

Barnet Society

CAMPAIGNING FOR A BETTER BARNET

SPRING
2017

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Library protests ignored **Pages 10&11**

Susi Earnshaw pupils shine **Pages 12&13**



Council paves the way for High Street footpath build-outs

A plan to widen the pavement on one side of Barnet High Street, from the Post Office to just beyond the entrance to the Spires shopping centre, is about to go out for public consultation, writes Nick Jones.

The council hopes that the built-out pavements, which would remove seven parking spaces, will improve comfort and safety for pedestrians, and provide room for benches, litter bins and trees.

The Barnet Society has been campaigning for some years, together with the Barnet Town Team, for improvements that would help to make the High Street more attractive.

Traffic engineers say that building out pavements and reducing the number of cars pulling in and out of parking spaces usually speeds the flow of traffic.

Funding would be provided under the London Implementation Plan, administered by Transport for London. The plan shows that the pavement build-out would extend from the Post Office all the way to just beyond the pedestrian crossing outside the Spires shopping centre entrance, allowing for the installation of benches, bins, cycle hoops and the planting of up to 18 trees.

Seven parking spaces would be lost, reducing the number, from the tube station to Hadley Green to 56.

Two new loading bays would be established, in Salisbury Road and Union Street, for deliveries to High Street shops.

Although traffic engineers are confident that pavement build-outs do not reduce the speed of traffic flow, there are

potential drawbacks.

The two pedestrian crossings would be shortened, allowing a speed-up in the timing of the lights, which might inconvenience some pedestrians.

There would be less room for cyclists, which could have unforeseen consequences at road junctions.

Although traffic turning into Union Street would probably not be affected, a build out at the exit from Salisbury Road might make it more difficult for buses turning right into the High Street.

The latest proposed make-over follows a redesign four years ago of the garden beside Church Passage, the installation of seating, and the planting of trees in the High Street, from Barnet Police Station towards High Barnet tube station.

UNION STREET RESIDENTS OBJECT

Union Street residents overwhelmingly oppose the 'build-out' plan for Barnet High Street. A petition of 70 households has already attracted 65 signatures. The proposal is confused: The given objective to 'prettify' to attract new businesses is questionable given exorbitant rates, rents and reduced parking.

If to improve traffic flow that will be impossible: Where presently South-bound traffic may undertake vehicles waiting to turn into Union

Street, if the street is narrowed other traffic will back up, the same when buses pick up passengers opposite Union Street. Seven parking bays removed from the High Street means increased parking in Union Street, which the proposed loading bay will exacerbate.

There are also increased risks for disabled, partially sighted, parents and children and frail elderly pedestrians - as 2 ½ years of kerb parking during the OWCH development has proven:

Heavy lorries parked in the narrowest point of a narrow street means passing traffic is forced to mount pavements. The same for Salisbury Road, where two lanes are blocked when buses turn from the left lane: A loading bay means only a viable left lane with traffic backed up to Stapylton Road and beyond. Please rethink and consult residents directly affected.

Keith West,
Chair, Union Street Residents Association.

What a result!

Barnet Residents - 9 Ark Academy - 0

Council's planning committee voted unanimously last month to reject plans to build an all-age academy for 1,680 pupils on Barnet Football Club's former stadium at Underhill, writes Robin Bishop

This is a major victory for the Barnet Society along with Barnet Residents Association, other local community groups and Underhill residents, who have campaigned for months against the proposal. All three Underhill Councillors also opposed it, as well as Councillor Caroline Stock of neighbouring Totteridge ward. The Society had warned last summer about the unsuitability of the scheme, but we did not expect such a decisive verdict, 9-0

Of course this will disappoint residents keen to have a better choice of schools in Chipping Barnet. The Barnet Society has always supported the idea of a new school on the site – just not one of this size and type. And as pupils would be spending 15 years of their lives in the Ark Pioneer Academy, they deserve buildings and grounds of sufficient size and high quality.

At the packed planning committee meeting, Tim Leffman, a

teacher and long-standing Underhill resident, and me were the only two objectors allowed to speak.

I argued that the case for a school of this size was fundamentally flawed because the Department for Education wanted to recoup some of its huge investment in purchasing the former stadium, the Council needed to hit its target for extra school places within the borough, and the Ark wished to increase the number of schools in its chain.

My criticism focused on the Academy's design. Because of incredibly tight cost and area constraints, the whole scheme had been distorted and the architects had been forced to adapt off-the-peg boxes from the DfE's standard building kit and squash them into too small an area. The resulting building and shortage of outdoor space, especially for nursery and primary pupils, would have been damaging for pupils' education, health

“ There is capacity for expansion at existing local primary and secondary schools. Such a special site (Underhill) also deserved special design quality, but the proposal lacked that.”



Barnet Society's environment head Robin Bishop, left, and transport adviser Peter Bradburn consider the plans last autumn

and wellbeing. Most of the school would not even have faced out onto the beautiful Dollis Valley.

Green Belt development is only permitted under “very exceptional circumstances” and the Society did not believe these had been proved. There is capacity for expansion at existing local primary and secondary schools. Such a special site also deserved special design quality, but the proposal lacked that.

In his turn, Tim Leffman spoke passionately about other adverse consequences of approval, particularly the detrimental impacts of traffic on streets already congested at peak times, the risk of accidents, and harm to health due to pollution from vehicle emissions.

The additional lanes proposed for the A1000, Underhill and Fairfield Way junction would be technically challenging and very expensive. They would also require felling of at least five of ‘Lees Trees’, the magnificent avenue up Barnet Hill initiated by the Society 20 years ago.

Ark could yet appeal against the refusal to grant planning permission. If successful and the current scheme goes ahead, there could be a backlash against the senior councillors and council officials who seriously misjudged the strength of public and local councillor opposition, and who did not place enough value on architectural and landscape quality.

It would be politically wiser for Ark, the DfE and Barnet Council to negotiate a scaled-down project. A sensible start would be to consult groups such as the Society on alternative options, of which we know there are several.



