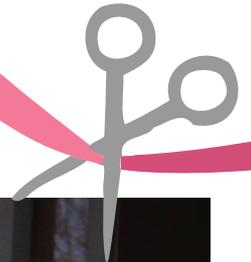


The BARNET SOCIETY

Campaigning for a Better Barnet

RED-SCISSOR OPENING FOR NEW ENVIRONMENT CENTRE



Schools are already queuing up for their pupils to visit the Byng Road nature reserve and its new eco-friendly environment centre after its opening by leading benefactor Janet Hulme of the Hadley Trust, writes Nick Jones

A long red tape held by children across decking at the front of the cedar-clad building was cut in half by Mrs Hulme with a massive pair of red scissors – a magic moment for volunteers who had worked for months to prepare the reserve for its big day.

The opening of the new centre will allow work to start next year on the construction of state-of-the-art care facilities for the Noah's Ark Children's Hospice, which now controls the eight-acre reserve.

Under a deal brokered by Barnet Council, Noah's Ark took over responsibility for the Byng Road reserve and has permission to build a new six-bed complex on the site to provide north London's first children's hospice.



Janet Hulme cuts the ribbon

In return, there is a requirement for the nature reserve to be kept available for community use, and as a first step Noah's Ark has built new premises for the use of the Friends of the Barnet Environment Centre – a development made possible by a £750,000 donation to Noah's Ark by the Hadley Trust.

Ru Watkins, the hospice's chief executive, and Dick Elms, chair of the environment centre's trustees, welcomed guests to the official opening.

They paid tribute to the Hadley Trust and spoke of their delight that the two charities were working together to improve and maintain an important community asset and provide a hospice that would become a hub for children's palliative care services across north London.

Mr Elms told the Barnet Society the

new environment centre was an inspirational building. Its eco-friendly features included a living roof planted with sedum; a large open room looking out on to the garden and nature reserve; and a separate class room, together with cloak room, toilets and kitchen.

"We take up to 30 children on three days a week on school visits to look round the reserve. We were fully booked for the weeks before Easter and now, with offer of brand new facilities, we are booking up really fast for the summer term."

Byng Road environment centre has been hosting school visits for the last 40 years, but Barnet Council withdrew financial support 14 years ago, which left the friends of the centre having to rely on volunteers to maintain the nature reserve.

Continued on Page 2



Michael McInerney shows MP Theresa Villiers the site of the new Noah's Ark hospice

Annual General Meeting of the Barnet Society will be held in Christ Church, St Albans Road on Thursday June 16, starting at 7.30pm

From Page 1: When the eight-acre reserve was put up for disposal by the council, Noah's Ark obtained a long term lease which stipulated that provision should be made for the environment centre's educational work to continue.

Mr Watkins said the aim was to start work on the hospice next year, serving children across north and central London. A start date will depend on fund raising. So far Noah's Ark has raised £5.34 million towards the £10.55 million cost, but work will not go ahead until the appeal has reached £7.9 million (75 per cent of the cost).

Michael McInerney, chair of the Noah's Ark trustees, said the opening of the new centre meant it was now possible to prepare the site for the hospice. During the summer there will be further site clearance, the removal of spoil and rubble heaps, and the demolition of derelict buildings, in preparation for construction work next year.

"No other hospice in London is as fortunate as we will be, sited beside an eight-acre nature reserve. Here we have a site much loved by the local community, well used by local school children. There could hardly be a better environment for the parents and families of children undergoing palliative care, and now we have a wonderful new centre allowing us to work together."

The importance of the planned Noah's Ark hospice to north London was underlined by an impressive line-up of dignitaries for the official opening, including the Deputy Mayor of Barnet, Alison Cornelius, the Mayor of Camden, Lorraine Revah, the Mayor of Haringey, Jennifer Mann, and the Mayor of Islington, Richard Greening.

Also in attendance were Richard Cornelius, leader of Barnet Council, and the Chipping Barnet MP Theresa Villiers.



Is the door shutting on threat of housing at Whalebones parkland?

Any planning application to build houses on the 14 acres of woods and farmland at Whalebones – between Wood Street and Barnet Hospital – is “highly unlikely” to be approved, says the Chipping Barnet MP Theresa Villiers.

Having had discussions with both Barnet Council and the executors for the Whalebones estate, Mrs Villiers told the Barnet Society she remained steadfastly opposed to the land being listed for residential development.

“Barnet Council have made it clear that a decision to zone the site for housing is highly unlikely, and I welcome that.

“But the executors are keen to explore future possibilities for the site, and although Whalebones woods and fields are in a conservation area that does not give them total protection from the possibility of some new development in the future.”

Mrs Villiers told the Barnet Society she had taken up the concerns of local residents after a question

and answer session in January when she made a passionate case for Barnet Council to spare one of High Barnet's precious green spaces from the rapid spread of urban development in and around the town.



Her outright opposition to building on the Whalebones park is shared by Councillor David Longstaff who said it was the wrong place to build a residential estate.

“It is quite contrary to the values of the Gwyneth Cowing foundation that the land be sold for redevelopment and the land in question has been repeatedly turned down for planning permission in the past.”

Trustees for the Gwyneth Cowing estate, who are being advised by property consultants Bidwells of Cambridge, have asked Barnet Council to consider whether the Whalebones site can be listed for housing and community use in a new local development plan being prepared by the borough.

