

From beyond the grave: a plea against HS2



St James's Gardens: Such a fine resting place. But will its residents be made homeless by the ambitions of His Noble Lord Andrew Adonis of Camden Town?

• SIR, owing to circumstances beyond our control we, the undersigned, are unable to deliver our Petition to Parliament, and therefore humbly beseech you to raise our concerns in your esteemed Journal, copies of which visitors to our Gardens frequently leave behind for our perusal.

Many of our number having lain here, almost undisturbed for more than 200 years, the residents of St James's Gardens on the Hampstead-road were dismayed to learn, on the 28th last, that a majority of Members on both sides of the House had voted in favour of proceeding with a project that would not only result in the loss of a substantial urban oasis, but render the residents of the Gardens homeless, solely in order to fulfil the ambitions of His Noble Lord Andrew Adonis of Camden Town.

Although not himself a resident of the Gardens, his predecessor, the First Earl of Camden, has asked us to state, on his behalf, that he is mortified to learn that the man who elected to perpetuate his title is prepared to sacrifice the citizens of the parish on the altar of a misconceived and fatally flawed vanity project.

Lord Adonis's proposal to demolish the dwellings of hundreds of its citizens in order to free up ever increasingly scarce building land for yet more iron roads is beyond our comprehension.



George Morland (detail), by Henry Robert Morland (left), James Christie (detail) by Thomas Gainsborough (right)

The residents of St James's Gardens, who have assiduously been following "The Tale of the Train" through the pages of your Journal, have now been given to understand that the reason for their imminent exhumation and relocation, is in order "to heal the country's north-south divide".

Balderdash!

Inequality of income and opportunity will not be resolved by building yet another iron road; conversely, talent will flow even faster from the north to the south than it does at present. (May we therefore recommend Thomas Piketty's latest volume to members of the Commons for perusal during their long summer recess).

In light of our concerns, the residents of St James's Gardens therefore humbly beg the Editor of the Journal to submit a petition, on their behalf, to members of the Commons, among whom the Right Honourable Member for Holborn and St Pancras shines out as a beacon of courtesy, compassion and common sense.

Be assured, Dear Sir, that the astronomical sum of £20, required in order to submit our petition (in our day a small fortune), will be delivered to you shortly.

We, the undersigned, thank you for your indulgence and beg to remain your faithful servants.

CHARLES FITZROY

First Baron Southampton, Army officer & politician, 1737-1797

JAMES CHRISTIE

Auctioneer, 1730-1803

(who begs to state he is extremely concerned about plans to remove his monument)

GEORGE MORLAND

Genre Painter, 1763-1804

JOHN HOPPNER

Portrait Painter, 1758-1810

MATTHEW FLINDERS

Hydrographer, 1774-1814

PS Lord George Gordon, instigator of the infamous Riots of 1780, is recorded as being among our number; however, as some of his men attempted to set fire to my former neighbour Lord Mansfield's country house in Caen-wood, thankfully without success, we are excluding him as a signatory.

CF

- This letter was delivered to the New Journal offices via the earthly medium of *Marian Kamlish, NWI*



Matthew Flinders, watercolour miniature credit: State Library of NSW (left), Charles Fitzroy portrait (detail) by Joshua Reynolds (right)