Spring PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT REPORT

By Robin Bishop

Our efforts since the last newsletter have gone mostly into Ark Pioneer Academy, High Street pavement build-outs and the Barnet Society’s message to the Mayor of London, all reported separately.

TO ROUND UP OTHER MAIN CASES:



APPROVED

Barnet Library modifications

We opposed the downsizing of the library and loss of the community hall.

Brookdene, Finchley

We welcome the refusal at appeal of this big residential development, which would have dominated the Dollis Valley.



REFUSED

3 Montague Close

We’re delighted that this horrid little building has been refused.

14 Sunset View

We’re also pleased that this overdevelopment in the Monken Hadley Conservation Area has been refused on appeal, though a big back extension at 7 Sunset View has regrettably been permitted.

Moxon Street

Confusion surrounds two sites in the Wood Street Conservation Area. The latest proposal for the Royal British Legion site, which seemed to us sensitive and uncontroversial, has been turned down. But the proposal for 2-7 Moxon St (the car wash site) has also been rejected (less surprisingly). So the air of neglect lingers even longer



AWAITING DECISIONS

Noah’s Ark Children’s Hospice

As I write, the decision has not been published.

Hasmonean High School, Mill Hill

This would be on a Green Belt site larger than Ark Pioneer Academy, but for fewer pupils.

We have objected on principle.

Barnet Society's submission to Sadiq Khan on his London Plan

Sadiq Khan has pledged to review the London Plan, which focuses on buildings and the environment. As Mayor, he wants a 'A City for All Londoners' and asked people for their views. Our Environment and Planning chair, *Robin Bishop*, has co-ordinated the Society's response ahead of the final version of the plan.

The Barnet Society saw an excellent opportunity to put forward our views.

As an Outer London suburb embedded in the Green Belt, we want the new Mayor to take these as seriously as the more high-profile issues that tend to grab politicians' and planners' attention.

Mr Khan listed his priorities under six policy areas: *accommodating growth, transport, an inclusive city, environment, housing and economy.*

The Society Committee collaborated on a leaflet addressing each of these topics, posted it on our website and distributed it to visitors to our stall at Barnet Fayre

Following comments from members, it was amended and submitted to the Mayor on 10 December.

Theresa Villiers MP commented on our submission, "It makes a number of very sensible points with which I agree, particularly on the importance of supporting local high streets."

The London Plan will be redrafted in the first half of this year, and published for further consultation in the autumn. The final Plan will take effect from 2019.

For further information about the London Plan, go to: www.London.Gov.Uk/what-we-do/planning/london-plan/london-plan-full-review

Barnet by numbers



1320
New homes
built between
April '14 and
March '15



63M
Passengers at
Barnet's stations
between April
'13 - March '14



384K
Total
population
in 2015

An inclusive city Chipping Barnet has many fine natural advantages, particularly its proximity to so much open and interlinked space. We have much to contribute to the debate about what constitutes an inclusive and healthy environment.

Environment We welcome the Mayor's determination to protect the Green Belt and other designated green spaces, because our Society was founded 70 years ago specifically to protect such lands in and around Chipping Barnet. His support is especially helpful now that pressure to build is probably greater, and planning policy weaker, than when we were founded.

Housing Until recently, Chipping Barnet was a relatively mixed community in terms of income and home tenure, and we would like to restore that balance as much as possible.

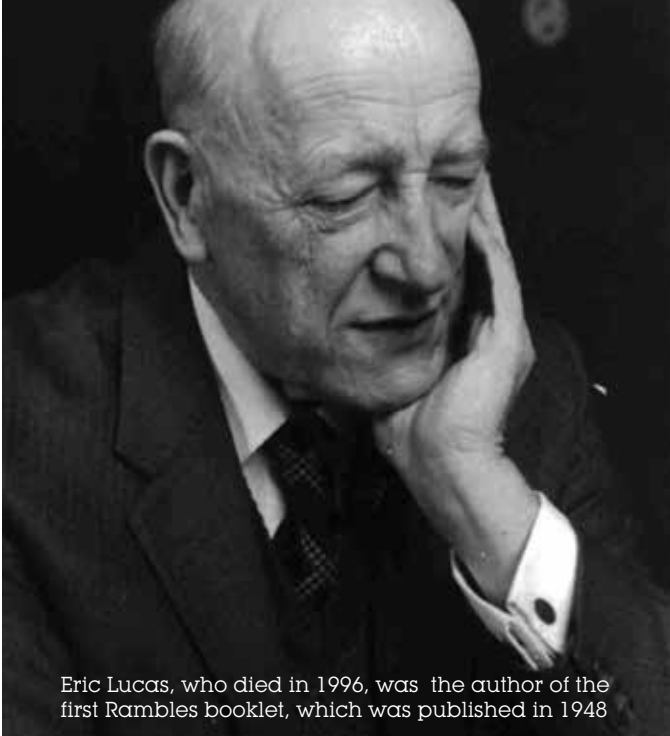
Economy He proposes Creative Enterprise Zones, designed specifically for artists and creative workers who find it difficult to afford to work in London, and wants to develop innovative financial models to support small creative businesses. London cannot afford to lose these, yet many smaller, less profitable workspaces are being converted to housing following the Government's recent changes to permitted development rights. Chipping Barnet was historically a setting for innovative start-ups such as cine cameras and medical equipment, and could once again be an attractive home for such businesses.

Key proposals in our submission: Accommodating growth

The Mayor wants to see more development in town centres, which he calls 'hubs for retail and community activity'. The Barnet Society agrees that, as retail methods evolve and housing need increases, it makes sense to focus development in these areas, provided that it is carried out to a suitable scale and sufficiently high quality.

Transport The Mayor should consider more orbital links between Barnet borough and adjoining authorities – preferably tram or light rail – including across the Green Belt where necessary, to link new destinations on either side of the borough.





