



The Barnet Society

Campaigning for a better Barnet

NEWSLETTER

February 2012



At the Dominoes challenge

**L to R: Upsy Daisy, Rt Hon Theresa Villiers MP,
Cllr David Longstaff, Iggle Piggle, Gail Laser**

CHAIR'S LETTER

The last few weeks have been a whirlwind of news and activity.

As most of you will now know, it was announced on Christmas Eve that the Swiss bank, UBS, had bought the Barnet Market site from Mr and Mrs Walsh.



This came as a surprise to all, not least the market stallholders, who were given no warning of the impending change of ownership. This is an interesting development in the history of Barnet's famous market and, on the face of it, is good news as it opens up new possibilities for its future. It also means that the previous scheme for the site that had an extension to its planning consent granted last July, in spite of great local opposition, will not now be built (we assume). As we were never convinced that this was designed to provide a proper market, this comes as a relief. I write about this in more detail below.

Photo c/o of Friends of Barnet Market

Over the coming weeks and months we will find out more of UBS' plans but, firstly, we must get the Planning Brief for the site that we worked on last year completed and adopted. We are lobbying the Council Leader, our MP and senior officers to get it reviewed, amended and out for public consultation before it is too late to have any impact on UBS' plans. This is a distinct possibility, though, as the opportunity to get the Brief finished last summer was lost when we were told that the Council had insufficient resources to complete it. This was on top of the abandonment of our long-promised town centre strategy, for which no proper explanation has been given. Funnily enough, we notice that there is a public consultation on a newly-drafted town centre strategy for Finchley Church End happening at the moment. So it appears that resources are available for some areas in the Borough, but not for others. Why?

The Outer London Fund (OLF) projects are at differing stages of development but all those involved have been spending vast amounts of time devoting themselves to aiding, guiding and providing the necessary work involved. In

spite of that, some of the projects are in danger of not meeting the Mayor's deadline of 31 March for completion. Derek Epstein writes about this in more detail below.

Our Vice Chair, Gail Laser, took on the Chairmanship of Barnet Traders Association last year and has been working, it seems, almost full time with her team on the OLF bid preparation, submission and execution of the various projects. As a result she is now being used by the Council as a town centre 'champion' giving talks and attending workshops to help/inspire other town centres in the Borough. She was also invited to be on the panel for one of Boris Johnson's Talk London events held in Barnet in mid-January. It is a thankless task trying to promote our town centre at the moment, with shops continuing to go out of business and with the introduction of expensive, cashless parking. The first of these two factors is beyond our control of course, but the second should be one we can have influence over. However, our Council appear totally intransigent on the matter. I was shocked, on my one visit to London Colney in the run-up to Christmas, to find the massive, free car park full and I was forced to use the one space left in the overflow car park at the far end of the site. How can our ailing High Street compete against that? We understand the need to reduce staff and maintenance costs, but by doing so, why not also reduce parking costs and provide easier ways to pay? We need to attract shoppers into our town, not discourage them, if the remaining shops are to thrive.

As we had been awarded money in Round 1 of the OLF, we were advised not to bid for Round 2 funds, even though a much larger pot of money was available. We have just heard that Cricklewood and North Finchley town centres will receive the huge sums of £1.68 million and £1.07 million respectively. We extend our congratulations to those town centres and wish them success with their various projects. At least they have a more realistic, two-year timetable to spend the funds.

There have been some interesting developments on other sites in and around Barnet town centre over the last couple of months with the announcement of the winning bid for the redevelopment of the Dollis Valley Estate (again) and the proposed redevelopment of St Martha's Convent Junior School in Union Street. Brief reports on both of these follow below. No decision has yet been made on the Barnet Countryside Centre but we are keeping an eye out for amendments to the proposed effect on the Green Belt. The old Court House on the corner of Normandy Avenue and the High Street is awaiting the result of its planning appeal as I write and we will find out the result shortly. And, of course, there is still the uncertainty over the future of Barnet FC's ground at

Underhill. The lease from Barnet Council expires at the end of this year and the two parties appear to be unable to agree a way forward. Surely there must be a way of keeping our football team in our town? We know that negotiations over leases with the Council can be lengthy and unclear from recent experience at The Bull and Barnet Museum (see below), but where there's a will...? We just ask for clear-thinking strategy and transparency in dealings with all of these organisations, together with consideration of the long-term benefits of retaining them for the residents and businesses of Barnet.

