



The Barnet Society

Campaigning for a better Barnet

NEWSLETTER

November 2013



The Market site is back in use, 9th November 2013

CHAIR'S LETTER

As a tsunami of retail closures continues to decimate the high streets of the north London suburbs, High Barnet might perhaps have a chance to buck the trend and attract new custom.

Every Wednesday and Saturday, at the rear of the Spires, shoppers and visitors have at last had a chance to savour the hustle and bustle that Barnet Market used to offer until it became the all-too likely casualty of an ill-fated property venture.

Inside the small paved area between the bandstand and Waitrose, the half a dozen or so stallholders who thankfully have never given up hope of reviving the market, have made the most of their temporary home.

They have managed to attract extra business and hopefully have reassured the Spires' new owners, the William Pears property group, that the £100,000 cost of resurfacing and re-equipping the original market site will have been money well spent.

Such has been the proximity of the stalls beside the bandstand, and so friendly has been the badinage between stallholders and their customers, that the



market has recaptured the familiarity of the days when it filled the former cattle market that had been its home for so many years (*See picture above*).

Bit by bit the new market site has taken shape. Removal of the wooden hoardings which had become such an eyesore was uplifting in itself; early groundwork made provision for supply points for water and electricity for the stallholders; and after completion of the resurfacing, white and yellow road markings now define the layout of what on non-market days will become a new car park.

Repairs to the pavement and a new low-level perimeter barrier have helped to smarten up a corner of the town that had looked so neglected for so long.

High Barnet has in the process acquired an appealing open space, just off the High Street, which might perhaps in the future provide a meeting place for local events such as weekend community fairs or exhibitions.

Not surprisingly the stallholders have been keeping an eagle eye as work has proceeded on their new pitches. Although they are delighted that they will have a settled home at last, I did detect a degree of apprehension and some disappointment.

While the new layout has brightened up the appearance of the junction of St Albans Road and High Street, one of the stallholders was concerned that what after all is simply a car park could be rather cold and windswept on winter mornings. “We’ve had to wait six years for a permanent site. Why couldn’t we have had a proper covered market like other towns?”

Notwithstanding these reservations, I am sure members of the Barnet Society will be doing all they can to support the valiant efforts of the Friends of Barnet Market whose campaign to preserve the market has shown the effectiveness of strong community action.

Our role as a local pressure group is being tested on several fronts. The Barnet Society has joined others in submitting a formal objection to the inappropriate timber cladding that has appeared above two premises in Church Passage.

We are determined to do what we can to hold Barnet Council to account over what householders say are the many deficiencies in the new collection service for recyclable refuse; residents are being asked to make a note of their experiences and forward their complaints to the council.

On a more positive note, the Society has given its full support to an application by the Battlefields Trust for help from the Heritage Lottery Fund towards the cost of an archaeological dig to determine the precise site of the Battle of Barnet.



Old Fold Manor Golf Course

News of a possible excavation in, around and to the north of Monken Hadley came hard on the heels of the Society's decision to set up a working group to examine the possibility of organising a commemoration or re-enactment of the Battle of Barnet in June 2015.

Our initial concern that the battle site might be damaged by landfill has to some extent been allayed after Barnet Council gave landlord's consent in principle to a plan by the Old Fold Manor Golf Club to re-contour low-lying land on the western edge of its course, next to St Albans Road.

Once the club has submitted an application for planning permission the Society will be able to assess the scheme in greater detail. Many issues will have to be resolved:

Are there sufficient safeguards to ensure that there will be no encroachment on land that might be of historical interest? How strong is the assurance that only certified top soil will be used? What would be the impact of felling most of the sixty poplars that mark the club's boundary along the St Albans Road?

We do hope you enjoy this first edition of the newsletter in full colour. In the New Year we plan to switch to a larger format, yet another step in our attempt to strengthen the impact of our work campaigning for a better Barnet.

The content and appearance of the Society's website continues to be

transformed under the guidance of our imaginative online administrator Martin Standley. Our up-to-date listing of local events is the latest add-on to what we hope will become an accessible and trusted notice board for local news and information.

So far there has been a good response to our two email alerts promoting the latest news stories on the website.

We know that some members do not have email. If you know a member (or friend or neighbour) who is not online, why not become their buddy – and print off any notices or news items which you think might interest them.

Please help by signing up new members. As chair I would like to renew our appeal for volunteers to join our committee. At least two of our officers have expressed their intention to stand down at the annual meeting next June and we are anxious to fill their places.

Anyone who is interested might perhaps like to attend one of our bi-monthly committee meetings. We meet on a Thursday evening and go through the issues that we think matter to Barnet and its residents. Do come and join us.

