



The Barnet Society

Campaigning for a better Barnet

NEWSLETTER

August 2012



Churchyard revitalised

CHAIR'S REPORT

As I sit down to write, the extraordinary 2012 Olympics opening ceremony is over but the Games have only just begun. By the time you read this, the glories and disappointments of medals won and lost will be over. The build-up during the last few weeks has been very exciting and with so many events and spectacles it's been impossible to keep up with it all. Seven years in preparation and over in three weeks. Whether the vast amount of investment and its 'legacy,' including the major regeneration of one of our city's most deprived areas, will make a real difference in the longer term will take some time to appraise. Out here on the edge of London, it can feel a long way away, but new additions to the skyline are visible from several vantage points in Barnet (including the top of St John the Baptist Church tower -I hope many of you will have ventured up there to take advantage of the 360 degree views over the last few weeks). Of course, the Mayor's OLF was developed, in part, to offer funding to outer London boroughs which were not benefitting directly from investment as a result of the Olympics and Crossrail. So, here in Barnet we have our own small 'legacy' with our new churchyard garden and improved and de-cluttered High Street, all of which are (finally) complete. Derek Epstein gives an overview below but, despite the many frustrations and disappointments, we are delighted to see how people have been taking advantage of the newly opened-up gardens in recent weeks and feel that, overall, the project has been a great success.

We hope the same can be said for Barnet Market very soon. We understand that planning applications have gone in for (1) improvements to the site for use as a market (two days per week) and (2) use of the site as a car park on the other days. The idea is that the new tarmac'd surface will be laid out to suit both uses with containers to store the market stalls, to provide an office for the manager and wc's for stallholders. The proposals also include new, low level railings around the site and tree planting. The Market has suffered hugely as a result of the changes forced upon it in recent years and it is hanging on by a thread. It is vital that planning consent is granted for the improvements and that these are carried out as quickly as possible. Our few remaining stallholders have put up with appalling conditions and broken promises for far too long. The time has come for action, before it's too late.

At our AGM in June, Councillor Longstaff confirmed that, after many requests, the Council have agreed to re-start the Chipping Barnet Town

Centre Strategy Board. At last! We have met with David Longstaff and the Council and the Board will be reconvened in September with a view to completing the Strategy by March 2013 (which is a very short timescale for a comprehensive document). We are reviewing the Draft Strategy documents as they need updating following the extended period of inactivity. The Council are only able to provide limited resources for the preparation of the final document, which means there is likely to be less urban design input than we should have, but at least the principles should be enshrined in the document. At a Cabinet meeting in July, the Council adopted the Planning Framework for The Spires, Barnet Market and TA Site. This document is now a 'material consideration' in the consideration of any planning applications coming forward, including the Barnet Market planning applications referred to above and the up and coming Spires applications. We presume that it will form part of the town centre strategy document in due course.

As we know, things do not stand still, awaiting the completion of strategies and frameworks. Other matters that have come up in the last few weeks include a planning application for the bowls shop adjoining Barnet Market (a 4-storey development for shops at ground floor, offices at first floor and with three flats above), a planning application for the former St Martha's Convent site in Union Street (redevelopment of the site to provide 26 flats for Older Women's Co-Housing), a new planning application for expansion of Barnet Hospital (A&E and Maternity Departments and the loss of 21 parking bays) and the news that the two hoarded sites at the Hospital (one between Wellhouse Lane and West End Lane and the other between Wellhouse Lane and Barnet Road) are to be sold, not developed as part of the hospital. And these are just the significant ones. All of the applications and potential future developments will be viewed against the recently-adopted Framework (where relevant) and the Council's Local Plan and new NPPF. With the forthcoming proposals for Dollis Valley and the potential sale of Barnet Football Club, we need to have our Town Centre Strategy in place to help guide such future development.