Search is on for Battle of Barnet Chapel

TEST PITS ARE TO BE DUG ON LAND INSIDE WROTHAM PARK AS PART OF AN INVESTIGATION TO LOCATE THE POSSIBLE SITE OF A CHAPEL THAT WAS ERECTED TO COMMEMORATE MEN KILLED IN THE BATTLE OF BARNET OF 1471.

Sam Wilson, the archaeologist leading the Battle of Barnet project, gave the Chipping Barnet MP Theresa Villiers a tour of the area thought most likely to contain what his team hopes will produce some interesting finds.

A geophysical survey conducted by a specialist technician from the University of Southampton confirmed that the target area was well worth further examination.

“We are investigating the belief that a chapel was built after the battle on what had earlier been a moated hermitage inside what is now Wrotham Park, and we are trying to see if we can locate the remains of any foundations.

“A geophysical survey has never been done before to test theories about the existence of a chapel. It is far too early to be sure of anything, but the next step is to dig test pits, to test a number of geophysical anomalies, and see what we find,” said Mr Wilson.

Mrs Villiers said the progress so far in trying to discover the site of the chapel was “very encouraging” as it might well prove to be another step in determining where the battle took place.

Dominic Barker, the technician from the archaeology department at Southampton University, who spent a week conducting magnetometry and resistivity surveys, concentrated his search in the fields around what is believed to be the last remaining section of the moat that encircled the original hermitage.

If the theory put forward by local historian Brian Warren is correct, the chapel was built on the site of the hermitage and was intended to commemorate those killed in the battle, whose bodies might have been buried nearby in a mass grave.

Mr Barker said the importance of a geophysical survey was that it could detect buried structures and cut features to a depth of up to half a metre and once downloaded, the resulting data shows up any magnetic variations in the ground, indicating where perhaps there had once been a ditch or stone foundations.

“The level of magnetic resistance tells us a lot about what is under the top soil, and the magnetic variations in the ground indicate not only possible foundations, but also for example the presence of a moat that might subsequently have been back filled.”

Mr Wilson says the search for the site of the chapel is going hand in hand with extensive surveys with metal detectors on farmland in and around Wrotham Park,

Continued on back page...

Dominic Barker, of the University of Southampton, at work with his magnetometer in Wrotham Park. Sam Wilson (right) is the archaeologist leading the Battle of Barnet survey and excavation.



Annual General Meeting

Thurs 16 June, 2016

MAIN EVENT

Questions & Answers with Richard Cornelius, Leader of Barnet Council

Notice is hereby given that the 71st Annual General Meeting of the Barnet Society will be held at 7.30 pm on Thursday 16 June 2016 at Christ Church, St Albans Road, Barnet, EN5 4LA.

Prior to the formal business, there will be a short address by Councillor Richard Cornelius, Leader of Barnet Council, followed by a question and answer session chaired by the Barnet Society chair Nicholas Jones.

Please email questions to chair@barnetsociety.org.uk or post to 29, Granville Road, Barnet, EN5 4DS.

There will also be time for questions from the floor. Please be prompt – a glass of wine or soft drink on arrival!

APPEAL FOR VOLUNTEERS

The Barnet Society is anxious to encourage new recruits to help with our campaigns for a better Barnet. Perhaps you have an interest in a cause or issue that affects the town centre or the local environment? If so, please make yourself known and come along to one of our committee meetings.

We meet for a couple of hours on Thursday evening, six times a year. Be ready for a lively discussion on how to safeguard and improve our locality. We would welcome your ideas and support. Nominations for new committee members are also invited, in advance to the secretary@barnetsociety.org.uk or at the AGM.

FORMAL BUSINESS

to be conducted after the question and answer session:

To receive and adopt the 71st annual report

To receive and adopt the Chair's report

To receive and adopt the Hon Treasurer's report and accounts for the year end 31st March 2016

To receive a report from the Planning and Environment Sub-Committee

To elect officers for the ensuing year

To elect members to serve on the committee

Any other business

OFFICERS & COMMITTEE

2015-16

President: Aubrey Rose

Vice-Presidents:

R Marson, David Lee, Dr J Remfry

Life members: A Neville, Mrs M Howells

Committee:

Nicholas Jones *Chair*

Gail Laser *Vice-chair*

Jonathan Supran *Secretary*

Robin Bishop *Planning and Environment*

Mary Carroll *Treasurer*

Teresa Kelly *Membership Secretary*

Eamonn Rafferty *Newsletter Editor*

John Gardiner *Newsletter distribution*

Frances Wilson *Minutes Secretary*

Judith Clouston

Peter Willcocks

Andrew Hutchings

Minutes of the 70th Annual General Meeting held at Pennefather Hall, St Albans Road, Barnet Thursday 18th June 2015.

There were 58 members present.

Apologies for Absence:

Mr & Mrs IG Williams, Michael Stewart, David Parry, Kirsty Johnstone, Ray Hopwood, Robert Burstow, Grahame & Jo Webb, Barry Blain, Mary Rossiter, Judith Clouston, Margaret Williams, Denis & Sue Bird, Angela Morris, David Lee, Geoffrey Crabtree, Derek Epstein, Terence Atkins.