Please note the change of date for our next event - a Q&A session with Chipping Barnet MP, Theresa Villiers - to Friday 24 February (see Dates for your Diary at the end of the Newsletter). This time we're asking for questions to be sent in beforehand. Please either email to: chairman@barnetsociety.org.uk, or post to: The Barnet Society, 28 The Drive, Barnet EN5 4JQ.

JUDITH CLOUSTON

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S REPORT

We are pleased to welcome as members of the Barnet Society Mr and Mrs N Jones, Mr and Mrs M Geiger, Ms K Johnstone, Mrs T Adams, Ms J Oliveira, Mrs J Porter, Miss E Johnston, Mr C Cohen, Dr J McKenzie, Mr and Mrs J Garrod, Mr and Mrs S Bennett and Mr and Mrs L Lipman.

Reminder notices went out with the November Newsletter to those who had not paid the 2011 – 2012 subscription. My thanks to all who responded positively. We can only assume that, for those from whom we have heard nothing, membership is no longer required; no further contact will be made and names will be removed from the members list.

Many of you will have had our new recruitment leaflet – blue, view from the Church tower – posted through your letterbox. Though of no use to you, please pass it on to someone you think might be interested in joining. Do not confuse this leaflet, which is exclusively designed to attract new people, with the renewal notice for existing members which you will receive as usual in May.

JOHN GARDINER

BUS STOP ?????

Those of us who use the buses will acknowledge the substantial improvements made over recent years. The fleet has been updated, routes extended,

timetables more closely adhered to and a service frequency achieved that is the envy of most of the country outside London. However, all is not well. We have received complaints from members that on occasions, sometimes very inconvenient occasions late at night, buses fail to stop. Another problem is the on the spot curtailing of services bound for the Spires at the Northern end of the High Street outside the KFC restaurant. Being asked to leave the bus at this point may seem only a minor inconvenience, but for those who are frail, elderly or who have children in tow it is unacceptable. In any case, with fares rising once again this New Year (£2.30 cash fare), passengers have a right to receive the full service every time.

We would like to know if you have experienced any problems with the bus service in order to get an accurate picture of the situation. Remember that problems can be reported to London Buses using the phone number 0845 300 7000, but make sure you get a reference number for your call.

JOHN GARDINER

(contact details on back page)

PS 84 – as any frequent user of this service will have discovered, Oyster cards and certain travel passes are no longer accepted on this route. You have to pay, we wonder why?

SHOPPING AND THE OUTER LONDON FUND IN BARNET HIGH STREET

Let me begin by wishing you all a very happy New Year and I hope that 2012 will be a happy and healthy one for you all.

As you may be aware, since winning the Outer London Fund bid, the last seven months have been extremely busy for the Barnet Town Team and we must say thank you to Hadley Residents Association and Barnet Residents Association for joining with the Barnet Society in our attempt at advancing prosperity in our High Street.

Derek has written about the planned design for the Church garden and the planned High Street de-cluttering programme below.

In my last letter to you all I wrote about forthcoming Christmas High Street events - window training schemes, trader promotions, and more so let's try and look at how successful these all were.

They say that timing is everything so the appalling introduction of a new parking regime by Barnet Council just before Christmas did nothing to help us or our traders, particularly as up the road in Potters Bar the usually low cost of 20 pence for one hour parking and the first half an hour free, was suspended over that period so parking in Potters Bar was free at all times, as I understand it was in many areas within Hertfordshire. Back here in Barnet I do believe that pay by phone is here to stay. However there is nothing in this new regime to support our town centre. The purchase of a ticket in shops is difficult as those providing this service are scantily located, and the cost is prohibitive, particularly for short term parking, plus the amazing vigilance of the plethora of traffic wardens has not gone un-noticed. Let's be honest, Brent Cross and London Colney have never seemed so attractive! I am sure there will be more said about this throughout The Newsletter, so for the moment I will go back to writing about the Outer London Fund Christmas provision from where I strayed.

I hope that most of you will have shopped locally wherever possible over the Christmas period and will continue to do so. Those traders that participated in the shop window master-class will by now have replaced their Christmas window display with something new for 2012. There were a few most attractive Christmas windows and as always the window at Hopscotch was excellent. Do share your views on our shop windows by sending me an email.

And what about the Christmas Events! Well each one was designed to entice you and your family into our High Street and began on Saturday November the 26th with Hunting the Board Game Piece and ended on Sunday December 18th with a weekend of events for all.

