

# SOPWELL

## RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

making Sopwell a better place

### Sopwell Memories project



Those of you who have been reading these newsletters for several years may remember that this project started five years ago, in 2009. We had modest aims, at the time, of researching the history of our area and mapping our green spaces. We wanted to show how beautiful our area is and the importance of Sopwell in the history of St Albans. On the way we collected many memories from residents of what it was like before all the housing estates and roads were built. Well we did all this and wrote it all down in our best-selling book, *Sopwell: a history and collection of memories* (still available).

Now we are on the last phase. Thanks to a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund in 2012, we have been interviewing and collecting even more memories and images and we have put them all on a dedicated website [www.sopwellmemories.org.uk](http://www.sopwellmemories.org.uk). I think you will agree that my team of interviewers, transcribers, researchers and technical geniuses including myself have done a marvellous job in putting all the information together to produce a living, enduring memory of Sopwell. I am pleased to say that all the feedback so far has been really positive.

We are going out with a bang by mounting an exhibition of the project in the Museum of St Albans in Hatfield Road for the whole of August. I am hoping that many of you have already had the opportunity to go along to see it. If this newsletter arrives before the end of August it might encourage more of you to go and have a look.

The website is interactive. You may leave your own memories or just comments after reading a particular post which triggers a response. We will also be adding any more memories we find.

All that is left for me now is to write my end of project report.

Sandy Norman Project manager.

The above photograph is the Mayor of St Albans, Cllr Geoff Harrison, opening the More Memories exhibition, with Sandy Norman and Rick Taylor, SRA Chairman.



#### From Your Editor

Welcome to our 26th edition of the Sopwell Newsletter. Another busy time since our last edition. Our More Memories project has reached its conclusion. We have mounted an exhibition in the Museum of St Albans. A new path has been laid in the Nunnery open space. Oh and Sandy Norman fractured her hip. Again! But Sandy being Sandy didn't let a small matter of a fracture stop her guiding and mentoring the committee into safe and calm waters. And may I take this opportunity to thank all the members of the committee who helped with the exhibition, especially Jennifer Taylor who took over the reins of the organising exhibition team, while Sandy was laid up.

Barry Bateman

#### Contents

- Sopwell Memories
- New Ramp
- Railways
- Setting up the Exhibition
- Cycle safety Training
- Sopwell History Walk Leaflets
- River Ver Bench
- Sopwell Gas lamp
- SAHAAS Conference 20th Sept
- History Walk
- Threat to Bus Services
- Resurfacing in Cottonmill
- Next Edition
- Useful Contacts

## The New Ramp down to the River



You will have noticed that we now have a new ramp suitable for wheeled vehicles leading from Cottonmill Lane down to the river. It took a lot longer than expected because of the adverse weather at the beginning of the year and there

were several hiccups in the building of it. As we were paying £5000 of the cost out of a Community Funds Grant, we wanted to make sure it was fit for purpose and that we liked it! Several of us have tried it out, including me as I have recently had an accident and cannot walk unaided for several weeks. Here I am in my borrowed mobility scooter trying it out. I am not sure I like the beach sand effect of the new path but we have been assured that it will bed down eventually.

In case you are wondering, the wooden seat by the river has had to be moved because the nearby riverbank is eroding. Hopefully the vegetation will eventually hide the eyesore of the mess left behind.

Sandy Norman



### Are you Interested in the History of Railways?

2015 will be the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the coming of the Great Northern Railway to St Albans. It no longer exists, of course, but the track is still there as a footpath, the Alban Way, which stretches all the way to Hatfield. It was suggested at our AGM that it would be really nice if SRA could put together some sort of event, or be part of an event with other resident associations or interested groups along the line. If you would like to be involved or can help in any way with suggestions about events or activities, please get in touch with us.

## Setting up the Exhibition

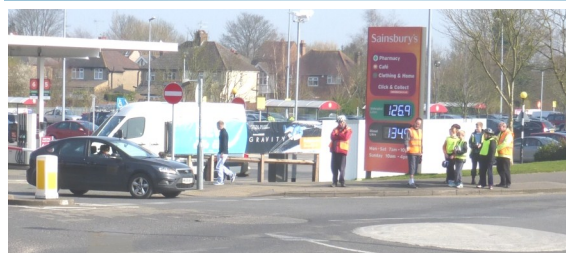


The Committee had wonderful fun and games while setting up the 'More Memories' exhibition on the 30th July.

Everyone was in good spirits and made very light work of the daunting prospect of setting up our long awaited exhibition. Sandy Norman, despite her fractured hip, was able to direct operations from her wheelchair and Jennifer Taylor made sure we all knew what we were doing, while continuing to design and organise the putting up of exhibits. There was a great buzz in the Museum while we were working together and every member of the committee finished the morning happy with their efforts. A special thank you must go to Catherine Newley, the Collections Curator of the Museum of St. Albans, who went out of her way to help and accommodate our group, You just know when someone goes that extra mile for you. A big thank you from all of us. We all had a good time collecting and organising the exhibition and we hope you enjoyed it as much as we did.

Barry Bateman (Editor)

### Cycle Safety Training



The above photo taken earlier this year shows local would-be cyclists at the District's Green Ring's crossing of Everard Close. Each year dozens of local young would-be cyclists take part in locally run cycle safety courses. Here they can be seen receiving instructions on how to safely navigate the busy and often difficult Everard Close/Griffiths Way junction, now part of the District's Green Ring; a 9km route circling St Albans, intended to make cycling safer within the District.



