

**RESPONSE TO THE FULL PLANNING APPLICATION
(REF. P2015/4907/FUL) RELATING TO THE
FORMER PUBLIC CONVENIENCES
ON CLERKENWELL GREEN
SUBMITTED BY
THE CLERKENWELL GREEN PRESERVATION SOCIETY LTD.**

Clerkenwell Green, the public open space between the Priory of St. John and the Nunnery of St. Mary, continues to be used by protesters and those wishing to express rights and reform, as happens on May Day each year. From time immemorial Clerkenwell Green has had the unique opportunity, being just outside the City Walls and the restraints of that City, to see and hear orators declaim, establishing social reform that we enjoy today. In the nineteenth century it was Marx, Parnell and Gladstone who came to speak on the Green, drawing crowds of over 2000, as recorded in "The London Illustrated News".

Conscious of the lack of sanitation, the celebrated engineer, George Jennings, built the Ladies and Gents. Lavatories on Clerkenwell Green in 1915, now threatened by Islington Council's Planning Application with demolition. Jennings was internationally famous, having installed the underground public lavatories in Hyde Park for the Great Exhibition, coining the phrase "spend a penny". In Clerkenwell, he ensured that the view from Middlesex Sessions House was maintained by putting the new Public Conveniences underground, thus safeguarding prisoners' security.

Some forty years ago, Islington Council closed these Public Conveniences, which remain intact, as the attached photographs show. They are of particular interest, urinals of porcelain and marble, with the Victorian crest of George Jennings on each. The pine panelling of private cubicles is in good condition. Already Islington Council refer to the removal of asphalt from the square panes of glass of the roof and the tessellated Italian floor is sound.

The development of Clerkenwell, with the expectation of an increase in pedestrian traffic from Crossrail, Farringdon and the installation at the eastern height of the public open space of a statue of Emily Pankhurst, will increase tourism to the Green. The restoration and opening of the Public Conveniences, in themselves, will be a much-needed amenity. The proposal by Islington Council for drop-ins to use the sanitary facilities of local pubs, is not welcome. However, this demonstrates that the Council recognises there is a need for Public Conveniences to be easily available for public use. Fortunately, those on the Green could be restored for use. The prospect of the revival of the performances of the Mediaeval Mystery plays and the Perambulation of the Guild of Parish Clerks to the Clerks' Well in Farringdon Lane, engage with the traditions and culture of the area. Clerkenwell Green, the centre of the Conservation Area, the first in the borough to be so designated, is the cradle of democracy in this county and its heritage worthy of respect.

This Planning Application requires the destruction of the Public Conveniences on Clerkenwell Green, knocking down the dividing central wall, to make room for a proposed underground café, bar or gallery. The Clerkenwell Green Preservation Society, the local amenity group, deplores what is being called this "Municipal Vandalism" and strongly opposes this Planning Application. To convert this site to commercial use is wholly against the Conservation Area designation, particularly when Clerkenwell Green is at saturation point, with valued rate payers of bars, cafes and restaurants in superfluity. An underground gallery, requiring display space, light and air, is an anomaly. Some years ago, the Society was formed, having prevented Islington Council from building a multi-storey commercial building over the Public Conveniences site; since then efforts to pour molten cement down the steps and sell the site for commercial gain has been prevented. The Society works to save George Jennings' Public Conveniences for posterity by ensuring their survival and not a loss.