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Binnie Walsh – see page 6 (Photo Dominic Pinto)

is nothing to be gained by selling it, either to their own nominees or a genuine third party. It is unlikely that anyone would want to take the site off their hands. Their options are limited. **TH**

## APPEALS AND AGENTS

The inspector noted in his decision in the above case that *"It became apparent that the appellant's planning witness was not qualified, as identified in his evidence. In particular he is not a member of the RTPI (Royal Town Planning Institute) and has not completed the Certificate in UK Planning Law. I accept, as put by the council, that this is a serious matter. However, I do not consider that means all the planning evidence should have no weight, but clearly the evidence has to be considered carefully, particularly avoiding areas cut and pasted from other decisions, and the weight attached to some aspects will be diminished."* We cannot fail to notice that this same agent is also representing the developer in their attempt to turn the Admiral Mann into flats. We reported last issue how the owner held an open day, at which the loyal and determined Friends of the Admiral Mann attended in order to (a) have a look at the state of the pub and (b) helpfully advise any prospective purchasers of the planning context. Concurrent with this apparent attempt to sell the pub, the owner submitted an appeal against the refusal of consent for the most profitable scheme, namely the demolition option. In the appeal documents, the agent, who had informed the Planning Inspector that his firm is constantly busy yet curiously has no website, claimed the Friends had attempted to sabotage the sale by staging a 'protest'. The Friends are a determined and passionate bunch but a dozen disheartened pub-goers on a wet Friday morning, mourning the unnecessary loss of their local, can hardly be described as a protest. It appears the same agents and solicitors seem to crop up time and again to offer their professional services to those seeking to destroy pubs. Pub campaigning is a small world, and apparently getting smaller! **JW/TH**

## FERRY HOUSE BACK AFLOAT

What is believed to be the oldest surviving pub on the Isle of Dogs has reopened after over one year lying empty. CAMRA's East London & City Branch was successful in securing an ACV on this Enterprise pub, which had been refurbished to a neutral standard, and advertised on the company's website. Amidst rumours of two potential tenants falling through, we are delighted to report that the riverside pub is open once more. The new tenant has previous experience at the Crown & Shuttle and the Water Poet, both in E1. The Ferry House is in a fabulous location on the tip of the Isle of Dogs and very convenient for the Thames Path, within easy striking distance of the South Bank via the Greenwich foot tunnel. Given the decimation of pubs on the island and the crazy property prices around Canary Wharf, this was one we really thought we had lost. Perhaps we should learn to be more positive! **JW**

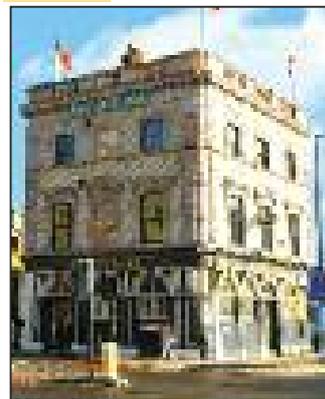
## GEORGE TAVERN, STEPNEY

Every now and then we take delight in reporting a true victory for the little guy. David has apparently defeated Goliath at Stepney's famous George Tavern. The Grade II listed George, which sits on the Commercial Road, roughly

midway between Aldgate and the East India Docks, boasts a small part of the original cobbled London Road as its beer garden! It was built in the 1820s on the site of a previous pub, the Halfway House, and is believed to contain some brickwork in its structure which is over 700 years old. For the last fourteen years it has been lovingly and slowly restored to something resembling its former Georgian glory, while maintaining a refreshing quirkiness which reflects its notoriety as a music venue that has attracted such acts as Amy Winehouse, the Magic Numbers and Nick Cave, among many others. It also doubles as a studio for still and moving images and for recording and events. Pauline Forster represents the epitome of diversity and originality and is a fine custodian for this rare piece of London's commercial and cultural heritage.

As long ago as 2008, Mrs Forster was dragged into a dispute when Swan Housing acquired the former Stepney's nightclub, which adjoins the George. Sadly the plot was split at auction when the George was acquired in 2002. The housing association had proposed to demolish the old night club and build a mixed use development comprising flats and retail which would share a party wall with the George as well as substantially block daylight to the rear yard and encircle the rear of the pub. Planning consent was refused by Tower Hamlets Council but Swan Housing were successful on appeal. This normally means game over but Pauline was not to be disheartened or deterred and at the helm of a huge campaign, featuring celebrity support from Sir Ian McKellen and Kate Moss, she took the battle to the High Court.

In petitioning the Judge, Pauline's legal team asked for the planning consent to be quashed on the grounds that the Planning Inspector had failed to examine the impact on the viability of the George Tavern, which enjoys a late licence and features live entertainment on many evenings, showcasing live bands in a sadly dwindling live music scene across London. Mr Justice Lindblom dismissed this claim in August 2015 but Team George picked themselves up from this setback and went to the Court of Appeal where Lord Justice Laws allowed the appeal on the 'light blocking' grounds but not on the noise impact. In his judgement, handed down at the end of June, the Appeal Court Judge agreed that the impact on the established business at the George Tavern, due to the loss of light resulting from the proposal, and particularly the diminution of light to a staircase used extensively for filming and photo shoots, was a significant issue that the Planning Inspector had failed to adequately examine. He quashed the planning consent.



