



The Barnet Society

Campaigning for a better Barnet

NEWSLETTER

February 2011



Barnet Christmas Street Fair 2010 – inside Tudor Hall

CHAIR'S LETTER

Change continues apace.

Following on from the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review in October, Barnet Council has been consulting over proposed cuts to next year's budget. We understand they are looking to save more than £25m over the next 3 years (from a total budget of £846m) and that, this coming year alone, they are looking to cut more than £10m from a budget of £277m. Whilst this may appear to represent a small percentage of the total, it is a huge amount of money to save in one go and they say they need to identify these cuts before the financial year end (30 March).

The Council has consulted on ways of increasing income, such as increased rents for allotments and greatly-increased parking charges, and on ways of reducing expenditure, such as decreased money for libraries and museums. The latter, together with the borough's arts facilities, appear to be seen as 'soft targets'. Whilst we are not aware that Chipping Barnet Library is under threat, we know that our Museum at 31 Wood Street certainly is. The Council carried out a consultation over the Christmas period (they assure us this was not a cynical move) regarding the future of both our museum and of Church Farmhouse Museum in Hendon. The proposal is that the Council will withdraw funding from both Museums. Without time to look into alternative ways of funding, both could be lost. We have not seen the results of the consultation yet, but understand a report is currently being written.

Whilst recognising the need to make savings, we feel that the consultations are being rushed through with little or no time for the community to reflect on the findings, to understand what choices may be available or to make other proposals. The results of the consultations are going to Cabinet in mid-February, and decisions will be made on the future of many Council services. The concern is that institutions, such as Barnet Museum that has been here for decades, may be gone in just a few months. The Council may think it cannot afford to keep our few cultural assets, but the truth is that we cannot afford to lose them. The Barnet Society is helping the Museum in its campaign to keep the collection in its premises in Wood Street and we would like to thank all our Members, particularly those who have contacted us with specific offers of assistance, and all who have signed the Museum's petition. More about Barnet Museum is contained within an article below.

Later in the Newsletter you will read about another change (for the worse), this time in connection with the Green Belt. However, here the consultation

period is already over and the decision made. In the Dollis Valley, next to Ravenscroft School, a piece of 'protected' land has been lost, in spite of objections from neighbours, the Barnet Society and London Wildlife Trust. This is the latest of a number of recent incursions into our precious Green Belt in this area and we cannot lose any more. We put up a tough fight, but as is sometimes the case, it appeared the decision had already been made. We have written to the Director of Planning, Housing & Regeneration to inform him that we will remain vigilant and must resist any further loss.

And one more victim of change, it appears, is our Chipping Barnet Town Centre Strategy, which seems to have been put on hold, pending a review of the impact of the Localism Bill. This is rather ironic, as we feel that the project is a great example of localism – different groups, representing residents and local businesses, coming together and giving their time and expertise to work on the future development of our town for the benefit of the local community. Instead, we are looking into using the Localism Bill to set ourselves up as a Neighbourhood Forum to develop our own Neighbourhood Plan, for which the Council will be obliged to provide support. We are certainly not going to let the Council waste 12-18 months of positive and constructive work, particularly as proposals for redevelopment of The Spires may be coming forward in the next few months – just the sort of thing the Strategy was designed to deal with.

I should mention that for one item, at least, there appears to have been no change. I mean, of course, Barnet Market. The application for extension (of the 2005 consent to redevelop) made in September has not yet been determined. The Barnet Society has objected to the application as we feel it no longer provides the most suitable solution for the Market. The Council has asked the applicant to submit additional information, only some of which has been provided. We have asked how long the Council is prepared to wait for the rest (it should not be an indefinite period), but so far we have had no response. In the meantime, the Market struggles on, with only a few stalls and a scruffy and unwelcoming appearance. Until the application is determined, it appears that little else will change, so we continue to pressure the Planning Department to act.

The Barnet Society will continue to campaign on all these matters and we are determined to get the best possible outcomes – for a better Barnet. Finally, we will shortly be launching our new website. We have been working on it over recent weeks and plan to make it 'go live' in the next few. We have tried

to make it more attractive, user-friendly and interesting – a change for the better! We will be able keep more up to date with News and hope to use it to attract new members. We will send you an e-mail alert when it is launched and will be interested to hear what you think.