On a smaller scale, but highly visible, we welcome the new restaurant that has taken over from Chicken Cottage in the High Street. The treatment of the new shopfront appears much more suitable to its setting in the historic heart of the Wood Street Conservation Area than its garish predecessor. We also understand that someone has taken a lease on the defunct After Office Hours next door, so we wait to see what happens there. All we need now is to get someone to take on the 'deformed' Abasi on the other side, to

restore it with a proper and fitting shopfront and we will have a much-improved row of shops.

At our AGM in June, we agreed to make some changes to our Constitution, which are outlined below. Our guest speaker was Dr Gillian Gear, who gave us an interesting talk on Barnet Museum. It appears there is still no change to report on the future of the Museum but we are delighted it is still here and we encourage you all to visit and use it as often as possible to keep up the pressure for its retention. Another recent planning application was for the addition of a new sign for the Museum, which was granted consent and which makes it more visible.

JUDITH CLOUSTON, Chair



MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S REPORT

Thanks to all members who have renewed their subscriptions to the Society and returned the renewal documents as requested. More people are taking up the standing order option and a few are venturing into the realm of electronic payment. For those who have yet to respond to the

papers requesting payment gathering dust on the desk or hiding behind the clock, please act now; we need both your financial support and your name on our list of members for the coming year.

We are pleased to welcome Mr O. Deed, Mrs G. Clarke, Mrs P. Jarman and Mr P. Morgan who have joined us in recent weeks.

JOHN GARDINER

CHANGES TO THE BARNET SOCIETY CONSTITUTION

At the recent AGM, changes were made to the Constitution. One of these provoked debate and some concern, so for the clarification of those present and for the benefit of those not, we repeat the essence of the paper circulated at the meeting and add some further points.

There were three proposed changes, which had been amended following receipt of comments prior to the AGM:

Clause to be added:

3.3 At the discretion of the Committee, organisations based in Chipping Barnet and sharing our aims and objectives may also become a member of the Society.

Clauses to be amended:

4.3 There shall be three classes of subscription, one for individuals, one for family membership and one for organisations. Life Members, the President and Vice Presidents shall be exempt.

5.1 An Annual General Meeting shall be held in or about the month of June in each year. At least fourteen days' notice shall be given to Members.

The reasons for proposing the first two amendments were, firstly, that our membership numbers are dwindling and have been doing so over a number of years. This is not unique to The Barnet Society, but is a phenomenon which is widespread amongst civic societies and is partly due to changes in demographics and partly to a reduction in civic activity, particularly amongst younger people. We have gained around 30 new members since the beginning of the year which is very encouraging and many as a direct result of a large recruitment drive in January. However, overall numbers

are still down. Secondly, our recent initiatives in and around the town centre have meant that we are working much more closely with other local organisations. We see collaborations with such groups as very positive, especially as we share many of the same aims and objectives. We would therefore like to extend the possibility of membership to include local organisations. These can be other civic and amenity groups, businesses, charities and institutions but they should be non-political, based in Barnet and share our aims and objectives.

Widening the types of membership is not a new idea – it has been discussed (and rejected) before. Some members have expressed concern at the idea of others trying to exercise undue influence, particularly of a commercial or financial nature, over the Society. Although such concern is understandable, and we consider such action to be unlikely, we have nonetheless consulted with our friends in The Finchley Society and The Mill Hill Preservation Society, both of whom have corporate membership and who have reassured us that their experience is positive.

The Mill Hill Society has had corporate membership for a number of years and they say it has never represented a problem. They reserve the right not to allow businesses to join if they consider there may be a problem. They currently have 5 full corporate members. The Finchley Society has only recently invited corporate membership and they have had 35 in their first year. They previously had concerns about the possibility of being ‘taken over’ by businesses but they are pleased to report this has not been the case and they feel that the arrangement is working well.

Following debate at the AGM, we agreed that we would report each new member from local organisations in our Newsletters and at future AGM’s. Each application from such organisations will be reviewed by the Committee prior to their becoming members and on an annual basis prior to renewal. The latter means we are able to prevent any organisation that we consider to be unsuitable (for whatever reason) from further membership.