Richard Cornelius: Guest speaker at AGM

LAST YEAR'S AGM

Nicholas Jones, Chair of the Barnet Society, welcomed everyone and introduced Theresa Villiers, MP for Chipping Barnet, who attended the first part of the meeting. He then introduced Simon Marsh, research officer of the Battlefields Trust, who gave a presentation on plans to determine the site of the Battle of Barnet.

Mr Marsh explained that the aim of the Battlefields Trust was to campaign to preserve battlefields as a historical resource by getting the community interested, so as to help protect them. The Battle of Barnet, one of the grisliest confrontations of the Wars of the Roses, took place on 14 April 1471 on fields up to a mile north of High Barnet.

The search to determine the precise site of the battle would follow a multi-disciplinary approach, looking at contemporary accounts and carrying out an archaeological survey. Historical documents included a picture showing soldiers fighting along Kitts End Road, which suggested the battle was in the Wrotham Park area. English Heritage and some historians placed the site nearer to Hadley Green, but others thought the clash between the armies of the Yorkists and Lancastrians took place alongside the old Great North Road, and that a chantry chapel to commemorate those who died was built on land in Wrotham Park.

Mr Marsh explained how similar research and surveys had been carried out to determine the site of the battles at Edgehill, Towton and Bosworth. In Barnet, cannons had been fired, so searches with metal detectors might reveal cannon balls and other battlefield artefacts.

Howard Simmons, the Battlefields Trust's representative on the Battle of Barnet Project, explained plans to engage with the community so as to provide a wider understanding of the two-year archaeological survey of the Barnet site that had been funded by a donation from the Hadley Trust and would be carried out under the direction of Dr Glenn Foard, Huddersfield University's celebrated military archaeologist. Further financial help would be needed towards the cost of interpreting and exhibiting any finds and an application was being made to the Heritage Lottery Fund.

At Barnet Museum's Tea in the Park on 28 June, the lead archaeologist, Sam Wilson, would give a presentation and there were also plans for a military re-enactment of the battle.

Annual General Meeting proceedings were conducted by the chair Nicholas Jones.

1. Minutes of the 70th AGM on 26 June 2014

The minutes were approved and signed by NJ

2. THE CHAIR'S REPORT

NJ outlined the progress achieved in the Society's campaigns and projects. These were predominately:

Parking: Strenuous efforts had been made to persuade Barnet Council to allow a period of free parking along the entire length of the High Street. To date the Society had not been successful, but was still campaigning.

Broadband: Efforts continued to persuade British Telecom to honour its undertakings to provide high-speed broadband connections. Theresa Villiers MP had been acting as co-ordinator and had called a meeting with BT for 10 July. Surveys by residents showed high demand for fast broadband and the Society had again appealed to BT to install the nine fibre-enabled telephone cabinets that were desperately needed to serve the 3,000 High Barnet households that lacked a high-speed connection.

Battle of Barnet: The Society was supporting Barnet Museum's bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for financial help towards the cost of ensuring that any artefacts that are found are properly cleaned and exhibited and that everything possible is done to encourage local participation in the project and a wider understanding of the importance of the battle in the history of Barnet.

Hanging Baskets: The Barnet Society, Barnet Residents Association and Hadley Residents Association had each contributed £496.28p towards the cost of installing, renting and maintaining hanging baskets in the High Street.

The report was moved by Ken Reynolds, seconded Jenny Remfrey, and adopted by those present

3. HON. TREASURER'S REPORT

Mary Carroll provided an Annual Report which was included in the Newsletter. This showed a surplus of £9,136.44

The report was moved by Gordon Kerr, seconded by Patrick Gaskell-Taylor, and adopted by those present

4. REPORT FROM THE PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT SUB-COMMITTEE

In a wide-ranging review, Robin Bishop referred to significant changes in the Spires shopping centre, the extensive housing redevelopment at Brook Valley Gardens, and the impact of the current surge in

home extensions and conversions of commercial premises to flats as a result of the government's extension in permitted development rights. New residential developments included plans for the construction of 25 flats by the Older Women's Co-Housing project in Union Street and the nearby conversion of the former Barnet Town Hall into flats.

Issues for 2015-2016

Highways improvements: Judith Clouston and Gail Laser had met Barnet Council's new Commissioning Director of the Environment to discuss proposals for pavement build-outs in the High Street and an improved layout at the junction of High Street and Wood Street. He had appeared to be really supportive, but three weeks later there had still been no further word on implementation.

Elmbank: Linden Homes had purchased the former nurses' homes on the Elmbank site, opposite the Arkley public house, and were proposing to submit plans to build over 100 new homes.

Whitings Hill: Barnet Council had proposed plans to develop land adjoining Whitings Hill Primary School to build 36 homes.

Underhill Football Ground: The Education Funding Agency had purchased the Barnet Football Club ground as a site for a new school to be established by Ark Pioneer Academy with places for 1,800 pupils from nursery age to sixth Form.

Old Fold Manor Golf Club: A proposal had been made to remove the mature and pollarded trees currently standing on the east side of St Albans Road, build up the height of the boundary with landfill soil and replant with 3,000 new trees and shrubs.

David Lee had visited the site and offered advice to the club and its landscape developer, who seemed to be taking note of the views expressed. A planning application was expected shortly, and the Society's comments about the future of what was a very significant belt of greenery, providing in effect a green gateway to Barnet, would be published in the newsletter and the website.