Onwards and upwards!

JUDITH CLOUSTON (Chair)



Barnet Museum at 31 Wood Street

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S REPORT

We are pleased to welcome Mr D Knight to the Barnet Society and would encourage all our members to invite their friends and neighbours to join. The new year will see the local environment coming under renewed pressure as a result of Council spending cuts and residents groups such as ours will only be listened to if known to be well-resourced and supported.

My thanks to those who have answered the call of the letter, printed on unmissable bright orange paper, requesting the payment of overdue subscriptions. Those from whom we have heard nothing will now be

assumed to have moved away, or to no longer wish to remain members. Their names will, in due course be removed from the list of members.

Thanks also to those who have confirmed or updated their electronic contact details. Derek Epstein is beginning to use this avenue of communication to good effect.

JOHN GARDINER

CHIPPING BARNET TOWN CENTRE STRATEGY BOARD

In spite of the news about the Council putting the brakes on the initiative it started over a year ago to form a Strategy for Chipping Barnet, there has been progress on the formulation of Planning Briefs for the two possible major redevelopment sites – The Spires and the TA Site on St Albans Road. The Urban Design team have been working on these and we hope that they will be ready for consultation shortly. Of course, they should emerge from the town centre framework, rather than being prepared in isolation – that is the whole point of the Strategy – but at least there will be something to guide developers as they prepare proposals.

The owners of The Spires, UBS (Union Bank of Switzerland), have been holding meetings with the Council about their plans for expansion/redevelopment of the 1980's shopping centre over the last few years, but were prevented from making a planning application by the worldwide banking crisis. However, they are in talks with the Council again and we expect revised proposals to be developed over the next few months, hence the need for site-specific guidance. There are no plans to sell the TA Site yet as far as we know but, in the current economic climate, it is possible that the MoD will consider a sale. Again, having guidance already prepared is the best way of making sure we get the type of development we want.

The Barnet Society has met with the Council's Conservation team to discuss the idea of joining the town centre's two Conservation Areas in the High Street – an idea that has long been on our agenda. We hope to be able to report that some progress has been made in our next Newsletter.

The long-promised improvements to the junction of Wood Street and the High Street took a step backwards in January. The Council's Highways section had proposed simplifying the way the junction operates by removing some of the turning choices. It had planned a trial for one week in January to test the proposal, but at the eleventh hour, the trial was cancelled due to

concerns about possible congestion. We trust the works required to improve the junction for pedestrians will still go ahead though, as these are now greatly overdue, having originally been intended to coincide with the opening of Barnet College's Wood Street Campus in September (and being paid for by 'planning gain' money from the College's planning approval). Widened pedestrian access would also provide an opportunity to plant trees and greatly improve the appearance of one of the town centre's most important junctions. The Barnet Society produced a sketch for such improvements over a year ago – perhaps the Council would like to dust this down and take another look. There is no excuse for the lack of progress and we will continue to pursue the matter until there is a satisfactory outcome.

By the time of the next Newsletter, we trust the Town Centre Strategy will be back on track so that we can complete the work that many people have put a great deal of time and effort into.

JUDITH CLOUSTON



The junction of Wood Street and the High Street with its woefully inadequate pedestrian access

PHOENIX TRIP

On 23rd January about twenty members had a fascinating tour around London's oldest surviving cinema. Newly re-vamped thanks to a Heritage Lottery Grant it really does look wonderful. The highlight for most was the Projection Room and the chance to be introduced to Peter Bayley MBE who was projectionist there for over forty years. Also we partook of an excellent lunch at the Café (open to non cinema goers). Most stayed on for the afternoon film (free!) "Playing Away".

Tours last for about forty minutes on a Sunday morning, are free, but need to be booked in advance. Do take the opportunity for a behind-the-scenes experience and take advantage of the free Sunday afternoon showings, set to continue for the foreseeable future. (ET on a Sunday in April, book it while you can!) They also have the usual weekly programme plus several "Live At" events, including performances from the National Theatre and the Donmar – buy your front row ticket at the Phoenix!

Eleanor Sier (020 3074 1967) is the Heritage Officer at the Phoenix and she would be delighted to hear from any members that have local cinema experiences as they are building up their archive material.