The last change to Clause 5.1 was purely a 'housekeeping' one as the Constitution stated that the AGM shall be in May and we almost always hold it in June.

JUDITH CLOUSTON

PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT NOTES

So, the works funded by the Major's Outer London Fund have been completed - at last! The benches are installed, newly-planted dead trees replaced by healthy ones, hanging baskets installed on stylish lamp-post brackets and, last but not least, the churchyard garden re-landscaping completed for all to enjoy during the long-awaited summer. As a result of mistakes in the paving layout, the long bench has ended up being somewhat eccentrically installed, with the seats being far too high in places, and we are discussing with the Council whether anything can be done about it. Nevertheless, the bench and the garden are being much used and enjoyed. Proof enough of this has been the overflowing litter bins – about which we are pressing the Council to take action in terms of an improved emptying regime.



The next big change to the town centre will be the start of the phased redevelopment and upgrading of The Spires shopping centre. Planning consent has been granted for opening up of the High Street entrance by removal of the columns; the old WH Smith unit to be amalgamated with the large first floor space previously used as a gym, to create a 1,100 sq.m.

retail unit; and windows at first floor level amalgamated/enlarged to present a somewhat more modern and eye-catching face towards the High Street - although the two eponymous spires will remain. The works are expected to commence in January or February next year. Meantime a temporary fashion-type retailer is to be sought to occupy the ground floor unit (replacing the current “free books” store).

Sooner than this, a major re-vamp of the carpark is to be undertaken: the top level is to be entirely resurfaced, designated disabled and “kiddy” bays provided and the whole carpark given a face-lift – redecoration, new signage etc. We are told that Phase 1 of these works will commence soon with Phase 2 starting in November and that, altogether, some £600,000 is to be spent.

Next, the north side of the first square (where ELC and the vacated Clinton Cards are located) is planned to be redeveloped to create a large store to be occupied by a major fashion multiple. We are told that terms have been agreed for the letting but the identity of the retailer has not yet been revealed. Planning consent needs to be obtained and there will be a public consultation about the proposals shortly. It is hoped that the new store will open for trade by Easter 2014.

As part of this phased redevelopment, the malls will be upgraded with a consistent, high quality, floor surface – probably York stone.

The proposed redevelopment of the south side, incorporating the Fern Room on Salisbury Road, has been shelved for the time being since the conflicting demands of servicing, retail layout and townscape impact were found to present a challenge that will call for detailed and careful consideration.

Judith writes about the Spires/Market planning framework, proposals for Barnet Market and the Town Centre Strategy in her chair’s report

The potential exists for the Council to secure significant funding from Transport for London for further improvements to the town centre’s public realm, following the example of successful major upgrades that have taken place in other town centres such as Harrow and Hillingdon. In our town centre, there is scope to improve the High Street by pavement widening. Pavement build-outs in the stretches of road sterilised by zig-zags would create a more pleasant environment for pedestrians without any adverse effect on traffic or parking. It would also provide the opportunity for tree-planting which has, to date, been precluded by the density of services

beneath the pavements. Another ‘trick’ employed elsewhere is to incorporate loading bays into widened (and strengthened) pavements, so that the space can be enjoyed by pedestrians when not used by delivery vehicles. We also have exciting ideas about improving the immediate environment of the Station and TfL funding could cover that too.

We had been hoping that the Council would be more enthusiastic about such ideas following the replacement of the former cabinet member for Environment who opposed anything that might interfere with road space. This has so far not been the case but we will continue to apply pressure, such as through the Town Centre Strategy work. In the short term, though, the new lead member, Dean Cohen, has initiated changes which will hopefully have a more direct and immediate impact on the economic health of the town centre, such as the proposal to install credit card machines in car parks and possible differential pricing across the Borough which could lead to lower charges in Chipping Barnet to help fight the competition from nearby shopping centres in Hertfordshire where parking is cheap or free.