Mays Lane: Planning permission had been granted for the conversion of two barns at Brent Lodge Farm into three houses. The designs were sketchy and the farm was in the Green Belt, but following recent planning deregulation, the planners were powerless to insist on the high standards that would make the development acceptable.

Barnet Market: The market was really struggling with only three fruit and vegetable stalls present on a regular basis. Gail Laser emphasised that if the market was not supported by the local community, then it would be lost.

Church Passage: The Society was continuing to press its objections to the shop front of the new Guns and Smoke restaurant and to remind Barnet Council that this was a conservation area.

Mr Bishop thanked all the members of the Planning & Environment Sub-Committee for their support, especially Judith Clouston, Martin Geiger, Peter Bradburn on highway matters and David Lee on trees.

There were a lot of objections from the floor about the proposed Ark Pioneer Academy school at the former Barnet Football Club ground at Underhill, mostly concerning increased traffic and the loss of Green Belt land. One member questioned the need for another school when Totteridge Academy was not full and had cancelled its sixth form. Councillor David Longstaff said the planning application had not yet been made and members should make their objections known.

The report was moved by Ken Rowland and seconded by Gail Laser.

5. ELECTION OF OFFICERS TO SERVE ON THE COMMITTEE

Nicholas Jones handed the Chair to Aubrey Rose, who proposed NJ be re-elected as Chair for 2015-16. This was seconded by Neil Kobish.

Vice-Presidents: R Marson. David Lee, Dr J Remfry - proposed by Gail Laser and seconded by Robin Bishop

The Committee: Gail Laser, Jonathan Supran, Robin Bishop, Mary Carroll, Teresa Kelly, Eamonn Rafferty, John Gardiner, Judith Clouston, Peter Willcocks, Andrew Hutchings, Frances Wilson. - Proposed by Jenny Remfry Seconded by Robin Marson.

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There were still copies available of Rambles Round Barnet Book 2. Owen Jones, the author, said an app, developed by Geotourist, would be available shortly on smart phones providing guidance and narration on three of the most popular rambles.

The Society was praised for the standard of its newsletter, edited by Eamonn Rafferty, and for its innovative website developed by the society's webmaster Martin Standley. Thanks were also expressed for the two trips for members to visit Big Ben. Neil Kobish thanked all the committee members for their help and hard work.

NJ thanked everyone for attending.

The meeting closed at 9 pm.

BARNET SOCIETY TREASURER'S REPORT

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES PERIOD TO 31ST MARCH 2016

PROFIT & LOSS 31ST MARCH 2016

	Apr '14 - Mar 15	Apr '15 - Mar 16
INCOME		
Subscriptions	4,199.02	3,740.31
Books	802.00	444.20
Postcards	24.00	8.00
Donations	100.00	58.00
Bank Interest Earned	4.52	5.18
TOTAL INCOME	5,129.54	4,255.69
GROSS PROFIT	5,129.54	4,255.69
EXPENSE		
Bank Fees		
PayPal Fees	18.31	25.84
TOTAL BANK FEES	18.31	25.84
Computers & Internet		
Software and Social Media	482.06	227.44
Website	707.46	369.44
TOTAL COMPUTERS & INTERNET	1,189.52	596.88
Donations	245.00	671.27
Dues and Subscriptions	140.00	135.00
Events		
AGM Expenses	126.57	223.84
Misc	209.12	176.02
Christmas Stall	120.50	119.00
TOTAL EVENTS	456.19	518.86
Newsletter		
Design	0.00	325.00
Printing	2,575.00	1,775.00
Postage	205.48	138.24
Stationery	94.00	87.57
TOTAL NEWSLETTER	2,874.48	2,325.81
Training		
	0.00	243.02
TOTAL EXPENSE	4,923.50	4,516.68
NET ORDINARY INCOME	206.04	-260.99
PROFIT FOR THE YEAR	206.04	-260.99

BALANCE SHEET 31ST MARCH 2016

	31 Mar 15	31 Mar 16
ASSETS		
Current Assets		
Accounts Receivable		
Books and Post Cards	0.00	30.00
Total Accounts Receivable	0.00	30.00
Cash at bank and in hand		
HSBC - Deposit Acct	504.63	8,007.57
HSBC - Current Acct	8504.66	344.61
PayPal	285.95	391.47
Total Cash at bank and in hand	9,295.24	8,743.65
Total Current Assets	9,295.24	8,773.65
Current Liabilities		
Accounts Payable		
Accounts Payable	0.00	69.58
Total Current Liabilities	0.00	69.58
Total Current Liabilities	0.00	69.58
NET CURRENT ASSETS	9,295.24	8,704.07
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES	9,295.24	8,704.07
NET ASSETS	9,295.24	8,704.07
Capital and Reserves		
Share Capital Account	9,899.74	8,965.06
Profit for the Year	-604.50	-260.99
SHAREHOLDER FUNDS	9,295.24	8,704.07

COMMENTARY

A small loss in the profit for this year which decreased by 11% compared with 2014/15, mainly due to a drop in the number of subscriptions paid. Sales from books and postcards decreased by 40%.

Expenditure was 8% less than the previous year. The Newsletter, Software and Internet continue to require the largest spend although both had less expenditure than the previous year. This reduction was counter balanced by an increase in donations made. The largest being a joint contribution with the Barnet Residents Association for hanging baskets for the High Street, and a further donation to St John The Baptist Church Recital.