Eric Lucas, who died in 1996, was the author of the first Rambles booklet, which was published in 1948

Barnet's footpath pioneer remembered

After years of uncertainty, answers have finally been found to questions about the identity and motives of an early pioneer in the continuing task of defending the footpaths and green spaces that mean so much to members of the Barnet Society.

"E H Lucas" was the author of the first known guide book for walkers who enjoy the countryside around High Barnet. It was published in 1948, and a copy resurfaced in the archives of Barnet Museum in 2001.

But apart from his surname and initials, his life and whereabouts remained a mystery despite extensive research by Owen Jones and David Ely, who followed "in the footsteps of E H Lucas" and who worked on the Barnet Society's two *Rambles Round Barnet* guides published in 2012 and 2013.

We now know from the author's son John Lucas, much more about his late father, Eric Lucas, who became treasurer of the Barnet Society, and who was asked in 1947 to report on the state of local footpaths after the Second World War.



Old and new: version of the Rambles from 1948, and above, the current publication



Owen Jones writes: Most Society members will be familiar with the two local walks guides, 'Rambles Round Barnet' that were published in 2012/3. However, for newer members, the story begins with the efforts of the first Treasurer of the Society, Eric Lucas, to survey the state of the local footpaths at the end of World War Two. His detailed report was later written out as a walker's guide to the local footpaths and sold in 1948 for 1 shilling (5p).

The story would probably have ended there had not Mrs Doreen Willcocks, a principal curator of the Barnet Museum, found a copy of this booklet in the Museum's archives in 2001. Doreen's husband, Peter, scanned its pages and then put these on a CD so that we could follow some of the routes that Mr Lucas took. In 2012, the Society decided to commemorate the Diamond Jubilee of the Queen by publishing these contemporary versions of the walks.

David Ely, one of the primary authors of the booklets, had the inspired idea of including the sub-title 'In the footsteps of E H Lucas' on the cover of both volumes. Inevitably, we tried to find out something about the life of Mr Lucas that we could include in the booklets. Every trail ran cold almost immediately and we abandoned the search in 2013.

Three years later, just after Christmas 2016, Nick Jones, the Barnet Society Chairman, had an email from a Mr John Lucas. He had been told of the 'Rambles Round Barnet' booklets by a friend who had realised that the 'E H Lucas' referred to on the cover page was John's late father. John subsequently sent us details of the life of Eric Herbert Lucas. Thus we learned of his earlier years and the family background when he wrote the original walks guidebook.

A fuller account of the life of Eric Lucas will appear in a subsequent article. From a ramblers' perspective, it was interesting to learn that Eric became a father for the first time in 1947 when John's sister was born.

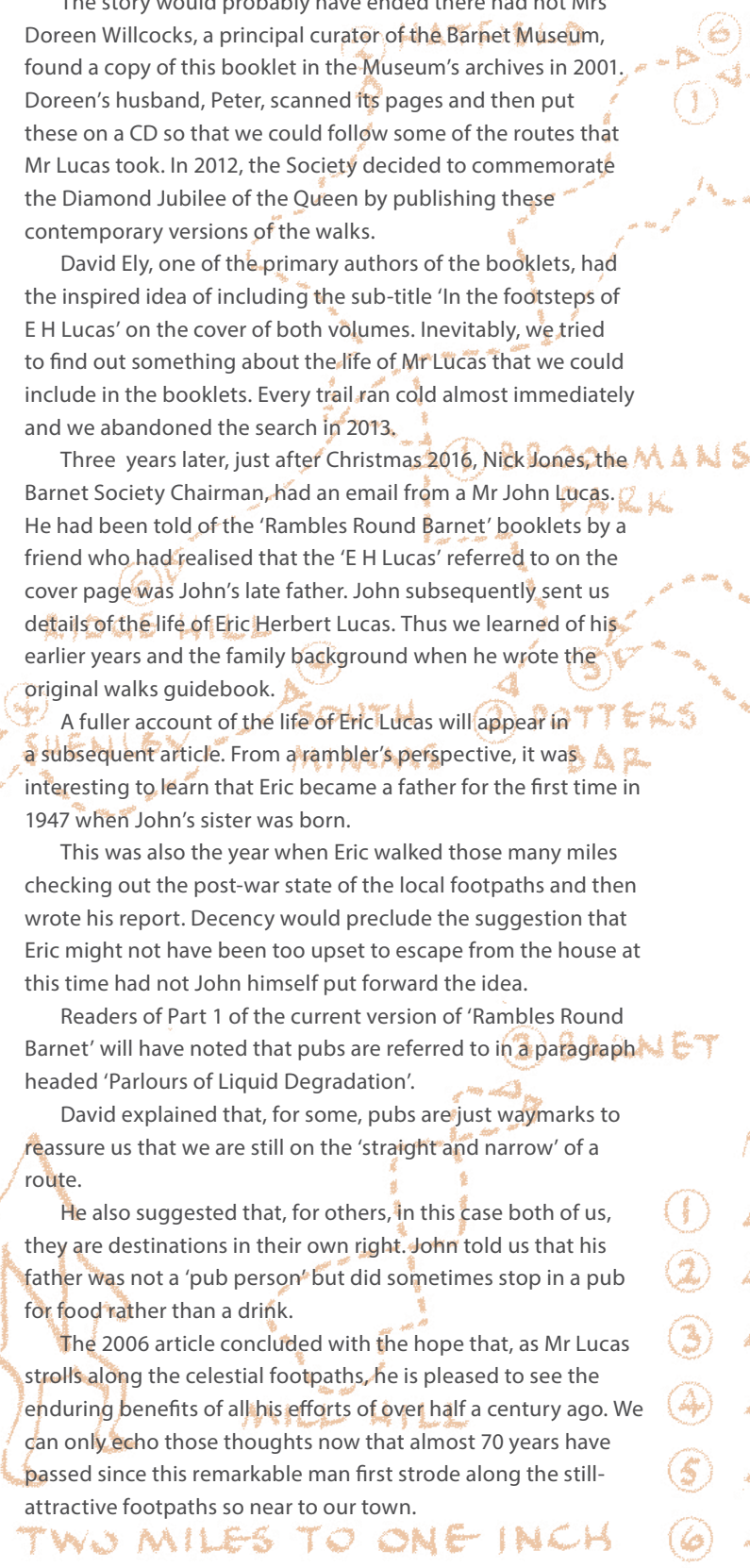
This was also the year when Eric walked those many miles checking out the post-war state of the local footpaths and then wrote his report. Decency would preclude the suggestion that Eric might not have been too upset to escape from the house at this time had not John himself put forward the idea.