Maybe consider joining as a Friend and get very good discount on bookings! It is only a short walk up from East Finchley tube or a direct run there on the 263.

DENNIS BIRD

BARNET MUSEUM CAMPAIGN

Barnet Council recently undertook a public consultation on the future of the Borough's two museums - Barnet Museum and Church Farmhouse Museum in Hendon. Against the background of deep public spending cuts, the proposal is to withdraw funding to both by April 2011. However, whilst the latter is funded by the Council, the former is only 'supported' and is run by Barnet & District Local History Society, which owns the collection.

The Museum at 31 Wood Street houses a unique and highly valued collection of local public records and archives, private records, books, prints, photographs, maps and artefacts. The Council-owned premises were made available to the Local History Society in 1938 when the collection outgrew its previous premises. Since then, many local people in and around Chipping Barnet have entrusted their 'treasures' to the Museum and the collection has

grown steadily over the years. The latter comprises a delightful, mixed record of domestic, industrial, retail and civic life in the town from the mundane to the extraordinary and it should continue to be protected and cared for, so that future generations can continue to enjoy and be fascinated by its contents.

Barnet Museum is run entirely by volunteers from the Barnet & District Local History Society - there are no staff costs for the Council. This dedicated band of people have given their time, energy and effort for many years in return for the satisfaction of knowing they are providing a service to the history of the place and to its community. In addition to keeping the Museum open and caring for the artefacts, many of them have spent huge amounts of time reading, cataloguing and transcribing the hundreds of fascinating documents that describe life in the bustling market town of Barnet. As a result, the Museum publishes books, pamphlets and leaflets including subjects such as the Battle of Barnet, Barnet Market, accounts of local benefactors such as the work of the Jesus Hospital Charity, the origins of local street and PH names, etc. The volunteers are generally very knowledgeable, ready to answer questions and eager to point out interesting items in the collection. The Museum has recently been accredited under the Museums, Libraries and Archives (MLA) Council's Museums Registration Scheme and is currently receiving advice from Museum of London.

Chipping Barnet's history is long and full of stories of abbots, fairs, markets, coaching inns, manor houses, one of the Wars of the Roses, curative springs, a workhouse, almshouses, churches, breweries, toll gates, vagabonds, educational establishments, railways, photography and the movies: something for everyone. Local schools visit the premises and students use it as a base for detailed studies and dissertations. The Local History Society regularly holds talks and lectures both at the Museum and outside for other local interest groups and societies.

The consultation documents do not state how much money the Council provides in support of the Museum on an annual basis (they estimate it to be about £23,000 but the Museum staff think this is too high). We understand there is a modest grant and that the Council maintains the building fabric (although we are not aware that much has been done in recent years) but, thanks to the volunteers, there are no staffing costs. We refute the Council's claim that there is a relatively high cost per visit to this facility and would suggest that cutting its funding will not save the Borough any significant amounts of money. There has been some speculation, therefore, that the plan is to move the Museum collection out and to sell the building: to 'cash in' the

asset. However, the building is small, Georgian in origin, locally listed and sits within the Wood Street Conservation Area. Its established planning use is D1 and redevelopment for any other purpose is likely to be resisted, as will plans to significantly increase the size of the premises. None of these factors will make its sale attractive to prospective purchasers. Instead, they are likely to reduce the value, making the short-term financial gain smaller.

We have written to the Council, requesting that a long lease is issued to BDLHS (at nominal rent), in order to attract funding from other sources for improvements to access, display and the building fabric, and that the Museum is given time to look into the possibility of becoming self-financing. We have just seen the report that will go before Cabinet in the middle of February, which recommends that the Council gives the Museum a couple of months to look into ways of covering its own running costs and managing the premises, which is a step forward. It appears there is a chance that the Council may be prepared to let the Museum stay in Wood Street, but it will need to put itself onto a proper business footing. Members are already rallying round and providing invaluable assistance – we will continue to help and do what we can to ensure that the Museum and its collection will not be lost to future generations.

JUDITH CLOUSTON

BATTLE OF BARNET WALK

The Battlefields Trust website for the Battle of Barnet comments that the exact location of the battlefield is in dispute. It suggests a new conjectural interpretation of the location of the battle, some distance to the north of the Registered battlefield. This is based on a re-examination of the evidence for the historic terrain, of the battle accounts, and the important research by Brian Warren as to the site of the battle chapel.

