Street. Following the Friday presentation, there will be a Victorian-themed street party in Union Square from 4 to 7pm.

For more information on the Union Square consultation, keep your eyes on our website.