Readers of Part 1 of the current version of 'Rambles Round Barnet' will have noted that pubs are referred to in a paragraph headed 'Parlours of Liquid Degradation'.

David explained that, for some, pubs are just waymarks to reassure us that we are still on the 'straight and narrow' of a route.

He also suggested that, for others, in this case both of us, they are destinations in their own right. John told us that his father was not a 'pub person' but did sometimes stop in a pub for food rather than a drink.

The 2006 article concluded with the hope that, as Mr Lucas strolls along the celestial footpaths, he is pleased to see the enduring benefits of all his efforts of over half a century ago. We can only echo those thoughts now that almost 70 years have passed since this remarkable man first strode along the still-attractive footpaths so near to our town.



'I went with my conscience when I voted for Brexit'

Chipping Barnet MP Theresa Villiers faced questions on the NHS, transport, the environment, libraries and, of course, Brexit when she attended her annual Q&A session organised by the Barnet Society
Report by Frances Wilson



Chipping Barnet Library

Nick Jones (NJ) said the Barnet Society had objected to the loss of community space, and as a protest had organised a mass read-in outside the library on the day it closed.

Adele Winston accused Barnet Council of showing scandalous contempt towards scholarship when other more deprived London boroughs offered spectacular library facilities which were widely used by school pupils and students.

Theresa Villiers (TV) said she campaigned to keep all the libraries open in the Borough and was pleased this was being achieved. She insisted that the future of Chipping Barnet was secure, but budget reductions meant reduced funding for the library service. Self-service operation had been trialled successfully at Edgware, and even abroad, and it would enable the library to open longer hours.

Battle of Barnet

NJ said the Barnet Society had welcomed the Heritage Lottery Fund's decision to grant £98,600 to the Battle of Barnet Project. TV welcomed the archaeological investigation, supported its continuation and praised the work of the Battle of Barnet Project. Deciding where the Battle took place in 1471 was a job for the experts, but she thought there was a great potential for engaging local interest in the Battle and putting Barnet on the map. Tewkesbury marked the anniversary of its Battle with an annual medieval festival from which the whole town benefited.

Traffic congestion and road safety

John Silvertown said that with average speed down to 7 mph in London would increasing road capacity simply aggravate the problem?

TV accepted there was high car use, and the answer was to continue to increase public transport. Part of the problem was that transport links were mostly in and out of London, and London needed to improve connections radially.

Clare O'Sullivan asked if action could be taken to stop people sitting in cars with engines running causing air pollution.

TV said that engines on modern cars were designed to stop when cars were stationary, so as new cars were produced their use should increase and reduce pollution. She thought the pollution caused by diesel cars needed to be looked at, but the government had a programme to incentivise people to buy electric cars by providing a subsidy.

Barry Blain urged that more should be done to improve road safety by mending potholes and cleaning and re-siting road signs hidden from view.

TV acknowledged that pot holes and dirty road signs were a danger.

Whenever she saw a particularly grubby road sign she reported this to Barnet Council. She urged local residents to do likewise. Similarly, potholes were a hazard, especially as she was a cyclist and again she reported them to the council and urged residents to do the same. Pot holes were a high priority on main roads and TfL had responded quickly to ones identified on the A1000.

Protecting the Green Belt and Ark Academy in Underhill

NJ said the Mayor of London Sadiq Khan was preparing a new London Plan to which the Barnet Society had submitted evidence on the need to protect the Green Belt. He asked TV to expand on her view that she wanted the Mayor to go even further. She had not yet seen a case where she could support new housing on Green Belt land around Chipping Barnet.

TV said she was definite about her position: she could not support new housing on the Green Belt as it was a vital environmental resource. She praised those who had the foresight to plan the Green Belt years ago, because without that protection, there would be a huge city



“ I am optimistic about the chances of protecting the City of London and confident that the UK would get a deal to protect the banks”

stretching from London to Birmingham. There were some exceptions to enable schools etc. to be built, but although the country needed more housing, it should not be on the Green Belt.

Threat to Pharmacies

Jon Supran asked about the threat to local chemists because of a change in government subsidies that might result in more money going to the large pharmacy chains such as Boots to the detriment of the independent chemists in Barnet High Street.

TV said she had met the pharmacists and had raised their concerns with the government, and she was confident independent chemists would be safeguarded.



Derelict Marie Foster home

Jenny Kobish asked why, after so many years, no decision had been made about the future of the derelict Marie Foster home in Wood Street?

TV said the continuing dereliction and indecision over the future of the former Marie Foster home was an outrage. "The last I heard from NHS property services, just before Christmas, is that the NHS had almost made a decision that it was not needed for health purposes, but the very latest is that the NHS are looking at it again for health purposes. Either the NHS uses it for health purposes or allows it to be developed...I promise I will keep on banging on about its future until something is sorted out."



Assisted Dying

Gil Exon asked TV if she would support the Assisted Dying Bill to prevent people having to endure unnecessary suffering, and also to reduce the traumatic distress of relatives.

TV had voted against the issue the last time it was debated. The concept of assisted dying presented a dilemma: it was not an easy issue to resolve. Whatever the safeguards that were put in place, she feared people would opt for assisted dying because they would not want to be a burden to their families, and would be pressurised to take their own life. When Parliament held its debate, MPs voted decisively to refuse.