The Battlefields Trust has arranged a walk over the site of this decisive battle which witnessed the defeat and death of Warwick ‘the kingmaker’ although it is not clear whether this will be the old or new site. The walk is to be conducted by Frank Baldwin on Sunday 10th April 2011 – meet outside the Olde Monken Holt public house at 11 a.m. There may be a charge for joining in. Further information from Harvey Watson on 01296 708975

PETER WILLCOCKS

EMAIL DISCUSSION GROUP

Few members took up my invitation in the last Newsletter to join the Society's members-only email discussion group. There are just 16 members so far but, even so, there has been some fun and useful stuff that the other 470 of you have been missing out on. Discussions to date have included

- The Christmas Fayre
- The threat to our libraries
- Several restaurant reviews
- A discussion about parking charges and car ownership and use
- Green gardens
- Comments on a new development in the High Street
- The threat to the Barnet Museum
- The Ravenscroft School planning application

Just think how interesting and varied the discussions could be if the group had 50 or 100 members. To apply to join, just drop an email to: listowner@barnetsociety.org.uk

DEREK EPSTEIN

HIGH STREET WATCH

We explained in our last Newsletter that the Council had produced a draft leaflet on Shopfronts, which we had commented on. In spite of telling us it had been finished, we still haven't seen a copy and so cannot say whether it includes everything it should. And it won't have been delivered to the shops and businesses in our High Street so we should not be surprised if alterations to shopfronts continue to ignore best practice.

We also reported that we had written to English Heritage in support of BRA's request to list the former Court House building on the corner of the High Street and Normandy Avenue. Unfortunately, EH have now confirmed that it is not suitable for listing. So, in spite of it being a good example of civic architecture and a positive, prominent building when approaching the town from the south, it has no protection if the new owners wish to demolish. We have since discussed the possibility of locally listing it with the Council, although this offers no legal protection. Planners have told us they would resist demolition, but as it falls outside a Conservation Area, we are fearful that this will not be sufficient.

A new kid has appeared on the same block in the last few weeks, Crompton House, in place of the former bed shop. It seems to have attracted mixed views, with some objecting to the height and flat roofs whilst others like the combination of brick and white render and the articulation of the glazed bays along the passageway. What do you think?



New kid on the block

Although Christmas already seems to be a distant memory, everyone seems to agree that this year's Street Fair was much-improved over recent years. The involvement of Barnet College with the newly-renovated Tudor Hall, the opening up of the rear of the Spires and events in The Mitre provided a greater range of activities and there was something for everyone, in spite of freezing temperatures. Plans are afoot for a Summer event this year and we will keep you posted as arrangements unfold.

JUDITH CLOUSTON

PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE NOTES

In November, the Society submitted representations to LB of Barnet regarding two key Local Development Framework documents – the “Core Strategy” (CS) and “Development Management Policies.”

Most of our comments were generic Borough-wide issues. For example Para 10.6.2 of the Core Strategy states that the predominant character of Barnet is two or at most three storeys and goes on to define a "tall building" as a building of eight storeys or more. We commented that “In many locations a building of seven, six, five (or less) storeys may be "tall" in its local context and deserves to be tested for compliance with the criteria in CS5” and recommended a change to the CS that “Tall buildings should be defined by reference to their context, i.e. buildings significantly taller than those in the surrounding locality.”

CS Para 11.3.4 states that in the Council's opinion Chipping Barnet (amongst other town centres) is "vital and performing (its) role in the town centre hierarchy well." We commented that “A Town Centre Strategy Study for Chipping Barnet is currently under way, motivated by the need to promote and improve the centre to arrest what is perceived by the local community to be a gradual decline and a lack of vitality manifested in empty shops, a poor public realm, declining Barnet Market etc.” and suggested that “The Core Strategy should state that an objective is to work pro-actively to improve the vitality of Chipping Barnet town centre which is currently perceived by residents to be deficient.”

