

SOPWELL

RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

making Sopwell a better place

The 'More Memories of Sopwell' Project is officially launched!



The official launch of our community project took place on 18th May at St Julian's Church. We combined the launch with a memories gathering exercise as well as celebrating our 10th anniversary.

There must have been about a hundred people who attended over the three hours it lasted. Our goal was to reach out to all members of the community to persuade them to share their memories and join in the fun and we certainly achieved that. There were several older residents willing to tell their stories, some of whom we have already interviewed before. However,

we were pleased to see the younger generations, including children, coming forward to join in. As well as a 'Memory Wall' on which to leave a memory, we borrowed a video booth from the University of Herts so that those wishing to share a memory could be recorded. If their memories appeared interesting or relevant they were encouraged to agree to a follow up interview at a later date. This proved to be very popular with everyone including children. It is lovely to see and hear a child saying spontaneously how lovely it is living in Sopwell because it has wonderful historic places to visit. The message is really getting through!

We had several tables of displays of old photographs and maps, rolling displays on computers and our two splendid banners to trigger memories and discussions. We also had a table display of memorabilia: artefacts dug up in gardens and allotments or found near the ruins or old buildings such as old coins, milk bottles and other small bottles, roof tiles and tesserae, oyster shells, and clay pipes. The eagerly expected mammoth bone turned out to be a fossilised mammoth's tooth which was no less splendid.

Another highlight was to hear the Mandeville school choir sing three beautiful songs which brought tears to many eyes. There was a really clever magician, Tony Middleton, also a local, who entertained the smaller children for the last hour. After the formal launch, the Mayor of St Albans, Councillor Eileen Harris and myself cut the wonderful chocolate cake made by a 16 year old, another local, Jed Armstrong.

You can see a wonderful video of the event on our Sopwell memories You Tube site. If you have internet access, go to http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ke_Ctg_0cq4

Green Space Grant

JUST IN: We have again been successful in obtaining a grant to improve the Nunnery Green Space. We have been awarded £5,000 to complete the path by the river and provide a ramp down from Cottonmill Lane to the river path for disabled and wheeled vehicle access. There will be more on this in our next issue.



From Your Editor

Welcome to our 24th edition of the Sopwell Newsletter. We really are making great progress with our 'More Memories' project, with many of you coming forward to tell us your memories of Sopwell. Thank you for your contributions and hopefully more of you will share your memories with our willing team of interviewers.

May I take this opportunity to welcome three new members to the committee. Dom Tang has taken over the role of treasurer. Christoph Lutz is our Web Designer and Ros Poor has joined the team.

I hope you all enjoy our latest edition of the newsletter.

Barry Bateman—Editor

Important date for your diary

15th September—Sopwell History Walk with Councillor Eileen Harris. See page 2 for details

Contents

MMoS project
Green Space Grant
Painting competition
Sopwell history walk
Gasometers demolished
Getting the 'hump'
Fly Tipping
Eco-Warrior
Holyrood Crescent Residents
Transition Streets
Next Edition
Useful Contacts

Sopwell Painting Competition



As part of the launch of the Sopwell Memories project, we held a children's painting competition for three age groups. We asked all three local primary schools to get involved which they did very enthusiastically. The theme of the painting was Sopwell as we wanted to encourage the children to become aware of their local area and hopefully show their appreciation

in art form. We had about 80-90 entries quite a few of which were of the same subject. The teachers must have suggested that the ruins in the Nunnery Open Space would be a good subject as the majority of the entries were of the ruins. Another favourite was the river, the paintings suspiciously all looking the same until we realised that they were copying a photograph. However there were also some other interesting subjects to judge. One enterprising class from Mandeville decided to paint portraits of the then Mayor, Councillor Eileen Harris. The judges spent several hours judging the entries and came up with some worthy winners. We gave prizes to the three winners and runners up. However, because the Mayor's portraits were so amusing, we decided to award prizes for this category. These were judged by the Mayor on the day.

Pictured above with the Mayor, is the winning contestant from the 8-10 age group, Ciara Calthrop, of St. Peter's School

Sopwell History Walk 15th September

Another date for your diaries: the Sopwell History Walk will take place on Sunday 15th September at 2pm. We will meet at the start of the Alban Way behind Leyland Avenue. Anyone who needs to use a car, can park by the old youth club or in the Argos car park over the railway crossing.

Councillor Eileen Harris will once again lead the walk. This year she will be talking about the watercress industry and she will be straying a little outside of Sopwell in order to take in straw hat making.

The walk will not be too strenuous. It should last about a couple of hours. These walks are always enjoyable. You get exercise as well as learning more about the area. Do come along! Please phone 865061 for any queries.



