



Sopwell Residents Association

NEWSLETTER

Issue 11
Summer 2007

Next Residents' Meeting 12th September 2007

As you know, the Sopwell Residents' Association is here to serve you and do whatever we can to make Sopwell a great place to live.

Our next open meeting will be on Wednesday 12th September 2007. It will be held in the Marlborough Pavilion at 7.30pm as usual. Please do come along. Our main speakers will be:

Our local Member of Parliament: **Anne Main MP** and
Jeff Minty, the Estates Manager of St Albans District Council.

The rest of the evening will be fairly relaxed so feel free to make any comments or raise any concerns you may have about your local community or the environment. We hope to see many of you there. Please remember that we are reliant on your feedback and involvement to keep us up to date with the issues that matter to you. There will be refreshments following the meeting.

If anyone needs a lift to get to the Marlborough Pavilion, please phone 865061 or send a message to info@sopwell.org.uk.

Residents' AGM

Sopwell Residents' Association held its 4th Annual General Meeting at Mandeville School on Tuesday 15th May. This finally got under way following a change of venue, as it was supposed to be held at the Marlborough Club. Many thanks go to Mandeville School for letting us hold the AGM at such short notice and again apologies to residents for any inconvenience caused. The AGM was attended by about 20 residents along with the SRA Committee, two of our local councillors and guest speakers.

Following the formal business, our guest speakers took to the floor.

Ken Lane, Neighbourhood Watch Liaison Officer, gave an update on his role and how he is trying to expand the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme into St Albans including Sopwell.

Helen Thorpe, the Extended Schools Liaison Officer, gave an interesting presentation on what activities are being provided "outside" of the usual day time hours at Schools.

Helly Sawyer updated the attendees on the youth issues happening in Sopwell and Joanna Field updated the attendees on current improvements to St Julian's church.

Following our guest speakers, the floor was opened for discussion. It's always interesting to hear residents talking about what is bothering them in Sopwell and these issues can be taken further at the Committee Meetings on your behalf.

Help deliver your newsletters? We are always looking for residents to help deliver your newsletters -perhaps you could deliver down your street? If you would like to help in the future, please contact Joanne Tang on 07976 521455 or joanne.tang@ntlworld.com

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Life as a new resident in Sopwell

Being a new resident in any area can be very daunting. Firstly there is the unknown of who your neighbours are going to be. Will they resent your presence, especially if you bring a family with you and they have been used to a quiet house next door. Perhaps they were fond of the previous tenants and you turn out to be the very opposite type. Secondly, what seem to be lovely houses and tended gardens during the day in a nice quiet street, at night, can turn out to be a very different type of environment. All of these and more are the unknown factors you cannot necessarily know before you move in, but yet are vital to fitting into and being accepted as part of a new neighbourhood.

When I first saw the house and street in St. Albans, where I finally moved to, my first impressions were; neatly tended gardens and hedges, well-presented houses and a leafy, green quiet street. There was a large pub around the corner and the Abbey Flyer hooted on a regular basis as it flew by, but it seemed to feel all right and as it was near the town centre and there were local shops and a bus route close by, I took the decision to move in.

I certainly tested my neighbours right from the start, not least because the removal van was still there at midnight on the day I moved and during the following days. My three children, seemed to make more noise than anyone else in the street put together. The hedge belonging to the front garden of the property grew wilder as each day passed and the back lawn that could be seen from all sides seemed to shoot up overnight and become shabbier by the day. Armed with only two blunt shears and no lawn mower, I was afraid of "letting the side down" and acquiring a bad reputation. How wrong could I be. The shops were friendly and informative when asked by me for directions or local knowledge. My neighbours greeted me with warmth and kindness, welcoming me to the street and when I asked if there was any chance of borrowing a lawnmower or cutting tools for the hedge, I was given help and support whenever I needed it. My children con-

tinued to be very loud but it didn't seem to annoy the neighbours and other children were quick to invite them to play and it has gone from strength to strength ever since.

One year on and I have enjoyed the "Larks in the Park", put on by the Sopwell Residents Association, whose committee I have now joined and the more I stay here the more I like the place and what it has to offer. The children love the green spaces and being able to play in the street and there is a caring attitude to the neighbourhood.

Is there a downside? I haven't come across it so far. Yes, there is litter by the railway tracks and there has been the occasional abandoned trolley on the local walkway to Sainsbury's, but nothing hugely offensive that cannot be dealt with by a caring community, which I feel Sopwell is. I'm certainly enjoying being part of this neighbourhood and look forward to meeting more of its residents and doing my bit to help in the future. It has been a good beginning.

Ananda Armstrong-King

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Trees for Sopwell!

In our last newsletter, we mentioned the possibility of extending our planting activities from bulbs to trees, and we carried out a slightly more detailed 'kite-flying' exercise at the AGM.

From this it seems that people would like to see more trees in Sopwell, and would also be willing to be involved in a tree-planting event. We've also had a few suggestions for locations. Most suggestions concerned street trees, both on those nice wide areas of grass we're lucky enough to have on many roads, and also on verges in the hope that

it might discourage people from parking on them. These would be individual 'semi-mature' specimens. We're also looking into plantings on some of the open spaces, to make them more interesting and wildlife friendly and perhaps help to reduce traffic noise. Plans are still at the early stage, as we think about where would be the best place to start, how to go about it, and where to apply for funding, so all suggestions (and offers of help!) welcome. It would be nice, however, if at least one new tree can be established in the ward during the next planting season to get things started.