The Barnet Society was founded at the end of the Second World War to give a voice to the majority of local people who believed that the Green Belt needed to be defended. Despite the Green Belt legislation and the efforts of the Society, the Green Belt around Chipping Barnet has been incrementally eroded by separate successive developments at Arkley, Whitings Hill and Mays Lane.

Over recent months I have been much involved, in conjunction with local residents and the London Wildlife Trust (and with the valuable help and support of David Lee), in opposing an application by Ravenscroft School to change the appearance of, and appropriate for private use, a tract of Green Belt land that forms part of the Dollis Valley open space. The proposal was in direct conflict with three of the

four objectives of the Green Belt set out in national planning guidance PPG2:

- to provide opportunities for access to the open countryside for the urban population;
- to retain attractive landscapes, and enhance landscapes, near to where people live; and
- to secure nature conservation interest

The case for it would therefore need to be very powerful. But it was not. My letter to Stewart Murray, director of planning at LB Barnet, follows this report. (The attachment to which I refer includes an exchange of correspondence with the headmaster which I will be happy to copy to any member who is interested. My email address is on the back cover.)

In recent years, numerous sites along Barnet Lane have been enclosed and removed from the publicly accessible Green Belt, often accompanied by the erection of buildings. These include The Stables and the Territorial Army sites. Most recently, at Old Stationers Field, the Council has permitted part of Barnet Playing Fields to be privatised for use as a commercial sports facility, incorporating a pavilion, all weather pitch, flood lighting, security fencing etc.

It could be argued from this that precedents have been set. But The Barnet Society takes the opposite view, namely that the creeping enclosure of sections of Green Belt land has already progressed too far and that a line needs to be drawn.

Of course, Ravenscroft School would like to have a nice expanded sports ground, but it is no more than that – a nice-to-have. Many other schools would love to be able to appropriate public open space as private playing fields. So, as I wrote to the planning committee members, will Coldfall Primary School be allowed to appropriate a section of Coldfall Wood? Will St Mary's in Hendon be allowed to annex Sunny Hill Park? Can Henrietta Barnett appropriate Central Square as a private hockey pitch?

The whole proposal was utterly misconceived and the Council had simply been swept along a path on which it should never have embarked. On any objective test, the application should have been refused. On 19 January, it was approved unanimously by the planning committee, without discussion.

No sooner had that tale come to its sorry conclusion, than the next case arose:

The proposal to create a golf course at Dyrham Park which will involve hundreds of lorry-loads of landfill being trundled into the site continuously over a two year period. Those with long memories will remember the experience in 2002-2003 when, despite legal agreements to the contrary, hundreds of lorries trundled – sometimes up to a hundred a day! - up Barnet High Street during the construction of the Bridgedown Golf Club, very close to the proposed Dyrham Park site. Those involved in the Bridgedown Action Group and SPACES (the residents association of Sebright, Puller, Alston and Calvert Roads) have mobilised again. It is hoped that the problem will not be as great this time since the developers of Dyrham Park appear to be a much more serious organisation and they have commissioned a reasonably respectable firm of civil engineers.

The developers have submitted to Hertfordshire County Council a “Lorry & Construction Management Strategy” which states that “construction traffic will access the site from the A1 directly into Galley Lane”. However, it would be naive to expect HGV drivers to do as they are told. SPACES has therefore proposed to HCC a series of measures that should be imposed to ensure that the agreed arrangements are enforceable and enforced and The Barnet Society has written in support. If the awful experience of Bridgedown is avoided, the Chipping Barnet community will owe a great debt of gratitude to Chris Nightingale and SPACES.

New planning procedures will flow from the Localism Bill, published before Christmas. Of particular interest to civic societies are the new Neighbourhood Planning procedures. In brief, communities will have the power to create a plan that becomes a statutory development plan. It goes like this:

- A community group, “a Neighbourhood Forum”, can propose a “Neighbourhood Area” and the Local Planning Authority must designate it unless there are good reasons otherwise. The Forum must show that it is representative of the area as a whole (not just five guys who meet in a pub!)
- The LPA is required to “support” the Neighbourhood Forum but there is not yet any definition of what “support” means. It does not mean financial support, although regulations can be made under the Act to stipulate what proportion of the new Community Infrastructure Levy must go to the Neighbourhood.

