



## Sopwell Residents Association

# NEWSLETTER

For all residents of Sopwell

Issue 16  
Spring 2010

### From your editor

The committee have been very busy on your behalf since the last newsletter.

- We persuaded the Council to put in two benches near the Abbey Line level crossing. These are already proving successful.
- We applied for and succeeded in obtaining a grant for £500 out of the Herts County Council Locality Budget to progress the Sopwell Project.
- We have provisional approval for another grant from the Community Spaces budget run by Groundwork UK on behalf of the Big Lottery Fund to improve the path by the river in the Nunnery Open Space. If we are successful, a board walk will be placed over the area that floods, and concrete chippings will replace the wood chippings so no more wet feet. Hopefully this work will start in the Summer.

And by the time you read this all the bulbs will be coming out around Sopwell. We planted a load more last November so there should be an even better display this year. Enjoy the Sopwell Spring – it has been a long time coming.

Sandy Norman

### Annual General Meeting - Tuesday 8th June

Our AGM and open meeting for this year will take place in the Marlborough Pavilion on **Tuesday 8th June** starting at 8pm. After the usual AGM business, we will have someone from Transition St Albans as our main speaker. **Transition St Albans** is an open and thriving group of community members exploring how we can act together locally, to prepare our city for the challenges ahead, building resilience and happiness, and the kind of community that we would all want to be part of. In the coming decades, climate change and dwindling supplies of oil and gas will require us to radically re-think our lifestyles, and adopt a way of life that uses the earth's finite resources more intelligently and generates less carbon emissions and undesirable waste products. This will need government legislation, but we can't afford to wait. For more information, please visit [www.transitionstalbens.org](http://www.transitionstalbens.org)

Do come along to find out more about what your committee has been up to and also to learn more about Transition towns.

### Larks in the Parks 2010

The date for this year's Larks is Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> June in the grounds of the Marlborough Pavilion, Old Oak off Cottonmill Lane. Please put the date in your diary. There will be more information nearer the time. Keep checking our website as well. If you would like to help please get in touch with us.

### St Alban's Day Cycle Ride



As a way of celebrating St Alban's Day ( 22<sup>nd</sup> June ) a short - but not necessarily easy- evening cycle ride with a Roman theme is being organised. For further details of the event please visit our web site [www.sopwell.org.uk](http://www.sopwell.org.uk) where details will be posted nearer the time, or contact Peter Wares on 860705..

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**If you live in Sopwell, you are automatically a member of Sopwell Residents Association. There is no charge to join and events are free.**

#### Contact details

23 Tavistock Avenue  
St Albans AL1 2NQ

[info@sopwell.org.uk](mailto:info@sopwell.org.uk)

[www.sopwell.org.uk](http://www.sopwell.org.uk)

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## Sopwell gets a £79,000 Floodlit Sports Area

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An all-weather flood-lit sports, come play area, is now up and running on the grounds of the Marlborough Pavilion off Cottonmill Lane. Thanks to a grant given by the Big Lottery fund, Sopwell residents now have an all-weather, flood-lit Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) which is open to all who live in Sopwell. There is no need to book – just turn up. Although the new facility is designed primarily for eight-a-side football and basketball games, there is no reason why residents shouldn't be able to play hockey or tennis there or even roller skating as it's a nice flat surface!



It is hoped a tighter control will now be kept on them.

During the warmer evenings of September and early October, the flood-lit "cage" became a popular focal point for many of our younger residents who were able to enjoy a kick about well into the evening. But as temperatures dropped so did the members using the area. However we are hoping that as the weather warms up, we will see even greater use being made of this amenity throughout the year.

There have been problems with the lighting being left on way past its cut off time, but this appears now to have been resolved. It

Peter Wares

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## Celebrating Green Sopwell walk 19<sup>th</sup> Sept 09

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Well it was a perfect day: the weather was fine; it was a good turnout; we walked round some lovely places and we learnt a lot of history of the area. We all met by the benches in the Nunnery green space. The first thing I noticed was how good the ruins looked since they have been de-weeded and tidied up. They looked really impressive against the mowed grass. No wonder it was awarded the Green Flag for the second year running, and with high marks too. It is certainly very different from the over-grown space of five years ago. And the second thing I noticed was that a bride and groom were having their pictures taken by the ruins, very "Hertfordshire Life!"