A view of the existing gasometers

Competition Winners

The winning entries were: 5-7 age group:



1st: Orla Thorpe, St Adrian's



2nd: Harry Evershed, St. Peter's.

8-10 age group:



1st Ciara Calthrop, St. Peter's



2nd Lauren Cropper, St. Adrian's

11-13 age group:



1st: Emily Daly, St Adrian's

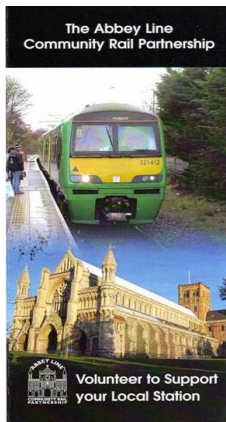


2nd: Izzy Hughes, St. Adrian's

Gasometers to be Demolished

Following a meeting with National Grid, we have been told that in the latter part of October work will commence to demolish the two remaining gasometers. Preliminary work has already begun. We raised concerns especially about the noise but they have assured us that they will keep it down to a minimum. They will cut a hole in the side of the tanks and then work from the inside out. The land is no longer dangerous so once the gasometers have been removed they hope it will be used for retail. They are already looking for a developer. The present tenant on the site – the cause of a lot of local noise - will eventually go. The work should take about thirteen weeks, most of the noisy part should be finished by Christmas. Letters about the demolition will be sent to the residents of the nearby roads in due course.

Getting the hump over the 'hump'



Part of Jack Hill's many roles in Sopwell, is as an 'adopter' for the Abbey Line Community Rail partnership. Here is a very interesting article Jack wrote earlier this year.

"Before the Abbey Station in Holywell Hill was given a makeover in 2009 at a cost of £200,000 the worst defect was the gigantic step down between train floor level and the platform. For some reason, this defect was not addressed in the costings and only after the work was completed were extra funds sought to solve the problem for one of the doors of the train (a one eighth solution being deemed better than none). The solution was modelled on the 'hump' installed at Harrington in Cumbria already in receipt of many plaudits. The Abbey hump was located, allegedly "designed", to relate to door No 7 of the 8 door train but this was a faux pas as the door designated for disabled passengers is door no 8 as indicated by the stickers next to the door opening. This is obvious as that first compartment has tip up seats to allow for parking of wheelchairs or buggies or often for cycles. The hump was launched with much fanfares and ribbon cutting but its shortcomings were immediately apparent to me if no-one else. So for all of my years as an "adopter" for the station, I have endeavoured to get the anomaly corrected. By talking to drivers, I have managed to get several to ignore the 4 car marker post and overrun to get door No 8 alongside the hump but this is unofficial and to others "more than my job's worth mate". So the marker post must be moved officially and then, if necessary, the buffers also moved to retain the designated overrun distance. This will entail extra rail lengths welded to the existing ends and seated on sleepers salvaged from the dump near the level crossing. Another alternative, would be the seeking of funds to adapt and extend the hump by perhaps three metres to cover door No 8. This would conflict with the proposals to upgrade the entrance gateway. However, in recent weeks there has been a tendency for London Midland to run the four coach trains as "back to fronters" with doors 7 & 8 becoming doors 1 & 2. that is with the disabled persons compartment as far from the hump as possible meaning either an attempt at a high jump or walking through three coaches to reach door No 7. The matter is raised every week in my official report, without any reactions. I have also tried to raise the questions with LM customer relations but they simply say that Watford is in "control". An email to Network Rail was rebuffed since I am not an "official" stakeholder. The Office of Rail Regulators have taken great pains to show their support for LM's attitude so I have reached a stalemate.

This is Sopwell's own station so I am wondering if group protests might bring about a change in the current situation and would appreciate letters of support which could be passed around. Remember that the Abbey Line is a joint undertaking between London Midland, Network Rail and the Herts County Council and is designated a Community project".

Fly Tipping

This article has been sent in by one of our highly valued SRA members

"When I was going down the road at lunchtime, I noticed someone returning from an open space, having apparently dumped some bush cuttings. I asked if he had dumped stuff in hedge and, when he said yes, I pointed out it wasn't a good thing. When I came back I found a very aggressive note through my door! Obviously it hadn't occurred to him that I could shop him to council. As this is something which happens, not infrequently, in all open spaces, I wonder if we could remind people (actually I think a lot don't know) that dumping garden waste in this way, is fly tipping and therefore ILLEGAL, as well as anti-social and sometimes bad for natural habitats too".

Eco-Warrior

Our local Eco-Warrior, Jack Hill, has written a very interesting article regarding the new changes to the recycling collection programme.

