

SOPWELL

RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

making Sopwell a better place



Sopwell Secrets Walks May 2016

Out and about in Sopwell

Over sixty people enjoyed the history and green spaces of Cottonmill when they joined the Sopwell Secrets walks in May. Some walkers were from afar while others were local residents who still discovered something new. With the white cow parsley and hawthorn in bloom, and fine weather, the Alban Way and St Stephen's Field were lovely and Sopwell looked its best.



Sopwell Secrets coordinator and walk leader, Maggie Douglas addressing some of the assembled walkers in front of the Nunnery ruins.

The Dog Steps have arrived



"Hi all I took several photos this afternoon of all three locations. Already some dismantling has occurred at the one opposite the flats. I waited for someone with a dog to arrive but with no luck. I want to see how the dogs react getting down the steep slope of the steps. Almost all the length of river has been barricaded by chestnut paling or stitched dead branches, forcing the use of the steps."

Jack.

Thank you Jack for the photos and your comments (Ed)

From Your Editor

Welcome to our 30th edition of your newsletter and things have been hotting up here in Sopwell: be they complaints about verges and weeds, speeding, litter, resurfacing, pot holes or more positive thoughts about renovations to the Nunnery Ruins, the introduction of dog steps to the river, the upgrade to the play park in Holyrood Crescent or yet another green flag award for the Nunnery Open Space. Also we have two new members joining the committee, so welcome aboard Jo and Janet and thank you for your energy and commitment already to our team.

Editor, Barry Bateman

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Reasons to be cheerful

There has been rather a lot of negativity around in the last few months but I would like to point out a few things that happened in Sopwell recently that were much more positive. Our special friend and mentor, Sandy Norman, on your behalf went and received the Sopwell Nunnery Green Flag award for yet another year. The ceremony was held on the 22nd July, at Watersmeet, Rickmansworth. This is a very special area and is constantly monitored by the SRA team to make sure it is maintained to the exacting standards of the Award's judging panel. Also, Sandy Norman, has been included in an exhibition held in the Verulamium museum, concerning important women in Hertfordshire, called Hertfordshire Hidden Heroines (though unfortunately, the exhibition will have closed by the time you read this). She has devoted much of her retirement to establishing Sopwell as an interesting and vibrant place to live and with her ground-breaking role in creating your SRA and her continuing work in her Sopwell Memories project and of course, her book on Sopwell, we have been extremely lucky to have had such a spirited, energetic and far-sighted member, in our midst.

A date for your diary. Our annual history walk, led by Councillor Eileen Harris, will take place on the 16th October, starting at 2.00pm by the Nunnery benches. It is a fascinating and informative walk and I am sure you will feel much better for it, both physically and mentally.

The SRA committee will be planting spring bulbs again this year and if you would like to come along and join in with us please do. We have set aside the 23rd October as our planting date and so if you see us near you, do come and join in. (*see article opposite for details*)

A grant has been made available to maintain the Nunnery ruins and you may well have seen contractors on the site making repairs to the structure. It is our most iconic feature in Sopwell and it is heartening to know that others think so too.

Finally, the play area in Holyrood Crescent has been given a much needed renovation and provides another new, fun and active area for children to use.

I think we can say that there are many reasons to be cheerful.

Barry Bateman (Editor)

Walking in Sopwell

Remember the song 'Walking in Memphis', well this is 'Walking in Sopwell'. Our Sopwell Councillor, Eileen Harris will be taking her annual history walk around Sopwell on the 16th October, starting at 2.00pm by the Nunnery benches. It is a really good way to learn about the history of our area and every walk is different, so even if you have been before, you will always find some new discovery (*Ed*)

Daffo-delight: Autumn Bulb Planting

Meet 2pm, level crossing end of Grindcobbe, 23rd October 2016.

Volunteers / helpers eagerly welcomed; no experience necessary. Bring a trowel, kneeler (if you have one) and some enthusiasm! We'll be replanting various areas of Sopwell with daffodil bulbs in the hope of continuing the lovely displays of Spring flowers. A great opportunity for all ages to meet other local people.