Support for the disabled

Penny Baxter asked why the Government was continuing to cut support to disabled people especially those who wanted to work.

TV said the government was spending more on PIP than used to be spent on DLA. Ministers were anxious to provide support for disabled people who wanted to work, and to encourage employers to make it possible. Disability pensions have been protected.

NHS problems

NJ asked about the shortage of hospital beds and delays and cancellations of operations.

Neil Kobish suggested the government should put a few extra pence on income tax or national insurance to pay for improvements in the NHS. Was there any reason why he, as a better-off pensioner needing more NHS services, should be excused having to contribute towards national insurance?

TV insisted the government was putting more money into the NHS, but demands were increasing because of an ageing population. She agreed that more money was needed for the health service and for properly funded social care. Probably there would have to be an increase in council tax as well as other taxes, but governments also had to look at areas where they could save money.

“ The government is putting more money into the NHS but demand is rising.”

BREXIT

NJ said Barnet voted 62% to remain in the EU, but TV had campaigned to leave and regularly spoke up in support of Brexit.

Graham Hawkins asked what TV believed was her responsibility to her Chipping Barnet constituents. Why wasn't she representing the majority opinion within the constituency to remain?

TV said the Conservative Party manifesto had promised the government would hold an in/out referendum. There was a huge turnout and the government's responsibility was to implement the vote while not neglecting the views of remain voters. The government's aim was to continue to work hard in preparation for negotiations with the EU and to liaise with European countries. She thought the Prime Minister Theresa May was right to try to create a new relationship with Europe. She was convinced that the country would be better off outside the EU because the UK could control its own laws and set out its own priorities. She was optimistic about the chances of protecting the City of London and confident the UK would get a deal to protect the banks. She said Barclays thought London would remain the Financial capital of Europe as it was in the interests of both Europe and UK because of the depth of the infra-structure in the City of London and the liquidity that was available, which would ensure that the UK could trade across EU borders.

NJ said that questioners on the social website StreetLife had raised TV's prospects as Conservative MP for Chipping Barnet. Did she intend to resign and fight a parliamentary by-election campaigning for Brexit? Did she think her pro-Brexit position might result in the Conservatives losing the Chipping Barnet seat if there was a snap general election or a second referendum?

TV said she went with her conscience, and if in the future, she lost the vote in Chipping Barnet she would know that she had been true to her own beliefs as she felt Britain would be a better place out of Europe.



Barnet Council has promised to act on Jean Samuel's appeal at the Q&A for the installation of a pedestrian crossing on Barnet Road, at some point between the junction with Wellhouse Lane and Wood Street, and the Gate public house at Arkley.



Security of tenure is seen as one of the vital requirements when trying to secure third-party funding for the museum



Barnet Museum's new lease of life

After years of uncertainty about its future, Barnet Museum is finally being promised security of tenure with a 125-year lease at a peppercorn rent

Barnet Council's asset, regeneration and growth committee agreed to the lease deal at its most recent meeting.

Mike Noronha, museum trustee, said that securing the long-term future of the museum had always been the goal of his predecessor, the late Dr Gillian Gear.

He described the committee's recommendation as a really encouraging start to the New Year for the museum's volunteers and its many supporters.

"Security of tenure is one of the vital requirements when trying to secure third-party funding for the museum, and this recommendation is all the more important following the Heritage Lottery Fund's grant of £98,600 for the Battle of Barnet project.

"We see the decision as very welcome recognition of the very high regard that local residents and visitors have for the museum's work and its contribution to explaining and promoting High Barnet's history and heritage.

"We hope that the very positive outcome we have had to negotiations to secure the museum's future augers well for the ongoing discussion with Barnet Council over our plans to build a rear disabled access and extension."

The 125-year lease at a peppercorn rent will be granted in the name of the museum, a registered charity which now has its own status as a charitable incorporated organisation.

Battle of Barnet project co-ordinator

The job of promoting and explaining the Battle of Barnet of 1471 is to be undertaken by a project co-ordinator, whose appointment has been made possible by a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The Battle of Barnet project is hoping to appoint a freelance co-ordinator whose role will be to develop activities and resources to inspire the local community to find out more about the Battle and its place in the history of Barnet and the Wars of the Roses.

Applications for the post closed on Monday 13 February. The co-ordinator will work an average of one day week, for a fee of £25,000, for the two-year period of the Battle of Barnet project.

The post has been made possible following the announcement in December of a £98,600 grant.

The HLF funding will allow for the development of resources for local schools; a new gallery at Barnet Museum devoted to the Battle of Barnet and its place in the Wars of the Roses; and the promotion of an annual medieval festival that will celebrate the anniversary of the battle.

Interest in the project has increased considerably since the start of an archaeological survey in the autumn of 2015 to determine the precise site of the battle, which was featured in the BBC 4 programme *Digging for Britain*.

Mike Noronha, Barnet Museum trustee, says other areas involved in the Wars of the Roses such as Bosworth, Tewkesbury, and Leicester have successfully exploited their heritage, and tourist and academic interest has followed.

"Edward IV, Henry VI and (the future) Richard III were at the Battle of Barnet, so was the powerful Earl of Warwick, the Kingmaker.

"Barnet is the site of the Battle of Three Kings and the Kingmaker. Barnet played a part in England's history. Let us be aware of it; let us be proud of it."

Take a pew Church expands to meet demand



Work in progress: Construction nearly complete on a 100-seat extension to Barnet's Roman Catholic Church

Mass and other services are being held in the parish hall, a community centre and nearby church while construction work continues on a large two-storey extension to the Roman Catholic church in Union Street, Barnet.

Rapidly rising attendances, that often resulted in parishioners having to stand, especially on holy days, have necessitated an extensive re-build.

When the church of Mary Immaculate and St Gregory the Great re-opens in early summer – hopefully by June at the latest – seating capacity will have been increased from 240 to 340.

The church – or St Gregs as it is known to parishioners – was rebuilt in the mid-1970s after being almost destroyed in a fire in 1973 in an infamous local case of arson.