There was something for every age group over that period. For the little ones we were most fortunate that IgglePiggle and UpsyDaisy, the characters from "In The Night Garden" found time in their busy schedule to pop in to The Spires and allow the children to hold their hands and have their photos taken. There was a fabulous fashion show with clothes supplied by almost all of our ladies fashion retailers from iKandy at one end of the street to Gems at the other. The Body Shop provided two lovely young ladies to do the make-up and the entire programme, put together by students from Barnet College was brilliantly done. The Sunday event (mainly for the men) was fantastic too. Crystal Motors generously opened their doors and provided food and hot drinks on a chilly Sunday so that our residents and visitors could try their luck at the Graffiti Wall. And of course in between all that St John the Baptist Church proudly displayed a beautiful Christmas tree in its front garden, the first for many years. This allowed us to have a fantastic lighting ceremony

including music and song. I hope that we may be able to have another tree next year but the cost was in excess of £2000 so this, sadly, is unlikely.

How many of you went to The Bull and saw “The Nightmare before Christmas”? It was as usual brilliant as Susi’s productions are. Please do continue to support our local theatre!

And how can I not write about the 2011 Christmas Fayre. This year saw an even greater improvement than last year. At times I struggled to walk along the High Street as there were so many people all clamouring to listen to the music, eat the fabulous food and generally enjoy the day. I don’t know about all of you but I would love to have a Summer Fayre and am looking in to the possibility. Let me know what you think.

As I mentioned in the autumn Newsletter, several of the independently owned shops are to have a bit of a facelift and we can’t wait to begin. However as I am sure most of you know, the winter months are not the best for outdoor decorating so we are trying to extend the period when we need to complete the work to the end of April so that we can do the best possible job, however this may not be possible so keep a look out, bear with us, and if you see obstructive pavement scaffolding please be patient. The end result will be worth it!

The Business Start Up Programme at Barnet College was a great success. Twenty learners were accepted on to the course and of those that completed I hope that we will see one or two open a business on our high street. The Programme ended with a Networking event on November 29th. Local traders were invited along to Emchai where some delicious canapés were served. There was a very interesting presentation given by Michael Korn, Shell liveWIRE Young Entrepreneur of the Year who lives in our Borough. He told us about his innovative retractable mobile screen that can be used in hospitals, offices, the classroom or indeed anywhere. It was a good evening.

And what else for 2012? I mentioned that local graphic designer Chris Smith will be designing a glossy Town Centre Magazine. Well he has already begun and believe me it is hard work. If you know anyone that would be interested in sponsoring future editions or even part of a future edition, please let us know.

Of course we have (and are) encountering issues and problems throughout the Outer London Fund implementation programme. Our local Council machine is not as well- oiled as we are and this can be extremely frustrating. The Town Team did not anticipate that many hours of midnight toil would be required. I could easily complain to you all but this is a new year. News is so often

downbeat and I believe that we all need positive messages. So come spring the Church Garden will be in flower, the High Street will be de-cluttered and we will have some newly painted shop fronts. Not bad considering we are in a recession!! So I do hope that you will all support your local shops.

You will have heard that UBS, the owner of The Spires, has purchased the market site. Plans are in the offing for redevelopment. What shops would you like to see in The Spires?

I would appreciate some help from all of you. If you think a shop looks dirty, uncared for or untidy, let the owner and us know. If there is something you need that is not sold in the appropriate shop, let them know. Conversely if you think the shop is working hard for you, that you appreciate the window, the merchandise and the staff are welcoming and friendly, then let them and us know that too.

And finally please welcome two new traders to our High Street. John Bye has taken over, and I believe had a make-over of our local butchers. So please support him at the Butchers Hook. And we now have a new fashion house and fine wine supplier, Fashion & Wine, at the Hadley end of the High Street selling a good selection of mainly white shirts for him and her as well as a choice of wine, champagne, decanters and more. Welcome Michele and Zoran.

GAIL LASER

BARNET MUSEUM

Progress regarding Barnet Museum continues, but at snail's pace. The Council has been making encouraging noises about securing a future for the Museum in Wood Street and we understand that they are considering issuing a lease to the Museum but with a sliding scale of rent, up to and including full market rent. The Museum maintains the latter is unrealistic. They may also consider an Asset Transfer, as requested by the Museum, but that will need to be justified. On a more positive note, however, the Council have recently covered the cost of repairs for the leaking roof. At the AGM, it was agreed to rename the body that runs the Museum as 'Barnet Museum and Local History Society' and to appoint new trustees. They are hoping to work with Barnet College tourism students on marketing the facility to as wide an audience as possible and to develop the website to provide family history information and to sell the Museum's publications.