Progress at Dollis Valley has taken the form of an Environmental Impact Assessment “Scoping Report”, examining matters such as air quality, traffic, noise, landscaping, waste, water etc. An initial planning application is expected to be submitted shortly and we have arranged to meet the developers’ design team to see the latest drawings to enable us to offer our comments.

Achieving big improvements to the town centre is a slow and laborious process but occasionally we get some nice little surprises. The replacement for the ugly Chicken Cottage, facing Barnet Church and Barnet College, is a Pizza restaurant with a refined and elegant shopfront – by far the best in the immediate environment. If only other retailers would follow suit, we could have a High Street that would lift our spirits.

DEREK EPSTEIN

LUCAS REVISITED – A DIAMOND JUBILEE YEAR PROJECT

Members who attended the A G M on June 21st of this year will know that the Barnet Society Treasurer in the years following the Second World War was a Mr E. H. Lucas. Described by Peter Rossiter in ‘The Diamond Collection’ booklet of May 2005 as ‘*The most enduring Treasurer by far*’,

Mr Lucas also displayed a lot of endurance in his country walking. He was asked by the Society to produce a report on the state of the local footpaths in the aftermath of the War. Following on from this report, Mr Lucas wrote a guide to some recreational walks in the area which he called 'Rambles Round Barnet'. In a moment of real serendipity about ten years ago, Doreen Willcocks chanced upon a long-forgotten copy of this booklet in the archives of the Barnet Museum. Doreen typed each walk's notes onto single sheets of A4 then Peter Willcocks scanned these as well as the original booklet, transferred them onto a CD and gave me a copy on a nice shiny disc.

Older members will recall just how long it took to count all the 240 pennies that made up one pound, the 12 that made up one shilling and the 20 shillings that, therefore, totalled one pound. Hopefully, Mr Lucas did not have to deal with too many farthings, half pennies, three penny bits or sixpences but may well have juggled with some florins and half crowns.

The foregoing paragraph is an attempt to explain the brevity of many of the guiding notes that Mr Lucas produced. Now, in the Diamond Jubilee Year of our Queen, the Society has decided to produce an up to date version of 'Rambles Round Barnet'. David Ely and I have set out to walk along each of the eight routes described by Mr Lucas in 1947. To follow some of these exactly sixty five years later would involve illegal, probably fatal, direct crossings of the M 25 and only slightly less risky transits of the A1 dual carriageway from Galley Lane. Our present Treasurer would surely not wish to lose two subscriptions in one year so we have found alternative, safer methods of negotiating these hazards.

Some sections in the guiding notes from Mr Lucas involved up to three miles of steady walking along country roads. Today, these once peaceful lanes are often busy, noisy and, in places, dangerous roads with little or no protection for the Rambler. We are finding safer, more peaceful roads or footpaths. Maybe the busy Mr Lucas possessed a Kodak Brownie Junior collapsible camera, or similar, but definitely not a pocket sized digital camera such as those David and I carry with us on our walks. We hope to produce several pleasant shots of the local countryside to accompany our guide notes. Terence Atkins has generously undertaken to dig out some of his charming postcards showing these areas in earlier years. It would be wonderful if any members could give us more details of the life of Mr Lucas. A photograph of the man himself would make two ageing rambles

totally happy for the rest of the Jubilee celebrations and for our remaining twilight years.

We will do our best to produce a booklet of local walks that will honour our lovely Queen and respect the memory of Mr E. H. Lucas.

OWEN JONES.

HIGH-SPEED BROADBAND IN BARNET

Parts of High Barnet face prolonged delay in getting high-speed broadband, despite being earmarked as an early area to get the service. BT initially offered residents in the 'EN5' area the chance to sign up for its new Infinity service in December 2010, but that has been constantly delayed, even though the exchange itself is ready. While the likes of Enfield and Edmonton can now get broadband more than 20 times the average speed available in High Barnet, BT does not now know when all EN5 will be ready. According to its roll-out map, some High Barnet residents are unlikely to get it until at least 2014, although some already can and others may find it available in September 2012.