Although many parishioners have appreciated the light and airy interior of the current church building, consecrated in 1977, it has been a struggle in recent years to accommodate all those attending the Saturday evening mass and the four Sunday masses.

Often on holy days there has been quite a crush and some parishioners were left crowding around the entrance. The extension will create a new front door with an additional seating area and gallery above.

The site in Union Street was purchased for a church in 1853, and the original church was enlarged in 1878.

Construction work started at the end of last year and the church was closed for Christmas services which were held in nearby locations including the Wood Street United Reform Church where mass is held on Saturday evening and Sunday morning.

For full details of dates and places for services while the church building is closed, go to www.parish.rcdow.org.uk/barnet



The original Catholic Church in Union Street was destroyed in a fire in 1973

A sorry chapter Council ignores library protests

Conditions imposed on the downsizing of Chipping Barnet Library are to be monitored closely by the Barnet Society to ensure that they are writes Nick Jones

After its re-opening in early February, after a two-month temporary closure, library users will be able to put to the test the council's claims about the efficiency and safety of self-service operation.

Under the planned changes, a previously well-used library will be left unstaffed for much of the day with the likelihood of there being only volunteers in attendance on Mondays and Thursdays.

The downsizing, with much of the floor area being converted into commercial office space, was approved at a council planning meeting on Tuesday 17 January.

Numerous library users and residents joined the Barnet Society in opposing the loss of valuable community space and the construction of a new internal upper office floor for up to 28 employees.

At its last committee meeting, the Society agreed to monitor both the effectiveness of self-service operation and to continue its campaign to force the council to justify the downsizing of the borough's libraries and reduction in library staff.

Jon Supran, the society's secretary, has been engaged in an extensive correspondence with the council in what has been a largely unsuccessful attempt to establish the accuracy of a number of the statements made to the public regarding the library re-organisation, and the basis of the council's financial calculations of the costs of the re-organisation, and of the financial savings used to justify the downsizing decision.

"Up to now we haven't managed to obtain detailed or satisfactory answers to many of the questions we've raised, in some cases merely being treated to a repetition of the 'cut and paste' answers that the council has been regurgitating for several months now.

"In addition, several key questions specifically relating to Chipping Barnet Library have so far been completely unanswered."

On the day the temporary closure started last December – even before planning approval had been granted – the society staged a mass read-in outside the library front door to demonstrate the strength of local anger.

"Barnet Council: Shame on You!" Read the placard carried by Byng Road resident Dick Elms, one of the many outraged Barnet book lovers who condemned the downsizing of the floor space and introduction of self-service operation.



Protesters outside the library making their views known. Sign of things to come? Inside the new look library for digital self service age. The much-vaunted electronic access system was not working on the first day after reopening. The wooden fence around the library has been broken for years

After the read-in, Mr Elms left his poster propped up against the doors as a visual reminder of the strength of the protest.

When challenged at the Society's annual question and answer session, the Chipping Barnet MP, Theresa Villiers, defended the downsizing and switch to largely self-service operation.

She insisted that Chipping Barnet would still have an attractive library, with substantial library floor space, and self-service operation would allow for longer opening hours.

"Self-service operation has been trialled successfully at Edgware, and it does operate successfully. The change does allow Barnet Council to keep every library open within the borough and to operate for longer hours.

"I have campaigned as MP to keep all the libraries open and they will all stay open for use."

Mrs Villiers said she did not accept that members of the public would be fearful of using an unmanned library monitored by closed circuit television. The security of users was not the problem. "The key issue is the possibility of people stealing books."

When concerns about the safety of library users at times the building is unmanned, and operating on self-service, were raised at a recent meeting of the Chipping Barnet police committee, local representatives were told that the High Barnet Police station had not been notified of the changes taking place.

The neighbourhood police team was already dealing with problems resulting from men loitering near the band stand opposite the library, and the meeting was assured the switch to self-service working would be monitored by the police.

In accepting the application, the planning committee approved the "subdivision and part change of use of the library to provide office floor space, together with the insertion of a mezzanine floor" (above the Hyde Room).

The committee stated that the retained library space "shall be used as a library and for no other purpose."

Other conditions were imposed:

*The access control system to the library after the switch to self-service operation "must be via an encrypted fob resistance to being copied easily". (A reader for fobs for library users has been installed outside the front door).

* All locations within the library that utilise closed circuit television must display suitable information and signage.

*The library must liaise with Pc Karl Turton, Metropolitan Crime Officer.

*Further planning permission would be required for the installation of any additional plant machinery required for the new commercial office unit.

The intention during the two-month closure of the library was to carry out a "general refurbishment of the library space"; the layout of shelving and location of PCs was to be altered; a small community room provided on the ground floor; and the Hyde room converted into "lettable space".

Additional refurbishment work will be carried out between June and August next year.

Open and shut case

The council says that from 1 April the number of staffed opening hours will be reduced.

Once self-serving has been implemented, eligible library card holders will be able to use the library during unstaffed opening hours seven days a week:

Monday:

7am to 10pm - unstaffed

(with three volunteer supported self-service opening hours).

Tuesday:

7am to 9am - unstaffed

9am to 12:30pm - staffed

12:30pm to 10pm - unstaffed

Wednesday:

7am to 2pm - unstaffed

2pm to 8pm - staffed

8pm to 10pm - unstaffed

Thursday:

7am to 10pm - unstaffed

(with three volunteer supported self-service opening hours).

Friday:

7am to 2pm - unstaffed

2pm to 5pm - staffed

5pm to 10pm - unstaffed

Saturday:

7am to 9am - unstaffed

9am to 5pm - staffed

Sunday:

10am to 2pm - unstaffed

2pm to 5pm - staffed

During self-service hours, library users will be able to:

- Borrow, renew and return stock using the self-service kiosks
- Access Wi Fi, e-books and e-audio books
- Read newspapers and periodicals
- Place and collect reservations
- Photo copy and print items
- Use a PC to access online resources incorporated organisation.



