



# ISLINGTON PENSIONERS FORUM

The voice of Islington's older community  
May 2019 Newsletter

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Office opens from 10.30 am to 2.30 pm Monday & Wednesday (but 'phone first)

Charity No: 1043081

## SPEAKERS ON HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES IN ISLINGTON AT OUR APRIL FORUM MEETING

● **HEALTH WATCH ISLINGTON** is a charity with Trustees aimed at being representative of the borough and a staff team of six part-timers and local volunteers.

**Emma Whitby, Chief Executive of Health Watch**, Islington spoke at our April Forum meeting. She explained that the organisation was responsible for keeping watch and initiating actions in all Islington NHS outlets and nursing homes.

It was important to meet with local voluntary organisations and charities to bring something extra — motivating and enabling community collective memory to have a bearing on developments.

There were two ways of carrying out inspections: giving advanced information of the date and what in particular is being inspected, or arriving unannounced and doing "customer journeys". Health Watch has asvisiting services, e.g. podiatry, and there is special care to see whether people with dementia are included.

They had checked on the availability and access to the Council's social workers' telephone lines and after reporting on this exercise there had been improvements.

● The second speaker at our April Forum was **Will Lewis from the Council's Social Services** department. He was doing a piece of work with people of all ages across the borough, aimed at making Islington the best possible.

Will invited Forum members to make observations and engage in discussion based on "GROW", i.e. **G** (goal), **R** (reality), **O** (options), and **W** (way forward).

2019 is the year when dementia patients and services are the main project. For instance they are checking with GPs and their contact with carers, and she announced that a new centre dedicated to dementia services will be built behind Whittington hospital.

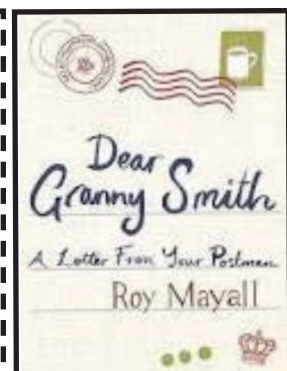
At University College Hospital there are short presentations on various things, including helping older people to use smartphones and to access digital services.

In the questions and discussion, problems of hospital transport were raised and the proposal was made that a day conference could be arranged for older people with Whittington hospital (like the one organised annually with Guys and St. Thomas's NHS Trust in Lambeth). Emma noted these and other issues. The Forum executive committee will follow them up with her.

You are invited to the  
**ISLINGTON PATIENT GROUP**  
Wednesday, 18th June, 5.30 for meeting 6 — 8 p.m.  
**ST. LUKE'S COMMUNITY CENTRE**  
90 Central Street, EC1V 8AJ

He made notes of the issues raised, including: Libraries should be open for more hours; it was a problem that the Drivers Community Centre had reduced its opening hours by one hour; there should be more places where computers are available for public use; and also it would help if there were scanners for public use to help with copies of documents; there should be more public toilets.

**Come to see two short films** — one about the NPC "Right not Charity" and the other about multi-cultural London called "We are all Londoners". (have Tea/coffee and cake with us)  
**Tuesday 7th May, 3 p.m. at the IPF Hall**  
**1a Providence Court, Providence Place, N1 0RN**  
The occasion is the annual general meeting of the National Pensioners Education and Welfare Centre charity to which visitors are invited



page 3  
Chapter Nine  
'Modernisation'  
mech-ed and mech-able

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# A VIEW FROM THE CHAIR

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Sorry I could not make the April Forum. April has been a month of many causes the Islington Pensioners Forum supports.

Climate change with the Extinction Rebellion took over Marble Arch, Oxford Street, Waterloo and Parliament Square. This links with my letter to Islington Tribune and my meeting with Nathalie Sowden from St Mary Magdalena Academy. It seems a young 15 year old and a 16 year old Swedish teenager Greta Thunberg talk more sense than politicians.

The rise in London knife crime is frightening for young and old. Islington Pensioners Forum has attended talks given by Met. Police, communal workers at Haringey Pensioners Group but so far there are more questions than answers to solve this terrible rise.

From the House of Perks ( Lords ) a report by the Committee on Intergenerational Fairness has been launched. I listened to Lord True, chairman of the com-

mittee on the radio commentating on the report. He said that it was not aimed at today's pensioners but at future generational inequality!