- Local plans – Core Strategies – will continue to apply. Once the Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared, an Independent Examiner must check and certify that it is consistent with the Borough and London Plans.
- The LPA must then hold a referendum to as to whether residents of the Neighbourhood support the plan. If so, the LPA must adopt it as a statutory plan.
- The Neighbourhood Forum can then even be empowered to grant planning permissions by reference to the adopted Plan

The Bill is expected to receive Royal Assent in November 2011.

I attended an open meeting of the London Forum of Amenity and Civic Societies at which all of this was explained by a senior Dept of Communities & Local Government official. Whilst the London Forum chairman and his colleague were supportive, talking of it as a “huge opportunity” if neighbourhood groups can show the necessary “leadership and vision to capitalize on these mechanisms”, the reaction from the floor, comprising representatives of around 40 London civic societies, was one of universal opposition and scepticism. People talked about the lack of skills and resources in local communities and the impossibility of getting diverse groups to pull together.

Chipping Barnet, however, is already doing it and so could be the exception that proves the rule!

Judith, in her Chair’s Letter and elsewhere, reports on other Planning & Environment issues including the Town Centre Strategy, Barnet Market, the Old Courthouse and road junction improvements

DEREK EPSTEIN

RAVENS CROFT SCHOOL

Letter to Stewart Murray, Director of Planning, Housing & Regeneration, London Borough of Barnet from The Barnet Society:

Dear Stewart

Ravenscroft School – new playing field

Last week, I addressed the Planning & Environment Committee regarding Ravenscroft School’s application to appropriate for private use, and urbanise,

a section of virgin public Green Belt land.

Attached you will find the submission that I made to the committee members a few days prior to the meeting. I ask you to read it carefully.

Dressing up this proposal as a simple land swap was an expedient and clever ploy which misled everyone, including The Barnet Society, at first sight. In reality it is clearly not a swap in that the westerly field has no planning permission for use as a sports field; the school has, as confirmed by Property Services, no legal right to exclusive possession of the land (You wrote on 2 Dec 1999 to Sir Sidney Chapman MP, who had questioned this, that the school “make use of” the land as playing fields); and the two fields are not of equal value – clearly not to the school and clearly not ecologically, commercially or to the general public. In no sense is it a swap.

In reality, therefore, what the school was seeking was the appropriation and urbanisation of a tract of virgin public open space.

At the committee meeting, John Marshall asked Bob Husband (LWT) whether he agreed that it’s good to give children the opportunity to play sports. The question was unnecessary; it is a self-evident truth. It is therefore good that Ravenscroft School already has several football pitches within its curtilage and some fifteen more within a very short walk at Stationers’ Field and the TA Centre. I was amazed when the headmaster told the committee that it would be too “complicated” for a member of his staff to prepare the necessary risk-assessment paperwork; that 90 children would sometimes have to walk down the road (it matters not whether it is 90 or 900 if each group of 30 is, as required, supervised by two adults); and that the walk would take time out of a 60 minute lesson. So, at a time when the country (and specifically the Borough) is faced with cutting funding from arts, culture and libraries, a very significant amount of public money is to be spent to avoid having to adjust the Ravenscroft school timetable and a staff-member having to prepare a risk assessment. As you are well aware, pupils walk along that road every day on their way to and from school.

I went to school in the City and had to travel by train to Grove Park in south London for sports. That didn’t stop my contemporary, Mike Brierley, from going on to captain the England cricket team to only four defeats out of 31 test matches played. Empire-building and land-grabbing isn’t everything.

It is regrettable that the headmaster played the “health and safety card” but was unwilling to explain to anyone (The Barnet Society or the planning authority) precisely what those health and safety issues are. None of us

understood. And it is inexplicable that neither the planning officers nor the councillors demanded an explanation. It is beyond belief that Mr Ferrie wrote to Dave Prince, in support of the application, that the second “principal reason” for the proposal was that the proposed field is closer to the changing rooms – so that the children wouldn’t have to walk so far! (and that the planning authority apparently accepted this.)

No proper explanation has ever been given as to the nature of the insurmountable “security issues” that make the westerly field “impossible” (not just inconvenient) to use and which require the proposed field to be fenced to exclude the public from it at all times including weekends and school holidays.