“

The greatest thrill of all was being chosen in the workshop to perform the new song, The Queen of Pop, and then to beat everything else, I got the chance to sing it on Blue Peter” - Miriam Nyarko



After numerous stage appearances, Miriam Nyarko, a star pupil at the Susi Earnshaw Theatre School in High Barnet, has already made her mark in London West End shows.

She was the voice chosen to try out a new song, “The Queen of Pop”, that has been incorporated into the latest American stage version of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*.

Miriam (14), made over 200 appearances as Violet Beauregarde, one of the children who wins a ticket to the Chocolate Factory, during its recent West End run.

She was also asked to take part in a workshop to try out one of the new songs for the show and her voice was used on the demonstration tape that was sent to the USA to be incorporated into the latest American production of the show.

Over a period of two years during its London run, Miriam performed the role of Violet Beauregarde for four nights a week during the months she worked, clocking up over 200 appearances.

“The greatest thrill of all was being chosen in the workshop to perform the new song, The Queen of Pop, and then to beat everything else, I got the chance to sing it on Blue Peter.”

Susi Earnshaw says she is so proud of Miriam’s achievements. She has also had parts in West End productions of *Matilda* and *the Lion King*,

“Miriam is a real trooper, she has such tremendous stage presence and confidence, and it was her voice that was sent across to America as the demonstration tape for *The Queen of Pop*, and that’s a real achievement.”



(Above) Susi Earnshaw, theatre school principal. On her computer screen is Miriam Nyarko singing Beyonce’s **Crazy in Love**, the theme music of the latest *Great Gatsby* movie, and also the theme of the school’s float. (Right), crowds cheer the parade





★ Susi Earnshaw school's got talent

Pupils of the Susi Earnshaw Theatre School from the Old Bull, High Barnet, were guests of the Mayor of Barnet, Councillor David Longstaff, when he presented them with medals for winning sixth place in the awards for London's New Year's Day parade.

"Lights, camera, action" was the title of their entry, representing the Borough of Barnet, and the theme was a Great Gatsby New Year.

Their float, decked out as a stage set starring pupils dressed in 1920s costumes, was led by a 1923 Bentley driven by Paul and Pina Griffin.

Miriam Nyarko (14) sang Beyonce's "Crazy in Love", the title music from the latest Great Gatsby film.

Miriam has already had parts in several London West End productions, including the Lion King, Matilda and Charlie and the Chocolate Factory.

Susi Earnshaw, principal of the school, told the Barnet Society that winning sixth place in the parade had raised £5,000 in prize money for the school's two charities, Noah's Ark Hospice and Dementia Club UK.

Councillor Longstaff invited the pupils to take tea with him at Hendon Town Hall where he presented their medals.



Top: The Susi Earnshaw float in the Great Gatsby theme. Above: Pina Griffin with her husband Paul led the way in their 1923 Bentley



Bake-off: George O'Connor ready with a slice of his own lemon cake to go with his afternoon cup of tea

Let 'em eat cake

Pastries fit for a queen

Celebrations for the Queen's Sapphire Jubilee, marking her 65 years on the throne, brought back fond memories for former Buckingham Palace pastry chef, George O'Connor, who now lives in sheltered housing in Barnet, writes Nick Jones

Mr O'Connor, who at 85 still bakes a lemon cake every other week, was guarded when interviewed by the Barnet Society: "I had to sign the Official Secrets Act, and that lasts a lifetime, you know."

But when reminded that the Queen's choice of cakes and pastries was hardly an official secret, he did suggest what he thought would probably have been the royal preference for such an important celebration.

"I definitely think she would have liked a light fruit cake, with just a thin layer of icing on top; that would have gone very nicely with a good cup of tea!"

Mr O'Connor rose to become the assistant banqueting manager at the Palace before retiring in the late 1990s. Prior to that he had been a cook at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

“

One day I was told that I had been recommended for another job. I was collected in a Rolls Royce, taken to the Palace and interviewed...”



"One day I was told that I had been recommended for another job. I was collected in a Rolls Royce and taken from the Foreign Office to the Palace and interviewed by the Sergeant at Arms for the vacancy of pastry chef at the Palace.

"I can only imagine that one of the Foreign Secretaries must have liked my cakes. One day, when President Clinton visited the Foreign Office, I had to prepare afternoon tea. The security team checked me out – and the tray of tea and cakes – and then I was allowed to serve them to President Clinton."

Mr O'Connor is still a prolific cake maker. As well as producing a lemon cake every other week – "I always have one in the house" – he often bakes a never-failed fruit cake, a pineapple cake and a cherry and walnut cake.

After his retirement, he lived in sheltered housing in Mill Hill, before moving to Mayhill Road. When his health was better and he attended a day centre at Edgware, he regularly baked Christmas cakes in the centre's kitchen,

"One year I did 26 8-inch Christmas cakes and 20 4-inch cakes, and they all sold out straight away at the Christmas bazaar, making £96 for the day centre."

Before becoming a cook and pastry chef, Mr O'Connor was a chauffeur for wealthy families. He got to know housekeeping side of the business and sometimes helped out. His most surprising engagement was helping the housekeeper at Peter Sellers' house in Godalming, shortly after he married Britt Ekland.

"One day Princess Margaret and Anthony Armstrong-Jones came to dinner and I was asked to serve them. When Lord Snowdon asked for another cup of coffee we were in trouble: we had run out of coffee and the kitchen had to use Nescafe. But Lord Snowdon told me he had never tasted such a good cup of coffee. Needless to say, I didn't let on."