But as today's pensioners know what is spoken of as the future can happen today, and in any case we (today's pensioners) are standing up for future pensioners! They will be working longer, paying more and getting less in state pension.

Lord True said that they were calling for some of the outdated (?) benefits based purely on age to be removed or means-tested, i.e. policies such as the state pension triple lock, free TV licences for over-75s. free bus passes and winter fuel payments (currently £200 for under-80s and £300 for over-80s).

And such proposals for cuts must be seen against a background of the crisis in social care, and the regular big headlines about the problem of loneliness among older people.

## VOLUNTEERING MATTERS BE SOMEONE'S GRANDMENTOR?

### ARE YOU OVER 50 AND LOOKING TO GIVE BACK?

Grandmentors is an award-winning programme from the national charity Volunteering Matters — matching volunteer mentors aged 50+ with young people aged 16-24. Volunteers meet with a young person every week to boost their confidence and work towards goals they have planned together.

You will receive full training and expenses from a dedicated project officer throughout

#### **Your local contact:**

Allison.bennett@volunteeringmatters.org.uk

## DOREEN KELLY

We are very sad to say that Doreen Kelly has died. Doreen ran the bingo in the IPF hall at Providence Court for many years. Always with a friendly smile, she would turn up week after week with the refreshments and make all those who took part feel comfortable and welcome. Doreen was kind and friendly, overcoming in practice, in the community, the isolation that so many people experience and so many others talk about. We send our condolences to Doreen's family and friends.

## **FOUR PLACES LEFT FOR BLACKPOOL!**

Hurry, hurry! It's not too late to join us for the National Pensioners Convention Parliament in Blackpool, and we are pleased to report that we are booked in for bed, breakfast and evening meal at the newly modernised historic Metropole hotel on the promenade.

**Our coach leaves Islington Town Hall at 11 am on Monday 10th June, returning on Friday 14th June.**

As usual the programme covers all the important rights of older people — pensions, health and care, transport, housing, the digital era, etc. with good speakers and discussion; the hotel has evening entertainment, it is free to ride on the famous Blackpool tram for those attending the Parliament and there is the dance at the Winter Gardens on Wednesday 12th June. Join friends and make new friends!

**Only £250**



The hotel started out in 1776 with 34 bedrooms, three dining rooms and a coffee lounge, and got its Victorian image in 1873. In 1955 it became one of Billy Butlin's hotels and in 2004 it was taken over by Baritannia Hotels. As of 2018 the hotel has been modernised and has 223 bedrooms, two restaurants and a cafe. It is the only hotel in Blackpool right on the seafront.

## Dear Granny Smith : Chapter 9 — Modernisation

*Last month we published the first part of chapter 9, ending with: "We could call it 'Mc-Mail'. It has a certain ring." . . . .*

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*Chapter 9 continued from April Newsletter*

Again, there's no obvious flaw in this [teams of casual workers], but it removes the traditional relationship between the postie and his round. My uniform allows me to approach your house without suspicion. Specifically, I know when you are away. The question then is: who do you want wandering up your garden path and peering into your front windows: an old familiar face who has been serving you and your family for years, or a bunch of McPosties who come bursting out of a van every morning?

**DOUBLE-DECKER LORRIES AND LATER DELIVERY TIMES.** Double-decker lorries are already in use in some parts of the country. You can see the reasons why they were brought in. Only one lorry in the place of two. Obvious savings.

Unfortunately, they also take twice as long to fill up, and as the mail isn't always ready at exactly the same time, often the lorries are leaving half-empty. Whoops. Double-decker lorries carrying the same amount of mail as single-decker lorries: someone hasn't been thinking everything through properly.

So now the idea is that the lorries will have to leave later to allow them to get filled up properly, which will put back start times for the rest of the postal service too. That's right, folks: modernisation in this case means later start times, yet again. A new suggested start time for delivery of 7.00 am will mean that no one will leave the office until 10.30 at the earliest, which will mean last delivery at 3.00 pm or even later.

**WALKING SPEEDS.** A few months back, if you remember, there was talk about posties having to increase the speed at which they walk: from 2.7 mph on average to 4 mph.

This would save the Royal Mail millions, we are told.

I know exactly where this came from.

There's a programme called Pegasus which is supposed to measure how long each walk will take. You put in all the facts and figures and then a little computer-generated man walks through a little computer-generated walk — at 2.7 mph no doubt — and, when it's run its course, it tells you how long it should take to do your round.