## Sopwell History Walks



The SRA has published a set of Sopwell History Walks to encourage visitors to explore Sopwell and learn a little about its

history. Many of you will be aware that each year we have an organised walk around our area. These popular walks which explore our history and green spaces started several years ago. There has been a lot of interest in these walks so, in our request for a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund for the Sopwell Memories Project, we asked for some money to produce walk leaflets. And these are the result. These five short and fairly easy circular walks are beautifully produced by Diverse Print and Design, the company which produced our book *Sopwell: a history and collection of memories*. Our own Barry Bateman has drawn by hand a beautiful map in each so you shouldn't get lost. They are free and available from the Tourist Information Centre. If you haven't explored Sopwell yet, now there is no excuse. Go walking!

### The River Ver Bench



The inadvertent moving of the River Ver bench during the recent laying of the path from Cottonmill Lane has generated a number of adverse comments from local residents

using the Nunnery green space. Although the bench was only installed a couple of years ago, it instantly became a welcomed resting spot for both local residents and those walking the river. Sadly, the moving of the bench away from the bank of the river means it's no longer possible to sit and enjoy the relaxing sound of the river or watch the sun setting. However, it's hoped the bench will still remain both a point of reference for those walking the Ver and a place where residents can stop, take a rest and ponder.

## The Humble Gas Lamp



In our last newsletter, we recorded the final days of the two giant gasometers on the former 180 year old gasworks site at the bottom of Holywell Hill now Griffiths Way. In this edition we now observe what is

probably Sopwell's oldest standing street lamp, dating back to the turn of last century when many of our streets and homes were lit by gas that came from coal rather than the North Sea. Interestingly, this lamp predates the houses in the road, so the question is, did this cast-iron Edwardian street lamp first light the footpath which is thought to have ran along what is now Cottonmill Crescent?

*Safety Training, Ver Bench and above article by Peter Wares.*

### St Albans at War 1914/15

#### St Albans at War 1914/15

A conference is being held by SAHAAS on the effects of WW1 on St Albans, at the Dagnall Street Baptist Church, in St Albans on Saturday 20th September. Tickets cost £18 per person but there is a student concession of £12 per person.

For further information and to book telephone 01727 851734; email [admin@stalbanshistory.org](mailto:admin@stalbanshistory.org) or visit [www.stalbanshistory.org](http://www.stalbanshistory.org)

## Sopwell History Walk

This year's Sopwell history walk will take place on Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> September at 2pm. Our walk leader, Councillor Eileen Harris, will concentrate on the First World War. The walk will start at the Watercress Beds in Riverside Road and we will be visiting some of the lesser known street memorials.

Eileen will tell us more about the servicemen who lost their lives and finding out about how the war affected life in St Albans.

Contact us for further details:  
Tel: 865061.

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

## Threat to Bus Services

39 bus routes across Hertfordshire including the **S4 Cottonmill Estate service** are under threat from plans by the governing administration at County Hall. They propose to cut all services which receive any kind of subsidy after 6.30 pm every day and all such routes on Sundays.

The County consultation on this is at <https://consult.hertsdirect.org/bus-services/>, but it provides no real options and also implies that some of these bus routes are subsidised to the cost of £9 a journey which we have now discovered is simply not true. The highest subsidy on any of the routes is £4.19 per journey, not the £9 as claimed.

The governing administration also said it only affected 200,000 passenger journeys. After questioning, it turns out that over 800,000 passenger journeys will be affected.

Please sign our petition at <http://signme.org.uk/985> and also respond to the web consultation. If you are not a bus user it's still important. Just think if everyone or even just half who used these buses diverted to a private car or taxi what the effect of 800,000 extra such trips would be on traffic at night and weekends! And if you have children who use the buses instead of using you as a taxi service, do get them and their friends to respond to the consultation.

*Article from St Albans South News and Views*

## Resurfacing in Cottonmill

It is very interesting that even when you eventually get roads repaired, something comes along to undo all the work that our representatives have striven to implement. As an example, I have taken a part article written in the St Albans South News and Views leaflet about resurfacing.

'In the Cottonmill area, pavements in Sadleir Road, Boleyn Drive and Nunnery Close were relaid only to be almost immediately dug up by National Grid Gas. The patching afterwards was done to a very poor standard and even where the new pavements had not been dug up, the contractors' machinery had left huge gouge marks in the surfaces. We demanded a meeting on site with all the different players, everyone was made to agree it was not good enough, and the pavements are all going to be resurfaced at National Grid Gas expense. We hope contractors and utilities will get the message – we're not going to stand for bodging and second-rate repairs, whether granite setts in the conservation area or simple tarmac elsewhere. Residents who work so hard to look after their homes and gardens deserve a similar quality of care when it is applied to their public realm.'

*Well done to those who actioned this on our behalf. (Editor)*

## Next Edition

The next edition will be out next 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.

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

## Useful Contacts

Councillor Eileen Harris: 831611:

[eileenharris555@btinternet.com](mailto:eileenharris555@btinternet.com)

Councillor Iain Grant: 811286:

[cllr.i.grant@stalbans.gov.uk](mailto:cllr.i.grant@stalbans.gov.uk)

Councillor Janet Smith: 763907:

[cllr.j.smith@stalbans.gov.uk](mailto:cllr.j.smith@stalbans.gov.uk)

County Councillor Sandy Walkington: 07802 177317

[sandywalkington@btinternet.com](mailto:sandywalkington@btinternet.com)

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)

Sopwell Residents Association:

[info@sopwell.org.uk](mailto:info@sopwell.org.uk) & [www.sopwell.org.uk](http://www.sopwell.org.uk)