John Brown's body of work on show

Two sculptures by the noted Barnet sculptor John Brown are due to appear in Steven Spielberg's most recent science fiction adventure, *Ready Player One*. Phyllis Oberman met him at his studio in Wood Street

A once-in-a-year opportunity to see and touch an inspiring collection of sculptures is offered to those who join the mailing list of Barnet's noted sculptor, John Brown. Usually held over several weekends in September those on the mailing list are invited to a special show to see John's latest sculptures in his large studio gallery and in the garden. Anyone interested can register their name and email address to receive details of the next special viewing (see below for details)

John Brown in his studio:

Recently John loaned two of his large sculptures for a City office scene in Steven Spielberg's latest movie *Ready Player One* - a science fiction adventure being filmed at various locations in Britain and due for release in March 2018. The two large works, 'Joy of the Family' and 'Pas de Deux' (pictured) can be seen on John's excellent website shown displayed in the garden

Pas de Deux :Bronze Resin edition of 12 Height 69in:

John trained at Hornsey College of Art and Hampstead Garden Suburb Institute. He works in a range of materials



and produces sculptures that are life-size or larger and also smaller works more suitable for display indoors in a typical home. Materials used include various types of stone, cast and aluminium resin, and foundry cast bronze. Many of his large sculptures are commissioned for display in corporate or public buildings. For example John's pieces can be found in The Prudential Insurance Company's art collection, in Harpenden town centre and at Barnet Hospital. His sculptures have also been bought by clients in China, Japan and The United States.

John creates his contemporary sculptures based on the human figure, simplified and abstracted, and expressing emotions and relationships. When a potential owner trawls his website or visits his elegant studio gallery they have the chance to order or buy a piece of existing sculpture or commission something new. Private owners of John Brown's sculpture include Sir Elton John and TV personality and entrepreneur, Simon Cowell.

Argentine Tango: bronze resin, edition of 12, height 33 in:

A fascination with forms of dance – from classical ballet to modern, contemporary and ballroom including the TV show 'Strictly Come Dancing', provide inspiration for



many of his works. Special commissions, however, are often created in conjunction with the client who might be an individual, a company or public body and sometimes he works with an architect or interior designer.

The website: www.johnbrown-sculptor.co.uk shows a wide selection of sculptures and extensive information about John Brown, his creations, clients, commissions and also lists the exhibitions in the area and around the UK at which he regularly shows his work. **If you wish to register your name and email address to receive an invitation to John Brown's next show contact: info@johnbrown-sculptor.co.uk**

Chip off the old block: John Brown at work on his Resolution sculpture, (Left) Pas de Deux. (Below) Phyllis Oberman



Phyllis was hired at 18 as a reporter at the London office of The Ceylon Times in 1952. She joined the National Union of Journalists the following year, and remains a life member.

She is a regular contributor to the crafts and hobbies section of the website, www.sixtyplusurfers.co.uk She recently recalled her glamorous life as a young journalist in Fleet Street in the 1950s. "I danced with prime ministers and confronted fraudsters, was a regular at the Queen's garden parties and in the parliamentary press gallery, mingled backstage at Miss World and broke a drug-smuggling story.

"On Fleet Street I rubbed shoulders with witty Leslie Thomas, a reporter before he became a bestselling author, and Randolph Churchill, loquacious and red-faced, in the legendary El Vino's bar.

Protecting our war memorials

East Barnet war memorial is one of tens of thousands across the country that is being considered by Historic England for possible listing for its special architectural or historic interest. *Nick Jones reports*

People wishing to comment have until mid-February to offer their advice online via www.historicengland.org.uk

Two others that might be entered into the consultation procedure for listing are the Monken Hadley and Arkley war memorials.

The East Barnet memorial is an impressive tall Celtic cross of Cornish granite, with the front and back faces of the cross and shaft decorated in Celtic-style knot-work carvings.

It was supplied by the Bodmin Granite Company, and was delivered free of charge by rail from the quarry direct to New Barnet station in June 1920.

Canon Overton, who was the rector of St Mary's church, conducted the unveiling ceremony. His wife, Mrs F. A. Overton, had overseen the project with the help of the East Barnet War Memorial Committee, at a total cost of £285.13s.10d., raised by subscriptions and donations.

As a result of research by Catherine Loveday – whose father's name (S.F.Chapman) was added to those who lost their lives in the Second World War – a second Second World War plaque was added to the memorial after it was revealed many more local servicemen had been killed. Around 500 people attended the rededication in 2010.

Originally the memorial was located in the middle of the junction of Church Hill Road and East Barnet Road, but when a roundabout was installed in 1970, it was moved to its current position in front of Brookside Methodist Church.

A final decision on whether the memorial should be listed will be taken by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport.



Current position in front of Brookside Methodist Church.

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION:



Welcome to all our new members listed here since October last. We are getting some good responses and results from those joining through the PayPal method which was

recently introduced. I will be sending Welcome Emails to people joining from March onwards and this is another new introduction. Can I please remind members to keep me updated with as much information as possible. I would like to add more email addresses and phone numbers to make contacting you easier in case of

membership queries etc. This will help us to be able to send the Newsletter electronically if that would be a preferred option for some, which means we could cut down on printing costs and paper saving the Society money, and helping the environment. Some of the Committee and I are having a 'Membership Brainstormer Session' soon to see if we can boost our numbers a bit more. We have around 450 membership subscribers currently so if you know anyone interested in what we do, please point them in my direction and I'll get them sign up. You'll find me on the Contact page of our website.

John Hay (pictured)
Membership Secretary

NEW MEMBERS:

Mr P & Mrs B Sawyer
Ms K Saint
Mr L Bedford
Seema Haria
Quinton Dighton
Mr N Woodeson
Mr J Jones
Mrs J Skinner
Mr G Davis
Mrs C Jordan-Jones
Ms E Stoyanova
Mr B Ingram
Ms P Oberman
Aleth Abadie
Uta Bindl
Mr & Mrs J Nelhams

JOIN US - IT'S ONLY £8, £12 FOR FAMILIES

The Barnet Society has been at the forefront of many campaigns since its inception in 1947. Over the years, we have campaigned on health, environment, transport, education and many other issues. You can use PayPal or Visa to join

WWW.BARNETSOCIETY.ORG.UK/MEMBERSHIP