Chris Pudsey led us round the green space and outlined how it was being managed now and Councillor Eileen Harris gave us a brief history of the ruins. The walk continued along by the river, past the allotments and up to the Alban Way as far as the old London Road station building. We stopped briefly in the Watercress Wildlife area and admired the views – if you have not visited this, it is well worth it.



Eileen treated us to a fascinating history of Longmire Road. Many of you will be unaware that this was what the older part of Riverside Road was called until Riverside Close was built in 1960 and the road was extended to connect with Cottonmill Lane. Longmire Road was originally part of a medieval (and possibly Roman) highway to Barnet and London. Of course I was fascinated by all this and

have included it in my notes for the Sopwell Project. Read more about it on our website.

Longmire Road is now a footpath which crosses the golf course to the south and it is picked up again just past Henry's Grant to the north. We walked along this footpath, crossed over into Old London Road and down Belmont Hill to de Tany Court to see the Holy Well. The water from the Holy Well was reputed to perform cures and John Churchill, of the Marlborough family, made it a water feature of his garden in the middle of Holywell Hill. The well was rediscovered when De Tany Court was built on the St Albans School Playing fields.



The final trek was down Holywell Hill to the river on the left hand side where we followed the Ver path until it reached Cottonmill Lane and back to where we started. We finished off with refreshments by the benches. Not a bad way to spend a pleasant Saturday afternoon in September. Our thanks go to Chris Pudsey and Eileen Harris for making it so enjoyable.

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## Abbots Avenue West shopping parade makeover

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The Council are planning to improve the area around Abbots Avenue West parade of shops. The aim of this project is to improve the visual appearance of the area and provide residents with a clean, attractive and safe environment to enjoy. They are hoping that the improvements will encourage people to visit the parade and thereby increase footfall for shopkeepers. Some of the planned improvements are repainting and planting the concrete planters, planting trees, installing benches and a revised parking scheme.

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## Scout Group seeking leaders

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The local Scout Group, the 4<sup>th</sup> St Albans Scouts whose headquarters is in Riverside Road is looking for additional leaders to provide worthwhile and interesting activities for the young people in the group. While there are plenty of young people wanting to join, their ability to meet this demand is limited by the shortage of leaders. There are three sections: Beavers (6-8 year olds) on Monday evenings (6.15 - 7.15pm); Cubs (8-10 year olds) on Wednesday evenings (7.00 – 8.15pm); and Scouts (10-14 year olds) on Thursday evenings (7.30 – 9pm). The more pressing need is for more assistance with the Scouts.

The group has been one of the more successful in St Albans and is celebrating its centenary but unless more volunteers come forward its future is uncertain. Perhaps you enjoyed your training in the Scouts and would like to put something back into the movement. Training will be provided. If you feel you would like to help please contact the Group Scout Leader, Ian Woods on 01727 857458.

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## Overhanging foliage from private gardens - polite reminder

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As Spring is here and Summer is on its way this is a timely reminder of the nuisance of overhanging branches of trees and shrubs. There are many instances of householders allowing their garden to overflow across the front wall or fence and letting the foliage or trees intrude into the pavement space. You may not be aware but this is contrary to the rules of the Highways Act 1980 which requires that the pavement/footpath shall be kept clear for the convenience of passers-by.

The Act says: "Where a hedge, tree or shrub overhangs a highway or any other road or footpath to which the public has access so as to endanger or obstruct the passage of vehicles or pedestrians, or obstructs or interferes with the view of drivers of vehicles or the light from a public lamp or overhangs a highway so as to endanger or obstruct the passage of horse-riders, *a competent authority may, by notice to the owner of the hedge tree or shrub or to the occupier of the land on which it is growing, require him within 14 days from the date of service of the notice, so to lop or cut it as to remove the cause of the danger, obstruction or interference.*" For the purpose of this section the competent authority is Herts Highways.