Sopwell and Cottonmill Toy Library

Term-time Tuesdays, 10am until 12 noon in St Julian's Church Hall, Abbots Avenue West.

Come and browse the folders of toys, and try them out during the session. For those your child likes, borrow items such as Happyland sets, Playmobil, Duplo and ride-ons to take home from 25p to £1 each per week. We have activities suitable for babies, toddlers and pre-school children. Keep the toys interesting by changing them every week without the guilt of clutter!

On that note, if you're looking to declutter your own place we'll happily take donations of good quality used toys.

We are also always looking for new volunteers. You would work in a pair on a rota, manning the library around once a month, and you would be welcome to bring your children along at the same time.

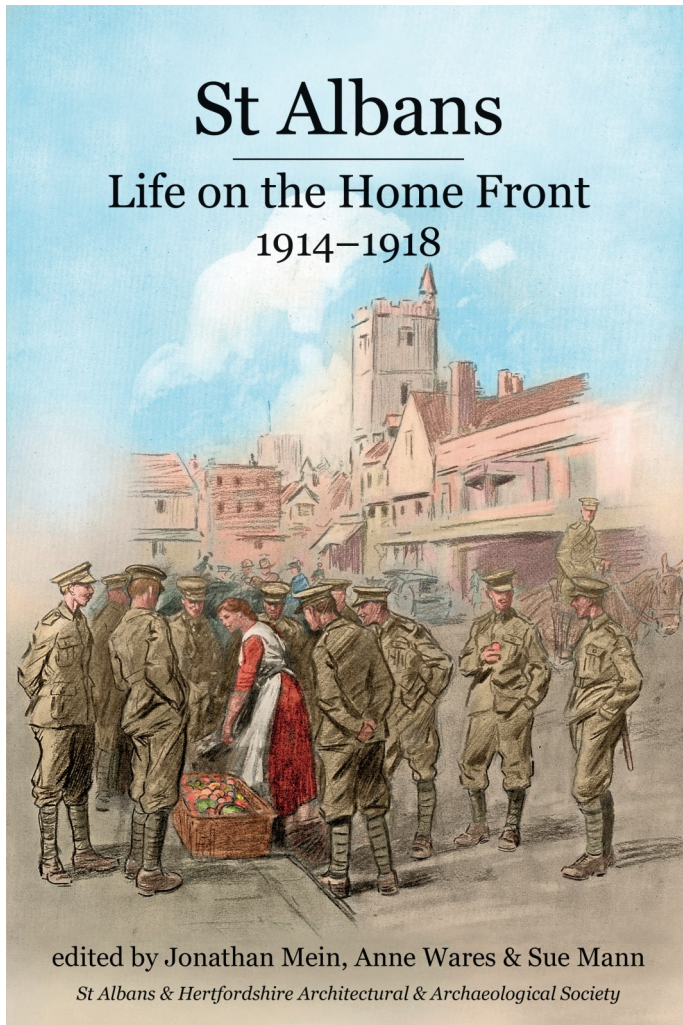
We'd love to see you!



£2 lifetime membership; find more information on the Sopwell and Cottonmill Facebook page or contact Janet on 07884 185925.

Life on the Home Front one hundred years ago

A book is published this month (September) which throws light on what life was like in St Albans during the First World War. It is based on over three years' research by members of the St Albans & Hertfordshire Architectural & Archaeological Society – a number of whom live in the Sopwell area – and is published by Hertfordshire Publications.



With the threat of invasion uppermost in the minds of the military, territorial troops were deployed to protect London and the south-east from enemy attack in August 1914. St Albans was one of a number of towns and cities in Hertfordshire that formed part of this defensive ring and became, almost overnight, a garrison town. Some 7,000 soldiers, initially from London regiments, were billeted in the city and the book explores the effect this had on the local inhabitants.