Affiliation subscriptions remain consistent with the previous year and an additional donation of £25 was made to the London Green Belt Council.

Events expenses saw a small increase this year due to the costs of the hall hire for the AGM. The miscellaneous spend in Events was for the costs of holding the Teresa Villiers Q&A session.

The net result of all income and expenditure this year shows a deficit of -£260.99 and the total funds available as of 31st March 2015 is £8,704.07.

The accounts will be examined and then published on the website in due course.



Mary Carroll, Barnet Society Treasurer

Barnet's artists publicise their work

Local residents will get more opportunities to view the work of members of the Barnet Guild of Artists if arrangements can be made to increase the number of public displays of their paintings and other art forms.

A selection of oils, water colours and prints are already on continuous exhibition in and around High Barnet, and the Guild is hoping that more locations can be found.

Almost every day of the week local artists can be found at work in the Guild's much-loved studio in Whalebones Park, which was built in 1961 by the late Gwyneth Cowing, and left in her will for their use.

Nichola Hunt-Peasnell, the Guild's chairman, is hoping that by arranging more continuous exhibitions in local venues, the public will be able to see the wide range of their artistic work, and hopefully boost membership, currently standing at just over 100.

Two regular events are the annual exhibition in the Pennefather Hall in July and the Christmas Fair exhibition in the Tudor Hall, but renewed efforts are being made to expand the continuous displays that are currently on show at the Bull Theatre, the foyer of the Reel cinema in Boreham Wood, and the Emmaus homeless charity store in the High Street (in conjunction with the Hertfordshire Visual Arts Forum).

“ I have lived in Arkley for 27 years, and I never even knew that there was an artists' studio in Whalebones until I found out about the guild.”

Monthly workshops are a regular feature of the guild's annual programme, and there was a good turn out for a demonstration of the production of relief mono prints by Andy Dalton, a print maker from York.

Mr Dalton used objects like leaves and feathers to demonstrate his techniques, a process that captivated the guild's newest recruit Hayley Lehmann of Arkley. She is a photographer by profession, but is anxious to further her interest in using fabrics to make collages. "I have lived in Arkley for 27 years, and I never even knew that there was an artists' studio in Whalebones until I found out about the guild."

Ms Hunt-Peasnell said the guild was extremely fortunate in having the use of the timber-framed studio built by Miss Cowing.

"The inside of the studio is very light and airy. There is a good quality of light because of the long window looking out south on to Whalebones park. Outside we have a courtyard where we can work in natural light.

"The studio is open every day of the week for members, and most days there is someone here."

However, there is a question mark hanging over the guild's continued use of the studio because the trustees of Miss Cowing's estate are investigating whether planning permission can be obtained for rezoning the Whalebones estate for residential and community development.



Nichola Hunt-Peasnell, chairman of the Barnet Guild of Artists, on the steps of their studio in Whalebones Park

Poetry Please

Celebrations surrounding the 400th anniversary of William Shakespeare's death gave an added impetus to the monthly gathering of the Barnet Poetry Group, when members spent an April Saturday afternoon discussing the playwright's many soliloquies and speeches.

The group, established in 1990, grew out of an earlier poetry class organised by the Workers' Educational Association.

Michael King, a founder member, and a WEA lecturer in English, said the members' love of poetry had sustained the society over many years, and they organised ten discussion groups a year.

For the society's newest member, Anita Butler, the event was an ideal moment to discuss her doctorate about Shakespeare's exploration of emotions. Her particular interest is in Shakespeare's descriptions of blushing. She says only seven of Shakespeare's 39 plays fail to mention the word blush.



Anita Butler, Michael King & Jane Strange at the group

"The frequency of references to blushing is probably a reflection of the limited vocabulary of the day. The word embarrassment wasn't in use, so if someone was embarrassed they blushed."

Carole Euesden, who organises the monthly meetings, has a mailing list of 35 members, and says there is almost always a good turnout for their Saturday afternoon discussions, held at the Friends Meeting House, in Leicester Road, New Barnet.

"My love of poetry was re-awakened when I did an A level in English at Barnet College after my children left home. I learn something new every time we have a discussion group, and we thought it was so important to discuss Shakespeare's soliloquies and speeches given the 400th anniversary."

Barnet Poetry Group usually meets on the second Saturday of each month (except July and August) at 2.30 pm, Friends Meeting House, Leicester Road, New Barnet. (Admission £4 including refreshments)



Planning and Environment Report Robin Bishop on the issues that concern the Society

The combination of planning relaxations, housing demand, property prices and uncertainty as to Council intentions makes this a critical time for Chipping Barnet's buildings and landscapes. The latter are the subject of the article on the opposite page.

This year has seen a noticeable change of gear. The latest Government planning proposals - being debated in Parliament as I write - would undo many safeguards we have taken for granted since the post-war Town & Country Planning Acts. This would drive building to a level not seen for decades.

The wave of residential development started last summer with two applications previously reported, Elmbank nurses' home (114 units) and Whittings Road (36 units), both recently approved. Since then, applications have been made for Tapster Street (12 units) and numerous smaller schemes on and behind the High Street; and one for 40 units on the Brake Shear House site is imminent. All these we've welcomed in principle, though often criticising the insufficiency of affordable housing and aspects of their design.