A date for your diary: Theresa Villiers, the Chipping Barnet MP, has agreed to attend our annual question-and-answer session on Friday 28 March, 2014, at 2.30pm at the Pennefather Hall. We shall be inviting questions in the New Year.

NICK JONES

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S REPORT

We are pleased to welcome Ms A M Poppy and Mr J Hay as members of the Society.

Late payments of the current 2013 – 2014 subscription are still trickling in, but a number of people have still to pay. If you receive a personal reminder with this newsletter please respond promptly.

Details of membership are clearly displayed on our recently upgraded website www.barnetsociety.org.uk along with other local news items, so do encourage friends and neighbours who might be interested in joining to look at these or to contact me directly at 020 8440 3899.

JOHN GARDINER

ALAN HOWELLS.

Members and friends were saddened to learn of the death of Alan Howells, a doughty supporter of the Barnet Society, who died in September. A Requiem Mass was held at the Church of Mary Immaculate and St Gregory the Great, Union Street, Barnet.



Photo courtesy of Old Uffs Assn

Dr Barry Blain, a former chairman, described Alan as a “strong pillar” of the society who had served tirelessly on the committee during his chairmanship.

Alan was at the forefront of the campaign to prevent landfill being deposited on what became the Bridgedown Golf Club off St Albans Road. He spent many hours monitoring the content of lorries arriving at the site to prevent the dumping of contaminated material.

In the final months of his life he posted comments on the society’s website, reacting to the latest news stories, and they remain a testament to his great

interest in Barnet and his support for the society’s work.

Despite declining health Alan attended the society’s last annual meeting and the most recent question and answer session with Theresa Villiers MP.

Alwyn Howells, the youngest of six children, was born in 1929 in Treharris, a small mining town in South Wales. The family moved to Wembley in 1932 but he and his sister were evacuated back to South Wales at the outbreak of war.

Later he gained a place at the local grammar school and after completing two years national service with the Royal Regiment of Artillery, joined the National Bank in Camden in 1949.

Alan had an assured career in banking: after being appointed manager of the securities department at the Old Broad Street branch, he became a branch manager in Fleet Street. He was promoted again after the National Bank was bought by Williams and Glyn and he managed the Belgravia branch. After yet another take-over by the Royal Bank of Scotland, he moved to Baker Street where he retired in 1989.

It was during his first job at Camden that he met a young Irish girl called Maura who had been transferred to the branch and who was to become his wife. After their wedding in Cork in 1959 and a honeymoon in Ireland, the couple moved to their new home in Wentworth Road, Barnet, where they raised Owen, Teresa and Timothy.

Before his marriage he had decided to convert to Catholicism and he became increasingly involved in the work of the church. He joined the Knights of St Columba, was national treasurer of the Teams of Our Lady and assisted in research and fund-raising for the Tyburn Convent in Marble Arch whose finances he had dealt with during his career as a banker.

PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT REPORT

Around the time the last Newsletter dropped into your letter boxes, the Society made a detailed submission on our local bus services to the London Assembly, which was largely the work of Peter Bradburn. We are very grateful to Peter for his thoroughness and expertise, and for giving us the following update:

An edited version of the Barnet Society's response to the London Assembly's request for comments on London's bus services has been included on the Society's website. The LA's focus was how the Mayor/TfL should accommodate the ever-increasing demand for bus services without an increase in the overall bus mileage operated.

The Society made the point that continued expansion of the network should still feature in Outer London boroughs like Barnet, recognising the needs of new housing (and, we hope, shopping) developments. Enhanced orbital links should cater for longer school and college journeys and hospital rationalisation in the area. A special plea was made for a procured minibus link between High Barnet Station yard and the town centre and Barnet Hospital, in view of the steep and awkward walk to existing bus stops. Desperately slow and sometimes underused services in Central London should be assessed more critically, recognising that tube, walk and cycle hire are more practical alternatives to the bus there than they are in Outer London.

Quite separately, the Council is proposing works in Wellhouse Lane and its junction with Wood Street to improve pedestrian and vehicle safety. (See the Society website). In principle this is a welcome move, and badly needed now and in the future as the hospital's influence increases. However the aspirations are quite complex, and the initial estimate of £70,000 seems on the

low side if a comprehensive scheme is to be achieved without compromising some aspects of existing pedestrian and bus user convenience.