BARNET MARKET AND THE SPIRES

As stated above, UBS' Asset Management bought the Market site just before Christmas to add to their long leasehold over the adjoining Spires Shopping Centre, which they have been planning to redevelop over recent years.

Since taking ownership of the Market site UBS have fixed a leaking gas pipe, made the electrical supply safe, stopped customer parking on the site (which was highly dangerous) and rigged up a new lighting system. We understand they are also looking into the costs of possible resurfacing and replacement of hoardings. So far, so good and the stallholders are generally very relieved to have some proper management in place after so many years of neglect. Their main worry, in the short term, is the possibility of an increase in rates of pitch hire although this has not yet been mooted by UBS, as far as we know.

UBS have committed verbally to maintaining the market on the present site for 2 years but will not be drawn yet on future plans for the market after that. Should we be worried? Asset management is concerned with maximising the profitability of any asset for the benefit of shareholders and must consider the best potential use of the site to this end. To be fair, the purchase of the site was a surprise to UBS too and they are only now starting to look at how they can incorporate it into their Spires redevelopment plans. The encouraging thing is that they are very aware of the huge public support that the market has and I'm sure they understand the consequences of doing anything that might damage it.

As stated above, we are pushing the Council to dust off the draft Town Centre Strategy which was stopped about a year ago. This plan was being formulated by officers with the involvement of traders, residents groups, Barnet College and other local organisations and was well advanced when Barnet pulled the plug. At the time we were promised a Planning Brief for The Spires and Market site, at least. This too was begun, but abandoned before it could be consulted upon and adopted by the Council. This means that, in spite of considerable time and effort on the part of the community, there is no specific guidance for UBS to follow, only general planning principles for redevelopment in the Borough. The Council have known that UBS intend to expand The Spires for years and have had several meetings with them and their agents, Savills, to discuss their plans. This latest twist in the tale makes it even more vital that we have a say in any forthcoming proposals.

We have been campaigning for the Market to be sited more centrally in any expanded proposal for the shopping centre. We will continue to lobby both the new owners and the Council to get the best outcome for our town centre.

DOLLIS VALLEY

The consortium of Countryside Properties (contractor/developer) and L+Q (one of London's larger Housing Association) has been selected as preferred partner to redevelop the Dollis Valley estate off Mays Lane after a lengthy selection process. The redevelopment has been planned for many years and there have been several attempts at previous masterplans, but these have failed to produce a viable financial model and/or have been set back by changes to the Council Brief. This time we hope that a scheme will be put forward shortly for meaningful public consultation with a chance to have our say prior to a planning application being made.



Illustrative 3-d model of the Dollis Valley scheme

The project will involve the demolition of the late 1960s estate and we understand the project will be carried out over five phases, with the first new homes due to start on site in 2013. All phases will include affordable and housing for sale. We understand that the masterplan, by Alison Brooks Architects and HTA Architects, includes up to 616 new mixed-tenure homes in a broad range of designs and sizes and with half as traditional houses. 386 homes will be for sale with at least 230 affordable rented homes. The scheme will also include new parks and community facilities.

We have written to the developer asking for more information and await a response.

THE DIAMOND JUBILEE

The London Borough of Barnet Steering Group has planned an exciting programme of events to mark the Queen's accession to the throne in 1952 and the Coronation in 1953. The main events will be during the jubilee weekend and Bank Holiday June 2nd - 4th 2012. For the latest news see "Barnet First" or check the Website www.barnet.gov.uk/jubilee.

Meanwhile Michael Knipe is looking at how oral history can be best incorporated into the celebrations. Did you live in (the now) London Borough of Barnet at the time of the Coronation? Would you like to be interviewed about your memories of the time? If so kindly contact Michael at mjknipe@hotmail.com or via the Barnet Society.

PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT NOTES

The 31 March deadline approaches for implementation of the works funded by the Mayor of London's grant. Plans for physical improvements to the High Street were finally agreed between Barnet Council and the High Barnet Town Team at a meeting in late January and the work is planned to be carried out during February and March. About two dozen trees are to be planted to soften the approaches to the town centre. Unfortunately, the narrowness of the pavements and presence of underground services severely limits the ability to plant trees in the central part of the High Street. Space for three trees was found near Iceland until it was found that even those few were precluded by the presence of a CCTV camera monitoring several nearby banks. Nevertheless half-a-dozen trees are to be planted in the stretch of the High Street north of St Albans Road and about 12-15 in the southerly section from Barnet Church down to the tube station.