One that we did oppose was for 70 High St, chiefly for its adverse effects on The Bull. It has since been approved, but with stringent conditions.

The flow of large home extensions continues. Farm buildings in Mays Lane are also being converted into dwellings. Most of these are now permitted development, so we have no opportunity to comment on them.

We did, however, complain about a 'commercial' extension in Montague Close (off the High Street), recently built and promptly converted into a dwelling. It was a disgracefully cynical manoeuvre, and thankfully hasn't been approved. This contrasts with two modest proposals nearby in Bridle Mews, where the full weight of planning policies have been applied because they are within the Wood Street Conservation Area (though invisible from the street). One was approved after re-submission, the other is design in progress.

Conservation Area status is now one of the last remaining planning protections we can rely on. That's why we have opposed two applications in Sunset View, at No.7 for a large and unsympathetic back extension, and at No.14 for a much bigger replacement house including basement pool. Sunset View has unique architectural value locally.

The road was laid out in the early 20th century by William Charles Weymouth, architect of Pennefather Hall and Ewen Hall. The houses are

attractive variations on Arts & Crafts themes, and together comprise an unusually complete and high-quality development for its period. If CA status means anything, the planners must reject both applications.

Down the hill, the Old Courthouse's conversion to residential use is an object lesson in respectful adaptation. It's been a five-year haul, but the hefty price of the flats must make it worthwhile!

On the commercial side, the loss of business premises has been accelerating in and around the High Street, and especially near New Barnet Station.

Architecturally significant cases have been the former Lloyds Bank in the High Street and Barnet's old Town Hall in Union Street, both of which we objected to.

The result of the planning appeal over Guns & Smoke is one win to us (its fascia must go), one loss (the main façade can stay).

Better news has been the Council's proposal to rebuild Checkalow's premises in Moxon Street, though we have asked for a more sensitive design.

At The Spires, the good example of Carluccio's is being followed by the proposed retail and restaurant units, though some of us regret the loss of the present courtyard landscaping.

The best news could be the Brake Shear House redevelopment. Although we were greatly concerned initially about the potential loss of employment, we won a battle with the Council for the provision of affordable workspace. Wrenbridge (the developer) and Morrow + Lorraine (their architects) have not only gone out of their way to listen to us but have come up with a good design. In addition to replacement workspace and the 40 homes mentioned above, the scheme is sensitively landscaped and will open up a new view of greenery from the High Street.

With so much going on, I've been especially grateful to fellow Committee members, and to Markus Geiger, David Lee and Peter Bradburn of the P&E Committee, for all their assistance.



View from the High Street of the proposed central square on the site of Brake Shear House. Visualisation courtesy of Morrow + Lorraine Architects

Landscapes

A lot of new housing is coming to Barnet over the next few years. In the Council's Housing Strategy 2015-25, it expected to be able to build 20,000 homes. But the latest forecast is that some 30,000 will be needed, so more sites must be found.

The Barnet Society will do what it can to ensure they're well designed and landscaped, but it's unlikely we'll be able to avoid some loss of open space.

At present, Government, our Council and leading London Mayoral candidates have all pledged to protect the Green Belt. But that hasn't prevented Old Stationers Field (near Dollis Brook) being turned into a floodlit and fenced-off artificial pitch – and more may be needed when the proposed Ark Academy opens in 2018.

Moreover, much of Chipping Barnet's green space, for example the Whalebones estate, is not actually designated Green Belt. The impression of continuous greenery we enjoy is due to the happy accident of various fields, parks and trees combining to produce an effect greater than the sum of their parts.

For this reason, we welcomed the recent consultation on a Borough-wide strategy for the maintenance and enhancement of Barnet's parks and open spaces over the next ten years. The Council is commendably frank about needing to save £1.7m from its parks and open spaces budget between 2015 & 2020. But the report's methodology was flawed and its suggested solutions cause us considerable concern.

Central to the Strategy is the ranking of every park and open space according to its high or low quality and value. It's a logical approach, but produces some bizarre results. In our immediate area, spaces deemed 'low quality, low value' include:

- Monken Hadley Common & Wood
- Hadley Cricket outfield
- Hadley Highstone
- Byng Playing Fields
- Ravenscroft Gardens
- Rowley Green Nature Reserve
- King George V Playing Fields
- The Tudor Golf Course
- Potters Lane Open Space
- Highlands Gardens



Own goal? Council's strategy on open spaces

It can't be right – to take one example – to classify Hadley Wood as low in both quality and value. It's a remarkable enclave of ancient and mainly indigenous woodland (the former Enfield Chase) miraculously preserved within London, and unique in Barnet.

The action proposed for spaces categorised as 'low quality, low value' is, 'Enhance quality and value or consider delivering outcomes through an alternative use' (my italics). Since funds are unlikely to be found for the former, the alternative use is most likely to be housing.

As I write, we don't know which open spaces will be targeted, because Area Action Plans are still being prepared – but no public consultation is currently proposed on the Plans, despite those proposals being what will matter to residents.

Development of most of these sites would be totally unacceptable. For any such idea, the Society would require a convincing demonstration of the housing, educational or other need, and a thorough appraisal of alternative options, costs and benefits. Resulting architectural and landscape schemes would have to be to the highest design and environmental standards, with adequate compensatory planting, amenity space and provision for wildlife.