Another important submission of ours has been to the Planning Inspectorate regarding No.1 Church Passage, in opposition to the owner's appeal against enforcement of Conservation Area policy. We objected both on grounds of principle and because of the inappropriate and detrimental execution of the timber cladding. As we argued,

This is the most serious and conspicuous of a number of infringements that have occurred in the Conservation Area in recent years – several of which, despite enforcement procedures, have yet to be rectified. Unless a stand is taken against it, the Council's policy will be widely perceived as worthless.

At last work has begun on upgrading the Market site (nearly six years since the old buildings were demolished!) and, by the time you read this, we hope the stalls will be back and increasing in number. The latest temporary move to the bandstand area seems already to have reinvigorated them. Please go and support the faithful stallholders who have survived the dreadful conditions imposed on them since they were first displaced in January 2008; and if you have stopped using the Market in recent years, do go and try out the new, improved version.



We are waiting to see the latest proposals for the Spires, which are clearly critical to turning round people's perception of the town centre. We also hope

that the new Town Team (formerly Town Centre Strategy Board) will be allowed a more proactive role than hitherto. Its second meeting was held in September, with Councillor Longstaff elected Chair and Gail Laser as Deputy. It will have two sub-committees: planning, on which the Society will be represented by Judith Clouston, and highways and parking, on which Jonathan Supran will serve.

A new issue causing us some concern is the proposal to remodel part of the Old Fold Manor golf course with soil waste. Nick Jones writes about this in more detail elsewhere in the Newsletter.

Apart from that, there is not much to report. Planning applications for home extensions continue apace, and (to a lesser extent) conversions of offices and shops to residential use. Preliminary building work has started on the Court House conversion to shops and flats, and though some alterations from the original planning application are being sought, the slight loss of character to the building will be outweighed, in our view, by its new lease of life.

Fortunately, since the last Newsletter, the threat of the planning department being put into special measures, and decisions being made in Bristol, has receded – though whether under its new out-sourced management it will be any more accountable remains to be seen. In fairness, the planners are having to deal not only with major developments elsewhere in the borough such as Brent Cross and the Welsh Harp, but apparently a spate of unauthorised housing in places such as Hendon. All the more reason for us to fight for our corner of the borough!

ROBIN BISHOP

RAMBLES ROUND BARNET PART 2.

Members who were able to attend this year's AGM will recall our Treasurer reporting that 'Rambles Round Barnet' Part 1 had sold well since its publication in December 2012 and was now making a profit for the Society.

One reason for the commissioning of this book was to celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and the Committee were prepared to face some financial loss over the project so this was especially pleasing.

Part 2 is now close to being sent to the printers in time for the High Street Christmas Fayre on Sunday 1st December and we are hoping that this will also sell well, then and subsequently.

As with Part 1, a large number of people have been involved in producing this guidebook, including several Society members. In the earlier stages of preparing for Part 2, David Ely walked through some parts of Ridge, Shenley, Hadley and Totteridge. He followed as closely as possible in the footsteps of Mr E H Lucas who wrote the first edition of this book in 1947. David's accounts of those walks and his general background notes proved invaluable in the writing of Part 2. He provided the postcard featuring a 1927 photograph of an 84 bus on its way to London Colney.

The crucial stage of having the first-draft accounts checked out by people other than the author was completed during the last few months. Once again, Barry and Sue Blain gave time to walking round some of the routes and gently pointing out where the accounts needed clarifying. Chris and Diane Nightingale went to the Darlands Lake Nature Reserve and made some helpful suggestions. They also read through drafts of the Introduction and the Acknowledgements. The section of the Hadley Woods walk from the railway line to Jack's Lake was considerably improved after Graham Willcocks followed the draft route there.

A charming feature of Part 1 is the black and white postcards of some of the places referred to in the accounts. Terence Atkins has again allowed us access to his collection of these postcards and so Part 2 will also have several of these in the accounts.



The two members whose work really began after the final drafts of Part 1 were written are Peter and Graham Willcocks. Their task was the transforming the A4 accounts in portrait format to A5 in landscape format and positioning the colour photos, the maps and the black and white postcards such that they made a coherent whole. This demands a high degree of computing skill as well as a lot of time and it was thanks to their Herculean efforts that the book was ready for sale at the Christmas Fayre last year. Happily, this year they have not had to work under quite the same pressure and this most complex job is being completed well in time for the 2013 Fayre.

Please visit the Society's stall at the Fayre, have a look through Part 2 and maybe buy a few extra copies to give as presents this Christmas. Once again, the book will be on sale after the Fayre in the Barnet Museum, Waterstones and 'The Paper Shop' (previously 'News and Chews') at the Hadley end of the High Street.

OWEN JONES.

