

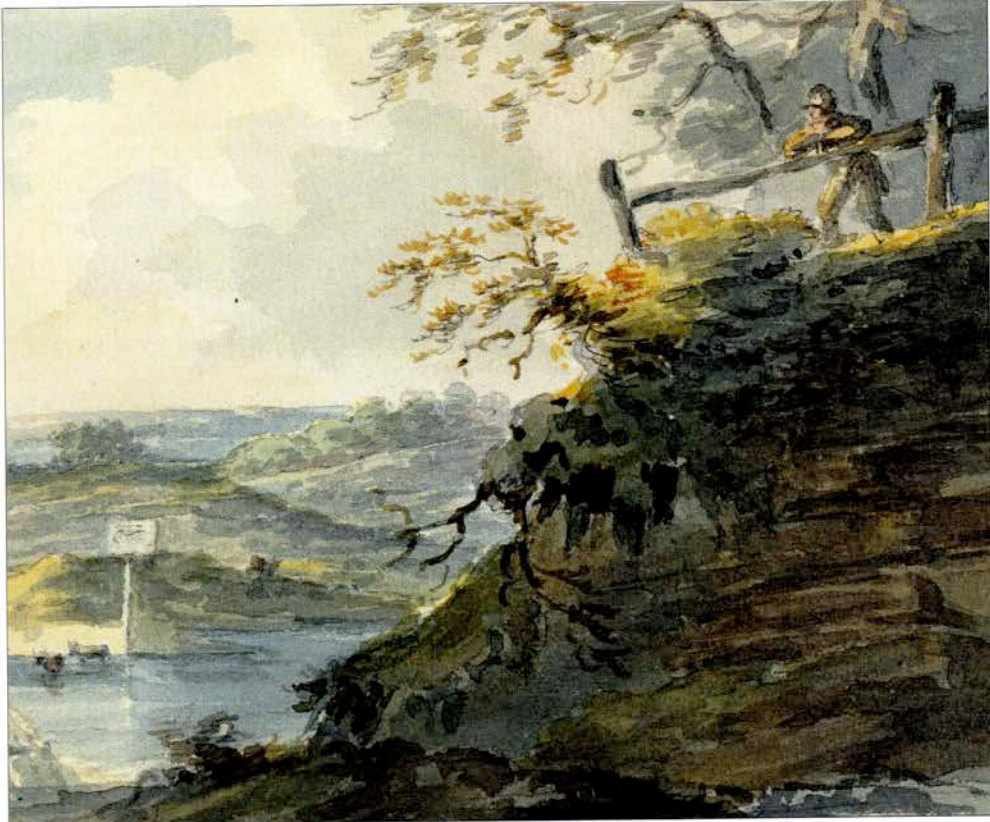
Somers Town has a rich history of radical thinkers, social reformers and rebels. Not only is it the site of one of the most innovative 20th century housing movements - the model for housing associations across the UK - attracting HG Wells, the Prince of Wales, and the UK's first women surveyor; it is also where the Pearly Kings originated (not the East End, as is commonly supposed); the place where French refugees established one of the first schools for girls; where Elizabeth Garrett Anderson set up a Hospital for women; the place where Mary Wollstonecraft lived with William Godwin, where their progeny Mary Shelley dallied with Percy in St Pancras Old Churchyard; the place where George Padmore and the African Congress devised African Independence, in an unassuming street, where the Unity Theatre drew together left-wing thespians: in short, this is a place where intellectual giants fomented modern thought in feminism, anarchism and decolonisation.

As one of our founders, Deborah Lavin (RIP) said, "It's unthinkable that there is no museum in an area that spawned Frankenstein, hosted radical thought on education for women and housed the working classes."

The Somers Town Museum will 'Launch' in Spring 2022 (date TBC), with an exhibition called 'Lost & Found', telling this rich history through found objects, in small premises at 52 Phoenix Road, NW1 1HR. The museum will be open 11am-5.30pm, Wednesdays to Fridays from March 2022. Running from 1 to 8 May will be a Gilbert Bayes Celebration, with walks.

And if you can help, we'd love to hear from you!

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George Walwyn Shephard *View from Judges Walk 1802*

### Branch Hill Pond

Branch Hill Pond has appeared in many paintings and prints by different artists. John Constable painted a number of scenes which showed the pond and sometimes the nearby quarrying of gravel for use in road surfaces nearby or sand for building. One of the paintings, courtesy of Camden Local Studies and Archives Centre, is the watercolour *View from Judges Walk looking north, showing Branch Hill Pond 1802* by George Walwyn Shephard. It was painted from where the steps at the west end of Judges Walk meet Branch Hill.

The exciting news is that the pond is going to be reinstated. The Redington Frognal Association successfully applied for grant funding and has been working with the City of London, it has planning

consent from Camden and it is hoped the pond will be dug to a depth of about a metre and puddling clay installed by the end of 2022 or early 2023. Excavation and reinstatement of the former pond will attenuate the water that flows into the culvert beneath Branch Hill, thereby reducing any risk of surface water flooding. The pond will be a natural wildlife pond, which is expected to attract frogs and dragonflies.

A recent exhibition was held at Burgh House about the project and the investigations carried for this and on the rivers and streams of the locality, showing that the pond was part of the start of the river Westbourne. The website <https://www.redfrogassociation.org/branch-hill-project/> has full details and includes presentations about the project and a lecture on Constable.

**Copy date for May Newsletter 10 April. Please send any contributions to Malcolm Holmes.**

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All contributions should be sent to Malcolm Holmes

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The Society is a registered charity - number 261044