In our view, successful new development will only be achieved if the community is involved from the start, and shares both the vision and the shaping of projects. Barnet Council's record in this respect gives us no grounds for optimism, whether on a small scale such as Brookdene Nature Reserve in Finchley – fortunately no longer to be sold to a developer – or large scale such as West Hendon, where the impact of the new towers on residents and landscape will be massive.

At the micro scale, we have also taken a close interest in local tree cases.

At Old Fold Manor Golf Club, we supported the principle of replacing the Poplars along St.Albans Road with native species – subject to a convincing method statement, specification and other key details. But these have yet to be produced, and a planning decision is still awaited.

In Whittings Road, we supported the local campaign to save a mature Oak that obstructed a proposed new access road. The scheme has now been redesigned to accommodate it.

We are in discussion with neighbours of St.Mark's, Barnet Vale, about possible Tree Protection Orders for trees in its vicinity. St.Mark's is worthy building, and better planting would make it a landmark in a locality not well endowed with greenery.

Finally, we hope to persuade the Council to plant a couple of London Planes in front of the former Old Red Lion to join up the line of 'Lee's Trees' down Barnet Hill to those by the railway bridge.

WOULD YOU ADAM 'N' EVE IT?

Barnet is living up to its fame in Cockney rhyming slang: a survey shows there are more hairdressing salons in the London borough Barnet than in any other part of capital, except for the West End.

Mapmechanics surveyed 62,000 hair and beauty businesses actively trading in the UK and discovered a north/south divide with the north-west of England having the most salons per head of the population than any other region.

But Kensington and Chelsea leads the entire country with 297 registered hairdressers, barbers, beauty spas and nail bars, giving the borough the highest concentration, with a salon for every 526 residents.

Except for the West End, the largest number of hair and beauty salons in any London borough is in Barnet, which has 428 salons – a salon for every 876 residents.



At the latest count, there were 16 hairdressers, barbers, spas and nail bars along the length of Barnet High Street – and the beauty parlours (7), were not far short of the combined total of hairdressers (5) and barbers (4).

Barnet Fair (sadly no more) is Cockney slang for hair – and is listed eighth in the top ten classics for Cockney rhyming slang; Apples and Pears and Adam and Eve are probably the best known examples.

Mapmechanics rated the north-west as the UK's regional beauty capital, with Blackpool, Preston, Lancaster, Blackburn and Crewe boasting 2,616 salons for a combined population of 1.9 million – or one for every 726 residents. Outside London, Blackpool was the hotspot with 391 hair and beauty businesses for a population of 280,000.

The proliferation of salons in the north-west was linked to the influence of footballers' wives and the popularity of events such as ladies' day at Aintree racecourse on Merseyside.

Perhaps the influence of wannabe WAGS and reality TV shows has helped keep the hairdressers of Barnet in business. Totteridge, Hadley Wood, Cuffley and other classy areas of north London and south Hertfordshire are known to be popular with Arsenal and Tottenham footballers and other would-be celebrities.



Aubrey Rose outside Monkenholt once the home of Dame Cicely Saunders

A campaign is being launched to persuade English Heritage to award one of its renowned blue plaques to the Hadley Green home of the late Dame Cicely Saunders, the Barnet-born founder of the hospice movement. She established the world's first-purpose built hospice in 1967 – St Christopher's Hospice, at Sydenham in south-east London – and was a pioneer in the importance of palliative care in modern medicine.

Dame Cicely spent her childhood at Monkenholt, a Georgian house on Hadley Green Road – a house that the Barnet Society President Aubrey Rose says is now "a must" for being presented with a blue plaque. "Dame Cicely was brought up in Barnet, and Monkenholt was the family home. She trained as a nurse in the last war, later qualified as a doctor and became the founder of the world hospice movement.

On the outbreak of war, despite family opposition, she left Oxford University in 1940 and started nursing at St Thomas's Hospital in London. After working part time at St Luke's Home for the Dying Poor in Bayswater, she studied to become a physician and started work at St Joseph's Hospice in Hackney, where she did research into pain control.

PARKING PERMIT PRICE ACCELERATION

Residents in controlled parking zones have complained to Barnet Council about what they consider is an exorbitant flat rate fee of £21 to change a vehicle registration number or householder's name on a parking permit. The same £21 charge applies to all three bands for permits – £30 for low-emission cars; £40 for mid-range vehicles; and £60 for high emission.

High Barnet's three ward councillors – David Longstaff, Bridget Perry and Wendy Prentice – were asked by the Barnet Society to explain how the council could justify a spurious administration charge for a transaction that was well outside the range of the council's fixed costs in its service agreement.

Councillor Longstaff, the only one of the three to reply, said he had been assured that complaints about the level of charging for permit changes would be considered at a meeting between Paul Bragg, the council's head of parking, highways and infrastructure, and the contract performance officer, Sameet Pandya.

The council's parking service justified the £21 fee on the grounds that a change of registration number or name required a manual verification check by a customer service officer of the relevant documents, and the updating of a resident's individual database. These checks were required to ensure that any fraudulent applications were detected.

Councillor Longstaff said he would also discuss the overall level of Barnet's parking charges in a CPZ with Councillor Dean Cohen, chairman of the council's environment committee.