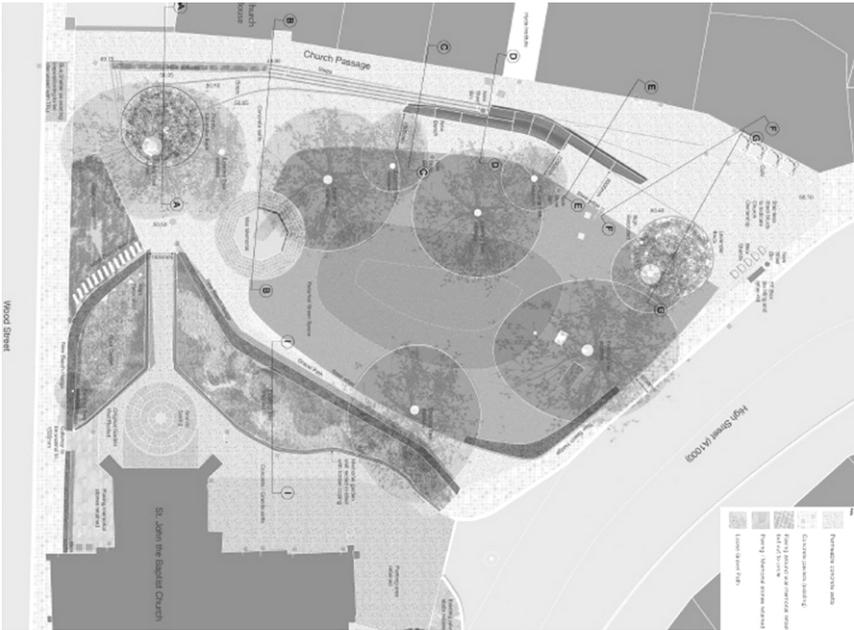
To reduce the cluttered appearance of the High Street, virtually all of the pedestrian guardrails are to be removed. It may be thought that that will be detrimental to safety but the current perception is that that is not so – when all guard rails were removed from Kensington High Street, accidents involving pedestrians materially *reduced*. Another improvement to the streetscape is to be the replacement of the motley collection of street name signs with uniform traditional-style street name plates in traditional positions - either fixed to buildings above shop fascia level or affixed to short posts at the rear of pavements. At the instigation of the LBB cabinet member for Environment & Operations, Brian Coleman, all existing litter bins are to be replaced at considerable expense with cast-iron bins in traditional style. To further 'declutter' the High Street the existing hanging basket posts, now looking in some cases rather tired, are to be removed and replaced with elegant hanging

basket brackets affixed to lamp columns at intervals along the length of the High Street. Four new benches are to be installed, with the benefit of sponsorship from The Rotary, and two existing benches refurbished. New stainless steel bicycle stands will replace the existing ones that suffer from chipped paintwork and extra stands will be installed at the edge of the churchyard garden.

Three 'civic boards' are to be erected, one on the Meadway corner to welcome people arriving by tube; one in Wood Street by the Church House bus stop; and one adjoining the bus stops behind The Spites in Stapylton Road. These are to be information/orientation board displaying a diagrammatic map identifying current destinations (Museum, Church House, Bull, Spires, Library, Hospital etc) and also historical points of interest. Each board will highlight and illustrate a few of the Town's interesting historical landmarks and/or events. It is also hoped to erect a notice board, on the wall in Church Passage, displaying (behind glass) temporary notices of local events - concerts, recitals, exhibitions), classes, clubs etc. The Town Team would control content to ensure that the notices are appropriate, of good quality presentation and current.

The largest single project being financed by the Outer London Fund grant is the re-landscaping of the churchyard garden of St John the Baptist Church to turn it into a more open and accessible town garden, closely integrated into the town centre. In our last newsletter we described the process by which the plans were evolved. The final plan, submitted for planning permission in late November is illustrated here. It involves the significant widening of the entrances to Church Passage from both the High Street and Wood Street, the removal of the holly hedges, planting of new beech hedges in some places and the creation of a long 'sculpted' bench as a major feature to replace the collection of aged benches scattered around the garden. The scheme received enthusiastic support when exhibited on The Barnet Society stall at the Christmas Fayre. But it is not all good news.