Somewhere along the line a great opportunity has been missed. High-speed broadband has huge social, domestic and business benefits and the council and BT need to get their act together to make up for lost time. We are grateful to Cllr David Longstaff who is working with council officials to find out what can be done. Let's hope High Barnet is not left behind on this.

EAMONN RAFFERTY

Our Chair writes: One of the possible reasons for the delay may be the planning process. BT have made a series of applications in the area for their new cabinets (which are the size of small wardrobes). When these fall within our two Conservation Areas (Wood Street and Monken Hadley) the applications have often been turned down because of the 'negative visual impact' on the Conservation Area. On the Conservation Area Advisory Committee (which includes representatives of The Barnet Society) it has been suggested that the distribution cabinets could be buried underground. BT may be looking into that possibility or, more probably, have discounted it as too expensive. We know that applications for cabinets in other areas are hitting similar problems, and in one London borough, which is almost entirely covered by Conservation areas, BT are being

refused every application. There needs to be a solution, and quickly, but not to the detriment of the visual amenity of the town – we’ve just spent a lot of public money de-cluttering our High Street and equipment from one of the large cabinets that used to grace Church Passage has been successfully buried beneath the new paving. So we know it’s possible.



BUTCHERS HOOK

It has been a while since I introduced you to a few of our High Street retailers so I thought it about time to continue the series. Here is the story of John Bye and ‘Butchers Hook’.

John Bye’s father was a butcher and an inspiration to young John. At the tender age of thirteen John joined the meat trade, working as a Saturday boy for Matthews Butchers in Enfield. At that time Matthews had about two hundred shops. Leaving school at sixteen, John went to Smithfield College for six months to learn the technical side of butchery whilst also remaining in the employ of Matthews. They could not fail to appreciate what an enterprising young man he was and at seventeen sent him to their own training college.

John remained working for Matthews until he was twenty one years of age. He then left to work for an ex-Matthews employee who opened a butchers shop in Milton Keynes, and it was here in Milton Keynes that John met his first wife with whom he had two children, a son, and a daughter. In fact his lovely daughter was working behind the counter whilst John was regaling mw with his story.

Meanwhile John's Father, who was the manager of Matthews in Union Street Barnet, began to open his own shops. His first was in Bruce Grove and he soon had two more, one in Waltham Abbey and the other in Tottenham.

John ran the Tottenham branch for his father until he opened his own shop 'Butchers Hook', here in Barnet last December and since then his business has grown from strength to strength. Overcoming cancer to then find the energy to take on a new venture in the deepest of recessions is not everybody's idea of fun, but John is clearly both enterprising and courageous. He has established a regular clientele that includes several local celebrities, such as Bruce Byron who appeared regularly in 'The Bill'. 'Butchers Hook' sells a great range of meats and there are plans to increase the range. In the next few weeks John hopes to offer BBQ tasters for his customers to sample such as sausages, steaks and chicken wings.

Keeping up with the twenty first century means having web presence and 'Butchers Hook' has its own Facebook account, and a Twitter account that already has 200 followers. You will also find recipes on the web site, www.butchershook.org. Most charitably, Emergency Service employees receive a 10% discount every Thursday.

John's free time is mostly spent with his family. He travels daily to Barnet from Colchester where he hopes to open his second shop. For his Barnet shop he is currently seeking experienced butchers with qualifications and is also willing to train an apprentice. Butchers Hook currently has local girl, Nicole Bradford from QE Girls' School, helping out and John cannot praise Nicole enough.

And for you all, on production of the Barnet Society Newsletter or a printed version of the article from the Barnet Society Website you will be offered a 10% discount.

And now for something completely different....

FLAIRLINE

You must all have seen John Bottoms, Terry or Mike wandering along the High Street at some time or other. They are joint partners in Flairline, one of the recipients of our shop-front facelift project (with thanks to the Mayor's Outer London Fund). The modern signage and elegant grey livery reflect the choices that the business offers.