ANNIVERSARY YEAR OF MUCH-LOVED DAY CENTRE

CHIPPING BARNET'S POPULAR VENUE FOR THE ELDERLY CELEBRATES ITS 40TH ANNIVERSARY IN JUNE

"For me it's like home from home, but with lots of friends to talk to," says Joan Frankling (96) who was one of the first volunteers when the centre was established in the 1970s

Mrs Frankling offered to help when she retired, after her husband's death, little thinking that 40 years later she would become a member herself and a regular attender.

The centre's twice-weekly sessions - on Mondays and Fridays, 9.30am to 3.30pm - are held at the United Reformed Church in Wood Street. Lunch on Monday is a roast meal cooked by a local carvery, and there are fish and chips on Friday.

For Brigid Horgan, the centre's organiser, the greatest reward is the knowledge that she and her team of volunteer helpers are providing a marvellous welcome and company, twice a week, for some of High Barnet's many elderly residents.

"There is more charitable housing for the elderly in High Barnet than in the rest of the borough, so no wonder we have a waiting list for places.

"We know we are a much-loved institution and that we have a lot of goodwill in the town. When David Cameron launched his 'Big Society', we like to say we invented it here in Barnet, we got there first."

The centre provides lunch, friendship and entertainment for 25 or so members, at a cost of £7 each a day. A 15-seat mini-bus and volunteer car drivers pick up the residents and take them home.

The centre's popularity, and the dedication of the volunteer helpers, speaks for itself. Two stalwart volunteers are Maura Howells (85), who became a helper soon after the centre opened in 1976, and Molly Stebbings (86), a volunteer for the last 18 years.

Swapping stories about their earlier lives ensures some lively conversation. One regular attender, Daphne Korner (91), who was in the Auxiliary Territorial Service, served as a secretary throughout the last war to Field Marshall Lord Montgomery,

Mrs Horgan, a nurse before she became the centre's organiser 15 years ago, says the centre's great strength is that it is an independent charity, and although it no longer receives a direct grant from Barnet Council, it does get financial help through Age UK Barnet and other local charities.

"The centre was established in 1976, by the Reverend Dereck Stockwell, a minister at the United Reform Church, and Lawrie Adams, formerly of Barnet Urban Council. They did a very good job, and ensured we had sound financial backing.

"We have our own 15-seat mini-bus, and of course that means we can have days out at the seaside or visit local garden centres."

Obviously we depend on volunteers and we are always looking for extra helpers, especially volunteer drivers.'

"We get volunteer help from some of the boys at Queen Elizabeth's School, and that is much appreciated. Waitrose supermarket is another great supporter and we benefit from regular donations from their 'community matters' collections."

The 40th anniversary is to be celebrated on Friday 17 June with lunch in Ewen Hall and entertainment in the afternoon.

Photos: (L-R)

Ashley Goodwin, volunteer driver at the wheel of the day centre's 15-seat mini-bus

Joan Frankling (96) was one of the day centre's first helpers when it opened in 1976. With her is Molly Stebbings (86), a regular volunteer

Two of the centre's longest serving helpers, Maura Howells (left), a life member of the Barnet Society, and Molly Stebbings. Washing up completed, Maura enjoys a St Patrick's Day Irish coffee



Search is on for Battle of Barnet Chapel

Continued from page 3...

Finds have included lead shot, coins and other artefacts, and although nothing has been found that can definitely be linked to the battle, the team are narrowing down their search area.

“Obviously we are looking at several possible sites for the battle, but having spent the last five months searching the area, I have to say I do remain optimistic that we might well be able to come up with a pretty firm idea of where it might have taken place.”

During her visit, Mrs Villiers was shown coins and other objects dating from the second half of the 15th century that might well be connected to the battle. These artefacts were unearthed in previous years and are currently on display at Barnet Museum.

They include a coin dated 1468 from the reign of King Edward IV; a French jetton or counting piece that might have belonged to one of the French gunners who fought at Barnet; and a late 15th century copper bar to which a purse would have been attached.

Mr Wilson said that although the items had all been found within Wrotham Park there was no proof they were owned by those who fought at the battle. “The coins and artefacts might just as easily have been dropped by travellers on the Great North Road, so we can’t be sure, but along with two cannon balls previously found on the Wrotham estate, they do seem to indicate we are searching the right area.”

Sam Wilson, the archaeologist leading the Battle of Barnet project, gave the Chipping Barnet MP Theresa Villiers a tour of fields inside Wrotham Park that might once have been the location of a chapel built to commemorate men killed in one of the grisliest confrontations of the Wars of the Roses. They are seen examining an Edward IV coin that might be linked to the battle.



Membership Report

Since the last membership report we welcome to Barnet Society the following members: Ms Rushton, Mrs O’Sullivan and Mr O’Connor.

With this copy of the Annual Report you should also receive a membership renewal letter specially tailored to your own situation. Please read it carefully.

If you have an existing standing order it will simply remind you of the fact and thank you for paying in this way.

Those, the majority, who pay their subscription by cash, cheque, electronic transfer or PayPal are asked to send payment to the Membership Secretary in the usual manner.

If you should wish to consider setting up a standing order the necessary form is provided. Even if you have no payment to make, please do check the accuracy of the contact details printed on the letter, correct as necessary and return it to the Membership Secretary (contact details below). At time of writing we have 425 fully paid-up members.

Teresa Kelly
membership@barnetsociety.org.uk