"Hello all here is an interesting scenario. Since recycling began, my neighbour has had two black boxes: one for paper and one for the rest i.e. plastic bottles, metal cans and glass bottles. Until August 23rd when the recycling contractors rejected her second box on the grounds that glass and plastic were mixed, I rang the recycling office at SADC and was told that the old system had been changed to speed up the collection process. So I asked for an extra box which was delivered next day. My neighbour went away on the Saturday so nothing was put into the new box. However on the Monday I noticed a yellow sticker had been put on the lid advising that large objects were not acceptable, so being curious I looked inside and was surprised to see a 4 litre plastic bottle which had contained deodorising liquid not in common use by me or the neighbour. I rang the recycling department again, this time speaking to a youngish lady and asked if she could explain what was going on. Her immediate reaction was, that the size of container is not acceptable so should not have been put into the box. I tried to point out that the neighbour had been away and so couldn't have been involved. So I asked if this was some sort of educational wheeze by the contractors who usually will not be looking at recycling boxes for another week. She dismissed this as ridiculous but I then asked well what do we do with this bottle ????



Answer, put it into the black wheelie bin! She then commented rather testily that surely my neighbour had "better things to worry about" so I put down the phone.

Continued over page:

Continued from page 3:

The bottle at 4 litres is said to be too large for the processing machinery so landfill is SADC's answer. I wonder why there isn't someone on a sorting line charged with removing such containers, putting them to one side, cutting them up to an acceptable shape and avoiding the landfill?

Councillor Janet Smith has replied to Jack's concerns over this issue:

"Dear Jack,

Apparently this has become more of an issue since the range of plastics was increased. Because there are more larger containers being put out they are jamming up the machinery inside the lorries.

The blades are going to be sharpened to try to improve things.

There are also some new stickers being produced asking people to either squash or cut larger bottles before putting them in the box".

Transition Streets

Transition Streets is a way to bring neighbours together to cut their household bills and their carbon footprint through taking practical action. It's free to take part, and a great way to turn neighbours into friends. www.transitionstalbans.org



Last year to celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee the residents of Holyrood Crescent organised a street party and despite the awful weather we all had a great time and the event was shared by many residents who bravely donned their wellies and rain macs and braved the pouring rain. It really was pouring! Despite the terrible weather the event was a success and we all agreed that there should be more community events.

On Sunday the 21st July everyone pitched their gazebos and rolled out the picnic blankets. BBQ's were lit, cakes baked and we gathered on the green to enjoy the beautiful weather and the company of our neighbours. The organisation was kept simple with a few games to play, a little face painting and A LOT of water! The fire brigade again visited us and shared a curry with us whilst the children played on the fire engine and at 4o/c Tonini the ice cream van visited and using funds from last year's raffle all the children got an ice cream to cool them down along with a water squirter each. This time the sun shone down on us and the atmosphere was wonderful with neighbours chatting to each other, discovering lost connections, making new friends and finding old. The children - big and small - had a fabulously fun time squirting everything in sight - mainly me... We are very lucky to have such a great space to be able to bring everyone together and everyone that came commented on the sense of community spirit blossoming again in Holyrood Crescent with this second event so watch this space! Brilliant day everyone - I think I've dried off now!

Jenny Huggard

Situations Vacant

Your association is run by a dedicated group of volunteers. Volunteers come and go so we need to keep asking for help otherwise we will fold. With all the good things we are doing this would be a real shame. Working for your community is rewarding: you meet lots of interesting people and you can have an input into local issues. We work closely with the councillors, council and schools to make Sopwell a better place to live. If you feel you can give a little time to help us, please email info@sopwell.org.uk

Next issue

The next edition will be out in the Spring. If you have any items for inclusion or you wish to advertise, please go to the website and leave a message. Advertisement charges: £50 for half a page and £25 for a quarter page.

If you live in Sopwell, you are automatically a member of SRA.

There is no charge to join and events are free.

Useful Contacts

Councillor Eileen Harris: 831611:

eileenharris555@btinternet.com

Councillor David Poor: 833670:

david.poor@btinternet.com

Councillor Janet Smith: 763907:

cllr.j.smith@stalbans.gov.uk

County Councillor Sandy Walkington: 07802 177317

sandywalkington@btinternet.com

Litter fly-tipping, graffiti: 0845 1258000 or

a.cleanerdistrict@stalbans.gov.uk

Faulty road or pavement surface: 01438 737320 or

www.hertsdirect.org/highwayfaults

Sopwell Residents Association:

info@sopwell.org.uk & www.sopwell.org.uk