It estimated my round at three hours. It actually takes between four and five hours to complete, occasionally more.

That's where that walk-speed estimate came from: from someone in an office somewhere playing with Pegasus, working out that if they increased the speed of

the little computer-generated man he could do even more computer-generated work.

Of course, real posties do not walk at 2.7 mph. We scoot, we ride, we jog, we do loops, we get on our bikes and we get off again, we stop to deliver parcels and get signatures for Special Delivery and Recorded Delivery items, and, when the person isn't in, we write them a card telling them that they should pick it up at the office. We need to stop for a pee or a tea-break occasionally. Sometimes we even like to ask after the customer's health. And we do all of this at breakneck speed.

We couldn't go any faster.

"Pegasus": that's a mythological flying horse, isn't it?

I could do with one of those.

**WALK SEQUENCING MACHINES.** This, of course, is the tour de force of the whole modernisation programme. The Royal Mail currently already owns a complete national infrastructure of Walk Sorting Machines. These are machines that read the post codes and sort out the mail according to the rounds. When I get in in the morning, there are already a number of pre-sorted bundles waiting for me. The bulk of the mail has by now been broken down into individual rounds, allowing me to begin throwing off my frame immediately.

A Walk Sequencing Machine takes this process one step further. Not only is the mail broken up into rounds, but the pre-sorted bundles are already sequenced so I can throw them all off in order. The machines can be programmed to the individual roads and the individual houses. All I have to do is look at the first address, then it's 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13 Relativity Crescent, followed by 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12 etc.

You can see the advantage of this, and there's not a postie in the whole world who would object.

Trouble is, they don't work.

Or rather, to be absolutely precise about this, they work a bit, but not all that well. They speed things up, but not all that much.

Once again they are being trialled. They were due to be introduced in October 2008, but so far they still only exist in their original trial offices. There are all sorts of problems with them. Walk Sequencing Machines can't cope with differently shaped packages or obscure handwriting or other human factors, and much of the job still has to be done the old-fashioned way. In the end, the actual time-saving each of these multi-million pound machines provides is, on average, about seven minutes per round.

I have to apologise now for some unpleasant language.

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*continued on page 4*

*continued from page 3*

The operative terms here are “mech-ed” and “mech-able”. Mech-ed mail is mail that has already been sorted through the machine. Mech-able mail is mail that is capable of being sorted. The aim was to get as much as 80 per cent of the mail mech-ed by now but the figure is much more like 50 per cent. There is a lot of mech-able mail, but not many mechanisms to mech it with.

Which, roughly translated, means that there’s been an almighty cock-up, and while the Royal Mail has lost, removed, or frittered away large numbers of its staff (up

to 30 per cent in the last two years) it has not replaced them with the requisite number of machines.

Or maybe — or am I being too paranoid here? — all of this is being done on purpose in order to run the Royal Mail down, in order to make it fail, so that when, eventually, it is sold off to a private company, it can be bought for a song. After which, of course, when the new methods are rolled out, and the new, slimmer, faster, corporate McMail takes over, and share prices begin to soar, it is those who hold the most shares who will make the most profit.

I wonder who that might be?

It won’t be Tom, that’s for sure.

## **THE BALLAD OF Highbury Barn**

**Richard Rhys O’Brien and friends** bring to life, on this CD and in the accompanying booklet, the history of Highbury Barn and the surrounding district — at one time “London’s prime dairy country”.

They start in the 1740s: “Throughout the 18th century the Barn developed a reputation as an airy place to dine, as a stop on out-of-town excursions where the likes of Irish playwright Oliver Goldsmith, the Templars, and the Highbury Society of Dissenters gathered for good conversation, food and drink.”

“In the second half of the 18th century . . . the Barn graduated to serving homebrewed beer and added facilities for games”. . . and “When demand outstripped supply they built the Highbury Brewery on the Holloway Road. Next door was the Highbury Brewery Tap — now The Lamb”. . .