CAN ARCHAEOLOGISTS FIND BATTLE OF BARNET SITE?

An application has been made to the Heritage Lottery Fund to see if it would agree to pay for an archaeological dig to try to locate the precise site of the 1471 Battle of Barnet. Glenn Foard, a landscape archaeologist would carry out the excavation on behalf of the Battlefields Trust.

The exact site of the Battle of Barnet, a decisive engagement in the Wars of the Roses, has always been a matter of dispute. It took place in fields half a mile, or even up to a mile, north of the town but English Heritage says the boundaries are not clear and so far it has not been possible for historians to determine the exact location.

The Barnet Society is among the local groups supporting the application. Dorothy Cohen, the Battlefields Trust's representative for London and the south-east, said they were hoping to raise the funds needed to "carry out a dig to try to locate the actual battle site".

News of a possible dig will give impetus to other initiatives that are also being considered to commemorate the Battle of Barnet and will also do more to promote and celebrate Barnet's rich history. One idea being considered by the Barnet Society is the possibility of holding a commemoration or re-enactment of the Battle of Barnet in the summer of 2015. A weekend in June has been suggested and the Byng Road playing fields might provide a suitable venue.

Another possibility is that students from Barnet and Southgate College might get involved in a project to map and photograph the area where the battle is thought to have taken place.

A Battle of Barnet display is one of the highlights at Barnet Museum's collection, and they take every opportunity to promote interest in Barnet's historic place in the Wars of the Roses. Historians regard the battle as one of the most important clashes of the Wars of the Roses since it brought about a decisive turn in the fortunes of the two houses.

English Heritage demarcates the battlefield as lying 800 to 1,600 metres (½ to 1 mile) north of the town of Barnet, but there are only approximations of where the fighting took place. A 15th-century letter from a Hanseatic merchant, Gerhard von Wessel, mentions a "broad green" which corresponds to Hadley Green and a marsh which is likely to be in the valley of the Monken Mead brook. The letter also mentions the St Albans Road (not the present one.) Houses in Monken Hadley now stand on part of the fields where it is thought the battle was fought.

Glenn Foard and the Battlefields Trust have a proud record in identifying and protecting battlefield sites. Foard, who is Reader in Battlefield Archaeology at the University of Huddersfield, is best known for discovering the location of the final phases of the Battle of Bosworth Field (1485). In 2009 Foard and his team discovered artefacts to support his theory that the site where the Bosworth visitor centre is currently located is several miles from the actual spot where the battle was fought.

Such is the 18th and 19th century urbanisation of the fields to the north of the original town of Barnet that Foard and his team will have a mammoth task on their hands and will have lots of theories to work through. Among the local legends to be either proved or disproved is that a hedge at Old Fold Manor Golf Club is the likely line of the shrubs behind which the 13th Earl of Oxford's men lined up and took cover when he rallied the Lancastrian troops!

BARNET IN THE FALL: VISIT WHITINGS HILL

Whitings Hill is hardly likely to rival New England in the fall, but two plantations planted almost twenty years ago by the Barnet Society are now resplendent with mature trees and present a vibrant display of autumn colours.

Tucked away between Quinta Drive and Mays Lane, the Whitings Hill open space might be unfamiliar to many High Barnet residents, but it is a tranquil

setting and a walk to the top of the hill is highly recommended. A panoramic view opens up: to the north are the big houses on Arkley ridge; to the east the new buildings in the Barnet Hospital complex; to the south-east the multi-storey blocks in Whetstone and Finchley; and to the south and west the countryside of Dollis Valley and Totteridge Common in the distance.



Whitings Hill had previously been scruffy pastureland until Barnet Council turned it into a public open space in 1995 and invited local groups to plant trees as part of the Watling Chase Community Forest project. Two plantations were created on the south-west side of the hill by the Barnet Society to mark its fiftieth anniversary; trees were also planted by Whitings Hill School on the north-west side; and more trees were planted in an adjoining field, including several hundred in a plantation established by the Woodland Trust.

On the day the trees were planted, in December 1995, there was thick fog which put rather a damper on the ceremony, and there was no chance for the Mayor of Barnet and other guests to see the view from the top of the hill.

The Society had taken great care to ensure that all the trees in its two plantations were native species, a task that was fulfilled with great diligence by David Lee, who had volunteered to help the Society and who has become one of its long-serving officers.

Three more oaks were planted in December 1999 in honour of the Society's

founders, one of the many projects in Barnet celebrating the millennium. Alongside the oaks, which it was hoped would eventually provide shade, the Society paid for the erection of a bench – known as the secretaries’ bench – in honour of previous office holders. Not surprisingly, given the vandalism of recent years, all that remains is one chunk of the original concrete footing. There is no sign either of any of the other benches that were placed alongside the paths going up the hill and around the plantations.