It has been made clear from the outset that an absolute condition of the grant is that all works must be completed by 31 March 2012. Despite having eight months to plan and execute the works, and despite constant pressure from The Barnet Society and the Town Team to move the project forward in a timely manner, it now seems certain that it will run out of time. This will not go down well with Boris Johnson and our local GLA member Brian Coleman, both seeking re-election to the GLA on 6 May, who launched the Outer



London Fund last summer to demonstrate their commitment to supporting Outer London town centres. As at the time of writing we do not know for sure that the GLA will agree to relax its condition and still fund the works. The likelihood is that they will do so since the political consequences of completing the project late would be as nothing compared to the political consequences of abandoning it. But the GLA should never have been forced into this invidious position. By the time you read this, the outcome should be known and we will report it on The Barnet Society website.

Judith has written elsewhere about other local planning and environment issues including proposed developments in Dollis Valley and Union Street; and Barnet Market, The Spires and the Town Centre Strategy.

In the last Barnet Society Newsletter I wrote about the proposed National Planning Policy Framework and reproduced the Society's representation letter to the DCLG. Ours was one of 14,000 responses that the government received on these controversial proposals but, through the good offices of our MP, Theresa Villiers, ours were brought to the attention of the responsible minister Greg Clark. After Judith and I met with Theresa in October and took her through our concerns, point by point, Theresa conveyed some of them in a letter to Greg Clark which he has acknowledged.

Fortunately, our concerns have been shared by the DCLG's all-party Select Committee. The committee recommended that the default answer of 'yes' to development should be removed from the NPPF and the phrase 'significantly and demonstrably' must also be removed from the presumption that all planning applications should be approved unless the adverse effects 'significantly and demonstrably' outweigh the benefits. The committee chair said "The way the framework is drafted currently gives the impression that greater emphasis should be given in planning decisions to economic growth. This undermines the equally important environmental and social elements of the planning system. As currently drafted the 'default yes' to development also carries the risk of the planning system being used to implement unsustainable development. The document omits any reference to 'brownfield development first'. We welcome the Government's openness to reinstating the familiar and well understood term 'brownfield development' in the NPPF. For similar reasons the NPPF should be revised to reflect the 'Town Centre First' policy." Amen, we say.

The government has announced its intention to publish the final version of the NPPF in March, without a round of re-consultation. We will have to wait and see how many of the horrors in this developers' charter will be watered down or removed.

DEREK EPSTEIN

PLANS FOR UNION STREET

An exhibition was held in mid-January to show plans for the proposed redevelopment of St Martha's Convent Junior School in Union Street prior to a planning application being made. The proposals are for 26 one-, two- and three-bedroomed flats for older women (Older Womens Co-Housing, or OWCH!) and include shared facilities and generous gardens. The buildings are designed to be 2 and 3 stories high with limited on-site parking (10 spaces). The site falls within the Wood Street Conservation Area. The design has been submitted to the Council for their pre-application advice and the applicants (a Housing Association) await this feedback before making their application. The main issues appear to be change of use from educational to residential and height. For more information refer to www.owch.org.uk



Above: preliminary 3-d view of the Union Street scheme from the south-west

TV.

The long-forecast digital tv switchover is about to happen for the London area; people with Sky or Freesat will see no changes, however people using Freeview will have to retune their boxes - twice!

Those using the old-style analogue (those that can just get 4 or 5 stations at the moment) including people using the New Barnet repeater will have to change to digital reception to maintain coverage.

There should be no need to change your aerial. - but if you do have problems wait until after the Crystal Palace power is increased.

Timetable:

4 April, BBC2 analogue removed,
(and some Freeview stations start from New Barnet)

18 April, all other analogue stations removed,
Crystal Palace Freeview 'power' increased 10-fold
(additional channels for New Barnet.)

Note: to get the full suite of Freeview channels you would need to receive from the main transmitter. Switchover Helpline: 0800 40 85 918.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Friday 24th February

Pennefather Hall 3 p.m.

A Question & Answer Session
with Chipping Barnet MP Theresa Villiers
chaired by Nick Jones.

Please send in your questions beforehand by email to
chairman@barnetsociety.org.uk
or post to The Barnet Society, 28 The Drive, Barnet EN5 4JQ

AGM on 21st June 2012 in the Pennefather Hall.

Also in June, a walk conducted by Owen Jones.
Details with the Annual Report.

EDITOR'S MUSING

Have you ever wondered what the
antique green box on the pavement by
the Church contains?

The other day it was open and we got a
look at the contents. It's a fusebox.

And what fuses they are, too!



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