Later, following the introduction of conscription, the book looks at the role of the St Albans Military Service Tribunal. This body, made up of local men, was constituted to hear often controversial applications for temporary, conditional or absolute exemption from conscription. Rare documents held at Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies in Hertford, together with copies of the *Herts Advertiser*, available on

microfilm at St Albans Central Library, made it possible for the team of researchers to piece together the stories of hundreds of local men whose applications were heard by the tribunal. There were six grounds on which an application could be made, including conscientious objection. Many employers applied on behalf of employees citing the need to hang on to skilled men to keep their businesses afloat. Some individuals applied for temporary exemption to put their affairs in order. For example, Archibald Harvey of Cornwall Road who wanted time to find a companion for his sick wife and to plant his allotment before going off to fight for king and country.

The book, *St Albans: Life on the Home Front, 1914-1918*, is available in St Albans from Waterstones and the Cathedral Bookshop, price £18.99, ISBN 978-1- 909291-74-4

Sue Mann

History Corner

Below is a photograph of the 2/4th Lincolnshire Regiment's camp at St Albans in 1915. We believe they are camped in Verulamium Park. (*I know the park is not in Sopwell but I think close enough to include and such a great photo, Ed*)



Copyright: St Albans Museums

Coincidence?

Was it just coincidence that a recent post on Facebook about our very own Eco Warrior, Jack Hill - highlighting his efforts to rid our Sopwell streets of weeds - triggered the appearance of a road sweeper for the first time in ages, who started to clear the weeds in front of houses and from the gutters? It certainly happened in Riverside Road and I hope it started to happen where you live.

Jack, who will be 90 later this year, is a true hero and we all appreciate his continuing efforts to make Sopwell a better place. He really should be officially recognised for all his voluntary works around our patch. (*Ed*)

SRA AGM

In May our Annual General Meeting was held and was extremely well attended, in fact possibly the best turnout we have ever had. There were many discussions during the evening and District Councillors Eileen Harris and Ian Grant and County Councillor Sandy Walkington were there to answer questions from the floor - and jolly exciting it was too.

Sandy Norman, our departing Secretary and founder member was honoured and given a generous gift of gardening vouchers on behalf of the Association and the Committee in recognition for all her hard work, enthusiasm and drive over the many years of the SRA's existence. The evening closed with refreshments, generously donated by our very own Jack Hill, who baked a mountain of rock cakes for everyone to enjoy and it was a fitting end to a very successful event.

Community Cafe

The Community Cafe at St. Julian's has now been running for nearly four years. It opens every Thursday from 10:30 to 2:30, and offers tea, coffee, cake (usually home made) and hot snacks like toasties (from £1.50), bacon baps (£2) and filled jacket potatoes (from £1.50).

The cafe is run by volunteers, and all profits go to charities selected by customers. If you want to go on the rota to help, please ask! It was recently inspected by the District Council, and was awarded five stars - the highest possible rating.

Computers are available for use by anyone: wifi and internet access is free. One-to-one computer tuition, to meet individual needs, can be booked: phone 862598 to book or for more information.

It runs in St. Julian's Church Hall, 3 Abbots Avenue, AL1 2HY, where you can meet other Sopwell residents.

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.

Willow Tunnel

Go and explore the Willow Tunnel in the Nunnery open space. Great fun for children and adults!



SRA Facebook page

Our very resourceful new committee member Janet Charles has set up a new Facebook group for us and within a few hours we had gained many new followers. It is a great initiative for us and it means we can post activities and events happening in Sopwell instantly; it also offers you an opportunity to post items that relate to Sopwell or things that you see and think we all should know about. The Facebook group is called Sopwell Residents Association. Do come and join us.

Volunteers Needed

As always volunteers are always welcome and if you feel you could help maybe keeping our willow tunnel trimmed or delivering our newsletter or planting bulbs, please let us know either via our new Facebook page or our email address (below under useful contacts)

Useful Contacts

District Councillor Eileen Harris: 831611:

eileenharris555@btinternet.com

District Councillor Iain Grant: 811286:

cllr.i.grant@stalbans.gov.uk

District 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