David Lee, who is one of the society’s vice presidents, hopes some way can be found in 2015 to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the Whittings Hill plantations. In subsequent years he was the guiding hand behind several innovative tree plantings in High Barnet. He master minded the planting of the line of trees along the Underhill side of Barnet Hill and in 2012 he advised on the choice of young trees along the High Street

Perhaps the time has come for the Barnet Society to launch an appeal to pay for some new benches on Whittings Hill; the twentieth anniversary would be an ideal occasion to celebrate the Society’s original contribution to such a valuable open space.

If any members or local residents would like to install a bench in memory of a partner or friend, the Society will be only too pleased to help with the necessary representations to Barnet Council, which is also the authority responsible for the upkeep of Whittings Hill.

FROM THE NEWSLETTER FOR NOVEMBER 2003

The ‘Press’ reported in October that Barnet was ‘nice but dull’, as it came fifth in a new quality-of-life league table for the Capital. Schools, parks, low pollution and strong sporting facilities were plus factors, but (in the Evening Standard survey) the borough was held back by lack of glitz and glamour. Barnet’s nightlife was also slammed with a zero rating for its bars. What about comments on this?

Lastly, it may come as a surprise to many that Barnet council is well on course to redevelop the Dollis Valley Estate. From the present 634 households it is intended to increase the density to between 1200 and 1500 households. The Barnet Society has, belatedly, become a Stakeholder and hopes therefore to make a meaningful contribution to the remaining stages of the development. So far, the Council has not bothered to involve residents outside the Estate in any dialogue or even inform them as to progress. That just might cause repercussions in May 2006.

FESTIVAL AT OLD COURT HOUSE RECREATION GROUND



Photo courtesy Sigrun Bjork Olafsdottir

In the August Newsletter we reported on the High Barnet Festival, raising funds for the Noah's Ark Children's Hospice, and we were pleased to learn that the hospice fund benefitted by over £3,000 from this event.

CAFÉ REOPENS IN OLD COURT HOUSE RECREATION GROUND

After a lengthy closure the Old Court House recreation ground has a functioning café once again.

A new tenant has reopened the business after a major refurbishment and is hoping that High Barnet will embrace the cafe culture that has proved so popular at Trent Park in Cockfosters and at Oak Hill Park in East Barnet. In recent years visitors to the children's playground, which is such a well-loved attraction at the Old Court House park, have looked in vain when hoping to purchase refreshments.

The café had presented a sorry sight, and the enclosed garden that surrounds it was neglected and overgrown. Now the building has been refitted, the lawns cut and the new proprietor Ms Sophia Tufail is hoping to install additional decking to extend the outside seating area.

Her long-term plans for the café include the possibility of obtaining a licence to stage outdoor events such as the occasional hire of a bouncy castle for children or perhaps small concerts in the summer months.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

SUNDAY 1st DECEMBER: BARNET HIGH STREET CHRISTMAS FAIR

Come and buy the Rambles book 2.

PRE-CHRISTMAS WALK IN THE DOLLIS VALLEY 10 am TUESDAY 10th DECEMBER.

LEADER: DIANE NIGHTINGALE.

The walk will go along the Dollis Brook, up through Totteridge and down the ridge to the Brook again. Distance 31/2 miles approx. It should be fairly mud-free! We will finish with lunch at The Old Red Lion at the bottom of Barnet Hill. Anyone else who would like to join us for lunch there would be most welcome. Walkers please meet in the pub Car Park (entrance is in Fairfield Way), at 10.00am - return about 12.15pm. For further information or if you need a lift, ring Diane on 0208 440 0203.

FRIDAY 28th MARCH, 2014, AT 2.30 pm IN THE PENNEFATHER HALL

Theresa Villiers, the Chipping Barnet MP, has agreed to attend our annual question-and-answer session.

BARNET SOCIETY CONTACTS

Chair	Nick Jones	020 8449 3027
	chair@barnetsociety.org.uk	
Hon Secretary	Jonathan Supran	020 8441 3808
	secretary@barnetsociety.org.uk	
Membership Sec	John Gardiner	020 8440 3899
	membership@barnetsociety.org.uk	
Planning	Robin Bishop	020 8449 0088
	planning@barnetsociety.org.uk	
Editor	Peter Willcocks	020 8449 6153.
	editor@barnetsociety.org.uk	
Website	www.barnetsociety.org.uk	