The noise issue grounds were not allowed. Intriguingly the Judge said that there might be some merit in the argument that noise complaints arising from the occupants of the adjacent flats, could conceivably lead to a licensing review and a restriction of the business, but that the argument should have been advanced in the

planning appeal, and developed before the Inspector. We could read much into this and there is, perhaps, some minor contradiction between this position and what the learned Judge had said about the light issue, but for us the headline message has to be this: if you want to stand any chance of relying on a particular grounds of objection, this needs to be sensibly developed and presented convincingly at all stages of the planning process, including the initial planning consultation and any subsequent appeal. If the planners or the Inspector chose to dismiss it, and you were on solid ground all along, then you could later find a friend in a High Court or Appeal Court Judge! Let us not mention the small matter of legal fees eh? We at *London Drinker* are delighted for Pauline and the whole team and we wish her many congratulations on this unexpected and thoroughly deserved victory.

James Ketchel, founder of charity Music Heritage UK, said, "*The George Tavern is a crucial grassroots music venue and cultural hub giving a stage to countless up and coming bands, and is a vital asset to the local community. Pauline Forster has opened up her pub and venue to musicians, artists, actors, poets and performers for over ten years, while resorting the Grade-II listed building to its former glory. For all of this to be threatened for the sake of a handful of 'luxury' flats is a crying shame. Music Heritage UK is proud to be supporting her campaign to keep live music and performance at the George, in what is, let's be frank, a cultural desert.*" **JW**

## GOOD SAMARITAN, WHITECHAPEL

The official 'hospital tap' and a well-established favourite of staff, patients and visitors to the Royal London Hospital, over many decades, currently finds itself threatened by a Trojan Horse attack on the upper floors and yard, originating from the freeholder, the Barts Charity. A petition by regular Chris Mills has attracted over 5,500 signatures including a response from the Member of Parliament for Bethnal Green & Bow, Rushanara Ali MP. We should point out that the petition, the full text of which can be read here: [www.change.org/p/london-borough-of-tower-hamlets-save-good-samaritan-public-house](http://www.change.org/p/london-borough-of-tower-hamlets-save-good-samaritan-public-house), suggests that the pub is to be demolished. The planning application from Barts Charity does not request this but instead seeks to remodel the pub internally, creating private self-contained flats above and to the side, and moving the toilets and kitchen into the basement. We were somewhat impressed with the excellent and comprehensive heritage statement that accompanied the application. This was one of the best presented and most thoroughly researched we had read but we disagree with the conclusion, namely that there are no heritage aspects of the current 1930s built pub of any significance and as such any internal bashing about is fair game.

What makes a pub? What is it about a particular pub that makes people visit time and again? Location must surely play a part but if you served excellent beer in a bus shelter, would folks still flock to use it? There must be something intrinsic within the building fabric, some sense of identity and belonging, embodied not just within the bricks, mortar, timber and glass, but reinforced by treasured memories of significant life events, moments shared with other punters, routine and ritual built up over many years. The Good Sam

is a very popular and well patronised pub in its present guise, which we accept has evolved since Truman's famous interwar pub architect A E Sewell first sketched out the plans in 1937. Those of us into pub heritage will mourn the removal of internal divisions, ornate mirrors and tiles and all other such paraphernalia but the present pub works perfectly well, shabby and worn as it might be. This appears to be a classic case of mixed-use intensification in order to maximise the asset value. CAMRA's East London & City Branch opposed this application. Fundamentally, we just don't trust developers who say 'let us build flats on this site and we will reopen the pub once the work is finished, honest'. We have far too many shut pubs to show for such naïve trust. Tower Hamlets planners will undoubtedly have received many objections, not least from NHS staff. We will report the outcome in a future edition. **JW**

## GREENWOOD HOTEL, NORTHOLT

In an area where they have closed several pubs recently, JD Wetherspoon's have now re-opened this classic 1930s pub, built originally for Courage & Co. By all accounts they have made a good job of the refurbishment. The photo comes courtesy of Paul Gordon. **TH**



## HORSESHOE, HAMPSTEAD

This is odd. The Hampstead Neighbourhood Forum nominated this pub (formerly the Three Horseshoes when owned by Wetherspoon's) to Camden Council for ACV listing but the application was rejected. The council did however grant ACV listing to the Pentameters Theatre which is on the first floor above the pub. Presumably the theatre is classed as a separate entity with its own entrance. The pub was the original site of the Camden Town brewery and is still operated by them. **TH**

## KENSINGTON PARK HOTEL, LADBROKE GROVE

Notwithstanding our previous report about the new manager and the record relaunch of the KPH, sharp-eyed readers have informed us that the premises are being advertised for lease by leisure brokers AG&G, described as a 'landmark Notting Hill pub/former hotel.' Curiously, the sales particulars claim that the pub is 'available on the open market for the first time in over 50 years!' Readers will recall that Steven Archer of SWA Developments paid Punch £3.2 million for the freehold in 2014. This was, of course, sold under the radar by Punch, which gives you some idea of how they do business. Now offers in the region of £250,000 annual rent are being invited for a 20 year lease. Yes, you read that correctly – £250,000 per year! The pub continues to feature live music and initial reports on the new