The proposed City and District Walking Strategy emphasises this question of removal of obstructions so it is advisable to cutback all foliage from ground level up to a height of 2.2 metres along the line of the boundary wall or fence. This will avoid receipt of a letter giving the 14 days notice or the possibility of Highways arranging for a contractor to do the work and then sending in the bill at their choice of rates.

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## St Albans District Woodcraft Folk

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In December members of St Albans Woodcraft Folk peace elfin group planted six hazel saplings at the Sopwell Nunnery as part of Tree O'Clock, a nationwide attempt to break the world record for the most trees planted in a single hour in multiple locations. It was lots of fun, we got our hands dirty and did something constructive for the local environment. The tree planting was in partnership with Sopwell Residents Association and St Albans City and District Council.



*The photo shows some of the elfins and 'woodchips' (under-sixes) with their trees and certificates*

If your children are aged between 6 and 9 and looking for a new adventure, then the St Albans peace elfin group could be for them! Woodcraft Folk is a fun, educational movement where girls and boys learn the values of cooperation, friendship, democracy, equality and peace through a varied programme of activities. These include weekly group nights, outdoor activities, hikes, games, songs, crafts, drama, camps and other one-off events. The St Albans elfin group is run by parent cooperative and meets on Thursday evenings. Email: [enquiries.stalbans.wcf.elfins@googlemail.com](mailto:enquiries.stalbans.wcf.elfins@googlemail.com) or visit the website: <http://sites.google.com/site/stalbanswoodcraft>





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### Did you know?

- The Abbey Railway Line is being considered for conversion to a tram line meaning we can expect at least two trams an hour to Watford! Depending on the

### Committee still needs support

We could still do with some more help on the committee. Also if anyone is interested in research for the Sopwell Project, we would be grateful for assistance. Please get in touch with us you are willing to get involved in your local community.

### Useful Contacts for Sopwell Residents

Councillor Eileen Harris: 831611 or [eileenharris555@btinternet.com](mailto:eileenharris555@btinternet.com)

Councillor David Poor: 833670 or [David.Poor@btinternet.com](mailto:David.Poor@btinternet.com)

Councillor Roger Axworthy: 812681 [rla@notmhs.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:rla@notmhs.fsnet.co.uk)

Litter fly-tipping, graffiti: 0845 1258000 or [a.cleanerdistrict@stalbans.gov.uk](mailto:a.cleanerdistrict@stalbans.gov.uk)

Faulty road or pavement surface: 01438 737320 or [www.hertsdirect.org/highwayfaults](http://www.hertsdirect.org/highwayfaults)

### Next issue

The next issue will be out late Summer/early Autumn 2010. If you have any items for inclusion or you wish to advertise please go to the website and leave a message.

outcome of the consultation and the completion of legal and contractual issues, the new service could be up and running in late 2011. The new service is also dependent on Network Rail agreeing to transfer control of the line and stations to Hertfordshire County Council on a long-term lease. The committee has been consulted and on the whole we think it is a sensible idea

- There used to be a farm at the Sopwell Nunnery open space until 1931, when it was burnt down by a youth who decided to have a cigarette while sleeping in a barn full of paper! The fire lasted for four days and livestock had to be rescued. The youth did £1500 of damage. The report was in the Herts Ad (on micro-film in the library). Does anyone remember this? There were several other farms in Sopwell (e.g. St Julian's Farm) until the early thirties does anyone remember them? Let us know if so. The full story of the Sopwell fire is on our website. [www.sopwell.org.uk](http://www.sopwell.org.uk).
- We have red kites in Sopwell? Several have been spotted in the Tavistock Avenue area recently. This is really good news.
- There are plans afoot to demolish and rebuild the retail park opposite Sainsbury's in Griffiths Way. Homebase and Argos are not affected, just the other retail units. If the plans are approved, it looks like the units may be smaller than they are now.
- Our website has had a bit of an overhaul. Do go and have a look and let us know what you think.