It is deeply disappointing and worrying that the school, no doubt with the help and support of the LB of Barnet governors, was able to manipulate the Council over a number of years to accede to the school’s wishes without any objective evaluation of their merits, as regards the need and the best interests of the public at large.

The Barnet Society will remember this case and call it in evidence if the Council should ever again allow its political objectives to override the objective evaluation, on planning grounds, of a proposal to further erode the public Green Belt.

When common land was being enclosed 200+ years ago, punishments were much harsher than they are now - which led to a popular protest among the dispossessed peasants:

They hang the man and flog the woman
Who steals a goose from off the common
But let the greater criminal loose
Who steals the common from the goose.

DEREK EPSTEIN

CAFFÉ COMPIANO – the second in a series on independent shops and businesses in our High Street.

In the last Newsletter I interviewed Eric Habert from HOB in Caffé Compiano so I thought it only fair to chat to Raffaello who owns the café.

As a very young man Raffaello worked as a barman in Compiano in Italy. In between the years he married and came to the UK settling in Brighton. Nothing much happened for him there so Raffaele decided to move closer to London and open a business of his own but was unsure what to do. Then one day when driving through Barnet he saw the café which was shabby and failing. He saw the potential for improvement and knew he could make the business his own so he took a risk and bought the café. With the help of family he decorated, devised a home cooked menu and changed the name to Café Compiano which is the town in Italy where his family comes from. Raffaele sources locally grown produce whenever possible and strives to keep his prices competitive and affordable which is not easy with the presence of at least one of the big chain coffee shops not more than fifty steps away . He works with his mother in law Rita which I think is pretty amazing and between them they offer a warm and generous welcome to all their customers. His aim is to keep everyone happy and I have to say that whenever I have been into Café Compiano the atmosphere there has always been warm and welcoming.. He is generously locally spirited and like Eric he too is working hard to make our High Street a more interesting and thriving centre. Also like Eric, Raffaele feels that it is such a nice area but it lacks choice for shoppers. He said that we need to make it more customer friendly and I know that he and Eric and many others are working very hard to do just that.



GAIL LASER



We complain enough about things going awry in Barnet, so it's nice for once to show that things can be done right. St Martha's Convent was a bit of a worry in Wood Street's Conservation Area, but the finished result, now St Martha's Court, looks pretty good.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY
SATURDAY 5th MARCH 2011

Railway Walk - Alexandra Palace Station to Finsbury Park, morning walk. Optional add-on: Finsbury Park to Olympic Park, afternoon walk.

Meet at Alexandra Palace Station at 10 a.m. (Train from New Barnet or 184 bus will get you there!)

A walk in two stages: c. 5 miles to Finsbury Park through ancient woods, the old railway track and panoramic views of London. Nearly all off road and very suitable for families (all children accompanied by an adult please). We will finish at the park café by the children's playground where the food is good! After lunch we will walk a further c. 6 miles or so through Stoke Newington down the River Lee to see the almost finished Olympic Site.

Any queries please ring Dennis Bird on 020 8449 0705.

continued over/

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY /continued

TUESDAY 15th MARCH at 2.30 pm
Small Hall, Christ Church, St Albans Road.

“80 YEARS OF THE YHA”

DIANE NIGHTINGALE tells a fascinating story of determination and unlimited enthusiasm by people like herself .

PLEASE NOTE NEW VENUE.

WEDNESDAY 6th APRIL at 2.15 for 2.30 pm (to clear security)
Barnet College, Wood Street: Main Entrance at back of forecourt

“COLLEGE AND TOWN TOGETHER”

A talk by Marilyn Hawkins, Principal of Barnet College, who hopes we can support each other in these challenging times.

TUESDAY 10th MAY at 2.45 pm – please note time
Wyburn Room, Wesley Hall, Stapylton Road, Barnet.

HIGH BARNET GREEN HOME ZONE
An Introduction from Sarah Challice and Tanya Adams

This is a local, independent, non-profit organization supported by LBB and Energy Saving Trust, offering residents advice and assessment on their household energy use.

ADVANCE NOTICE:

Thursday 16th June - AGM

Tuesday 12th July: A walk led by Owen Jones in the Colne Valley near Aldenham.

18th – 25th June High Barnet Festival – details in our next newsletter.

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