Flying the (Green) Flag!

Just too late to mention at our AGM in May, the Green Flag judges visited the Nunnery and allotments sites where they were shown round by representatives from the council, CMS, allotment holders and SRA. The site was looking at it's best, very lush and green after the rain, and the new welcome and interpretation notices looked good too. We felt that a good case was made for this varied and interesting site and – just on the copy

deadline for this newsletter – we've now heard that the Green Flag Award has been granted. So congratulations to the council officers who put the management plan and application together, and to all the 'partners' who contributed. SRA founder Anne Kalozci, who originally suggested the site should be put in for the award, would have been thrilled with this result.

St Albans Toy Library facing closure!

The St Albans Toy library is an excellent service to try a large number of toys without actually having to borrow them. Children can come along and play with them before actually borrowing them. Toys can be borrowed for 1 or 2 weeks from 25p with reductions for those in receipt of benefit.

As good as it sounds, the library is suffering from a distinct lack of volunteers and is in urgent need of several people who would like to be involved. If not enough people come forward then the St Albans branch will close in September.

The Toy library holds sessions during term time every Tuesday between 10-12 noon at St Julian's Church Hall, Abbots Avenue.

If you are interested in volunteering or want more information please visit www.stalbanstoylibrary.com or ring 07837 775065

Larks in the Parks!

This year's 'Larks in the Parks' event was held on 1st July in and around the Marlborough Pavilion, just off Cottonmill Lane.

It was an excellent event with about 300 members of the local community coming together and enjoying a fantastic get-together in the midst of the beautiful surroundings of the Marlborough Meadow, with it's fine views of the Cathedral and Verulam Golf Course.

A variety of 'travelling entertainment' organised by St Albans Arts, Sport & Leisure and funded by the Council,

performed on the day. There was a 'giant bubble maker', Balloonatic, creating fantastic creatures out of balloons, the Sambuka Samba band and the Leisure Connection Sports Team who organised sport and games for children. From the local community, Adam Hunt, a local musician, did a fantastic job in providing music including a range of all time favourites. St Julian's Church ran an excellent "tea and cake" marquee and sold all their cakes. A face painting team painted 90 children's faces. Around 60 plaster casts were decorated by enthusiastic children who also made

and decorated colourful Maracas and wove a delightful community tapestry. The Toy Library saw lots of children play with their great outdoor toys and Old London Road playgroup ran a lucky dip stall and other games for children. Finally, a huge number of plants were swapped or brought by donation (watch out in autumn for another bulb planting campaign paid for by the takings).

Everyone had a great day and there was a lovely sense of community, with something for everybody and lots of great local people involved. Efforts were made to ensure

that it was also an event which did not involve people having to dig into their pockets too much, with all the entertainment, most children's craft activities and games and face-painting being free.

A big thank-you to everyone who helped in making it so enjoyable.

If you are interested in next year's Larks in the Parks please get in touch with us: larks@sopwell.org.uk It's a great event to be involved in and a easy way to meet new friends in the local community.

Sports in the Parks!

This summer the Sport Development Team will be running organised interactive sport and physical activity sessions at a park near you! It's completely FREE! No need to book..... Just turn up. Sessions are aimed at children aged 5 - 12yrs. Children under the age of 5 can take part in the Sports in the Park sessions but must be accompanied by an adult at all times. **Sopwell at the Marlborough Club:** Tuesday 21st August, 13.30 – 15.30, Tuesday 28th August 13.30 – 15.30

Community Football

Every Thursday - 5pm-7pm, Marlborough Club Fun football sessions led by Watford FC coaches -20p

YAP

Monday 23 July - Friday 31 August. Get a card, get out of the house and get going for a really great summer!

What is YAP? If you live in the City & District of St. Albans and are aged 10 to 16 you can get a YAP card FREE. YAP runs from Monday 23 July to Friday 31 August and discounts are available at Leisure Centres Monday to Friday, 9am - 5pm

How do I join YAP? Call us on 01727 827667, email saash.arts@leisureconnection.co.uk or download a form from www.leisureinstalbans.co.uk

What does YAP include? YAP trips and 10% off junior concessions at Leisure Centres. Some people can get extra money off – call us for more information.

Information and bookings – 01727 827667, Email: saash.arts@leisureconnection.co.uk, www.leisureinstalbans.co.uk

Crime Prevention Day at the Mobile Police Unit, Friday 28 September - 9.00 - 12.00 noon

Come along to Sainsbury's on the above date and meet the Crime Prevention Officers who will be on hand to answer any of your questions regarding crime prevention. The police will have equipment to postcode your bikes, sat navigation systems etc. Further dates will be arranged so please look out for these on our website.

Contact the Sopwell Residents Association

Sopwell Residents Association, 23 Tavistock Avenue, St. Albans, Herts, AL1 2NQ

Email: info@sopwell.org.uk, Internet: www.sopwell.org.uk

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