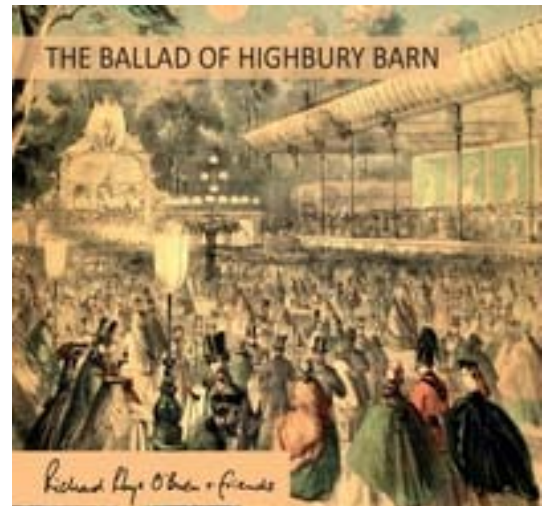
The Barn — by then named the Highbury Assembly House hosted dinners for the businesses and societies in London; a hot air balloon was launched; Irish composer, Michael Balfe’s song was performed. in 1861 and “as the genteel villas and townhouses encircled Highbury Fields the popularity of the Barn became of concern”. The annual renewal of the licence for dancing and singing was challenged.

However, larger-than life, actor, impresario and clown, Edward Giovanelli” came along; he took the Barn into its most spectacular era with half a million lamps enhancing an enormous Leviathan dancing platform; the Highbury Polka of its musical director, Charles Handel Randel Marriott was accompanied by daring acts from the likes of Selina Young “self-styled Blondin, the first tightrope walker to cross the Thames”.

“Giovanelli worked hard to improve the reputation of Highbury Barn” but the critics were growing. One “complained that the band music was totally inappropriate” and the entertainment was considered “rather lowbrow”, especially the Baby Shows. The last straw seems to have been “the Can Can exploits of Mlle Colonna (or Amelia Newman) and her Parisian style troupe.”

Finally “five hundred [German Lutheran sugar] bakers and their five hundred wives” were banned from having a little music at their annual dinner’. The Barn as a pleasure ground, closed its doors in 1872. As Richard Rhys O’Brien says: “Like for the other great pleasure gardens of London, the party was over. But the memory is still alive.”

**Review by Dot Gibson**



**CD cover picture shows the crowd enjoying entertainment at Highbury Barn in the 1800s**

*The commentary, pictures, music, songs and poems in this DVD plus booklet are delightful.*

*I bought a copy for £10 in Highbury Barn pub. You can get more information at [www.richardrhysobrlen.com](http://www.richardrhysobrlen.com)*

*There are 18 tracks. The following titles will give you a flavour. . . .*

**CREAM CAKES AND ALE**

**BEER BEER**

**FLOATING OVER Highbury**

**THE Highbury Polka**

**THE Highbury Cradle Song**

**SELINA'S STEP TOO FAR**

**HI JINKS AT Highbury**

**HALF A MILLION LAMPS**

**OH! I WANT TO GO TO Highbury**

*Richard Rhys O’Brien wrote all the lyrics, and music is provided by Bruce Knapp (ukulele) Nicola Hadley (accordion) Sarah Wilkinson (piano) and the World Harmony Orchestra*

## NHS News . . . . . Pam Zinkin

Will the NHS be better with a new secretary of health? It seems unlikely. The new secretary is Matt Hancock. He has just launched a report with the Taxpayers' Alliance (TPA), calling for increased automation of NHS services through partnerships with private sector technology companies.

The Taxpayers' Alliance is a right-wing lobby group backed by big business, which seeks to drastically reduce the role of the state and has previously called for replacing the NHS with an "insurance-based model" of healthcare.

The United States' experiences of insurance-based health care should frighten us as it is most expensive and unfair. Medical Insurance companies often exclude anyone who has a chronic or ongoing condition. So the patient has to pay their own medical bills. This is one of the main causes of bankruptcy in the US. Since most of us have at least one diagnosis in this category we need to beware and resist any move to that model.

But that's not all that should concern us. The report is just the latest in a string of moves by the Health Secretary to open up hugely valuable, publicly-held NHS datasets to the private sector. Vast amounts of private NHS data (that is your own medical information) have

been transferred to private firms, under the auspices of recent public-private partnerships to develop artificial intelligence and other data-driven technologies for the NHS.

One such example is the partnership between the Royal Free NHS Trust in London and a company called DeepMind where the agreement provided DeepMind with access to 1.6 million patients' medical records, which it would use to develop and launch its new healthcare app, "Streams".