Originally located where Sainsburys Local is today, Flairline, then owned by Ron Dear and his partner Bruce, established the business as a furniture showroom that has now evolved into the business you see today supplying both local homes and those further afield with exclusively designed kitchens bedrooms and bathrooms.

John says that times are tough but they have excellent promotions available worth up to 30% on some brands. Their free bespoke design service is available for you all without obligation in their warm and friendly showroom.

I asked them for a little insight into the fashion of the moment for kitchens, bedrooms and bathrooms. So folks, if it's a new bathroom you are after, then out with the bath and in with the 'wet room'. A new bedroom is, of course, now designed using rough sawn oak (as if we didn't know) so, for you folks with a mahogany bedroom, it's time for a change. And as for kitchens, the choice is endless, so do go to Flairline and take a peek. They look forward to welcoming you and also online at www.flairlinefurniture.co.uk

GAIL LASER

A FRESH VISION FOR A NEGLECTED SITE

A year ago we reported on plans to restore the fabric of, and provide services for older members of the community in, the former Red Cross centre next to Christ Church in St Albans Road. Members of Christ Church, with significant practical and financial support from the wider community, raised the £330,000 needed to purchase the building.

As a result, in late March of this year, the building became the property of the John Trotter Trust, a registered charity whose Trustees are all members of Christ Church. The Trust is named after the local Victorian

benefactor who made available the land on which a primary school was built in 1844. The Trustees' vision remains the same, namely to provide relevant and much-needed facilities for older members of the community in an historic building which has been a feature of the Barnet landscape for almost 150 years.

In support of this initiative the Church has appointed a Seniors Pastor within the last few months. Christ Church already runs a range of activities for this age group, including an annual week-long holiday club at the end of August for those most in need of a break but who are unable to leave their homes. Purchasing the building is '... the end of the beginning ...' of a long journey, according to David Parry who chairs the John Trotter Trust. Upwards of £1m is still required to renovate a building requiring significant internal repairs along with planned reconfiguration to equip the building to enable it to provide appropriate services for older members of the community.

Further information on the scheme can be obtained from David Parry at davidwparry@sky.com or on the website www.opendoorappeal.co.uk

JOHN GARDINER

WEBSITE OF THE MONTH

<http://countdown.tfl.gov.uk> is a surprisingly useful site. You go to it and put in a postcode or street or bus route number and select the bus-stop you want (you can enlarge the map) and you can then see how long it is to your next bus. Then you save it to your favourites. It isn't foolproof – it can invent buses or lose them for no apparent reason, but it means you usually can know whether you can just catch it. 'Refresh' (F5) is a good idea – a short auto-refresh is also available.

You can also do this by text from a mobile phone. Text the bus-stop number to 87287 and it will text the next buses back, but this can cost money (standard network rate plus 12p.) Might be worth it though!

PETER WILLCOCKS

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

THURSDAY 20th SEPTEMBER 2012 at 8 p.m. at

**Christchurch, St Albans Road
“Syria – A Personal View”**

An illustrated talk by Dr. Jenny Remfry: ‘I have been to Syria twice and I am very distressed about the situation in this ancient and fascinating land. I will talk about Damascus, Palmyra and Krak des Chevaliers, and also about the Christian communities in Syria. I will include a little about the work being done for donkeys and horses in the rural areas by SPANA - the Society for the Protection of Animals Abroad. Finally - the likely outcomes from the present violence.’

THURSDAY 18th OCTOBER 2012 at 10.00 a.m.

A walk in Shenley

A walk of about 4½ to 5 miles in the countryside around Shenley, through fields and lanes, with a high point overlooking the whole of the Shenley area.

We will be starting from the White Horse Pub, on the corner of London Road (Well End Road) and Green Street at the southern end of Shenley village. For those who want to stay for lunch, food is available in the White Horse.

If you need a lift, or can offer one, then please contact Penny Dye on 020 8441 6075

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