Although the way DeepMind handles NHS data has changed since the Information Commissioner's Office deemed the agreement to have breached the Data Protection Act, the company has stated that the app could help save lives lost each year by enabling doctors to identify life-threatening illnesses like sepsis more quickly. These sorts of big claims made at a relatively early stage are fairly common in the private medtech sector, partly due to its reliance on investors' demands for high returns. While occasionally the technologies do yield good results in the end, the sector has not been held to the same regulatory or clinical standards that we have for the biopharma. So you may not want some private companies to use your data yet.

### Social Care in England: spending £700 million less, and 13,000 fewer granted help

The King's Fund finds that the social care system in England is at "crisis point". They found a 2 per cent rise in new requests for adult social care since 2015-16, with 1.84 million requests in 2017-18, but almost 13,000 fewer granted help over the same period. Local council spending on social care has dropped in real terms and is now £700 million below what it was in

2010-11. The study found that it is not just older people who are requesting help, with a rise in the number of adults of working age seeking support — up from 500,000 in 2015-16 to nearly 524,000.

IPF, as part of the National Pensioners Convention campaigns for a social care system, free at the point of need, paid through general taxation, like the NHS.

### SOME GOOD NEWS ON HOUSING IN ISLINGTON

At a time of a great housing crisis and the development of expensive homes — many on short-term contracts and replacing social housing — it is a welcome development that we are able to report on a new social housing scheme. The four new family homes (one 3-bed and three 2-bed flats) are at 45 Eden Grove. They replace a former, long time empty, school caretaker's 2-bed house, meet all the GLA's and Islington Council's stringent standards for space and accessibility and have social rents.

Dairmaid Ward, Holloway Councillor and Executive dMember for Housing and Development on Islington Council officially opened the homes. It was developed by Barnsbury Housing Association working with Islington and Shorditch Housing Association. Barnsbury HA has 299 homes within Islington and is actively looking for more small sites locally to build more homes for social rent.

When many housing associations are being transformed into big corporate bodies, it is good to see Barnsbury maintaining the principle of homes with security and social rents. The Association took over Highbury View sheltered housing last year and have since developed flats specially for front-line workers.



# INFORMATION

BINGO	This is suspended for the time being. We will keep you informed.
Lunch and a chat on Wednesdays	1 pm in IPF Hall, 1a Providence Court, Providence Place N1 0RN
IT and Smart Phones on Wednesdays	3.30 p.m in the IPF Hall, address above
Wednesday 7th May 3 p.m.	See page 1 — invitation to NPC charity films, tea/coffee and cake
Thursday 16 May	10.30 a.m. Forum meeting at Islington Town Hall. Speaker from Friends of the Earth
Thursday 20th June	10.30 a.m. Forum meeting at Islington Town Hall. <b>Speaker to be booked</b>
Thursday 18 July	10.30 a.m. ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE FORUM
No Forum in August, but 17th August	IPF GARDEN PARTY AT HIGHBURY VIEW details later
Thursday 19th September	10.30 a.m. Forum meeting at Islington Town Hall. Speaker GLA Councillor Jennette Arnold

**Highbury View Tenants Association Garden Party**  
**Saturday 1st June Starts at 1 p.m.**  
 Entrance at the garden gate in Ronalds Road (Highbury Fields end)  
*MUSIC — FOOD — GOOD COMPANY*

## House of Lords Select Cttee. Report: Tackling Generational Fairness

The National Pensioners Convention Briefing Paper offers an analysis of this new House of Lords Report (25th April 2019) saying that it “is just the latest in a long line to argue for the scrapping or means-testing of universal pensioner benefits, on the premise that older people are no longer living in poverty. The report also argues that concessions such as the bus pass or winter fuel allowance are ‘outdated’ and unfair to young people, and that the government should rightly do more to support younger generations in the housing and employment market.”

### The NPC Briefing Paper concludes:

“Solutions to young people’s problems will not be found by reducing entitlements for pensioners. Instead, improving the new generation’s chances requires profound changes in how we structure our economy and distribute wealth.”

- **NPC Briefing Paper** can be found on: [www.npcuk.org](http://www.npcuk.org)
- **The House of Lords Report** can be accessed on: <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201719/idselect/dintfair/329/32902.htm>

NEW MEMBER	<input type="checkbox"/>	RENEWING SUB	<input type="checkbox"/>
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