



TREES AND OPEN SPACES

After 20 years of active membership, Sally Lewis left the Committee during the year, as did Deborah Calland and Peter Falk. They will be much missed but all are continuing their involvement with Bigwood and its Action Days. Lynda Cook joined the Committee early in the year, subsequently taking on the role of Secretary and we are actively seeking more members.

As in previous years, we continued to monitor the Suburb to identify problems to do with trees, grass verges, hedges and benches, with individual members of the committee covering the various areas. Our aim is to visit all roads paying particular attention to gaps in the original planting of street trees. For Barnet's spring 2015 planting, the Residents Association funded the planting of an extra 59 trees to fill old gaps in the Suburb roads. For the spring 2016 planting we will be matching Barnet's spend on replacing missing trees and are in the process of working with Barnet to finalise the list of trees to be planted; however the combined amount is, once more, not quite enough to fill all the gaps.

Our work with the Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust in their project to survey and create a database of significant trees, other than street trees, in the Suburb is drawing to a close with the surveying completed. The most important function of the survey has been to highlight those trees which make a significant contribution to their surroundings and recommend the most important of them to be covered by a TPO (Tree Protection Order). This highlighting will play an important role in our being able to fend off insurance company requests for their removal, as demonstrated by Barnet's refusal to permit the magnificent ancient oak behind 12 Asmunds Hill to be felled where the Chairman of the RA and the Trust Manager spoke in person against the application.

We continue to play an active part in the management both of Hampstead Heath, with a representative on the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee, and of Kenwood, as a member of English Heritage's Kenwood Landscape Forum.

The Bigwood Action Days also continued during the year with three Saturday morning sessions in the spring completing the work planned by Barnet's Tree Officer for the 2014/15 season, and three in the autumn making a good start on the 2015/16 season's work. Grants from the Forestry Commission to Barnet have funded new interpretation boards and surveys of birds, bats, fungi and flora. Of these the Bird Survey identified 28 species of birds making a population of 149 to 175 pairs breeding in the wood – a high density of breeding birds for an urban site. Two of the breeding species, Common Cuckoo and Song Thrush are listed as globally threatened species whose UK breeding populations have halved, or worse, over the past 25 years, and another four (Stock Dove, Eurasian Green Woodpecker, Mistle Thrush and Dunnock) are listed as species declining less severely. Our Action Days aim to improve the woodland structure by coppicing hazel and removing some of the ground ivy and bramble to create a number of small glades amongst the mature trees, whilst maintaining enough variety for the birds, bats, fungi and other plants to thrive. Come and join us (email peter.falk@dsl.pipex.com for details), we are planning to extend the work into Little Wood with its amazing amount of wild flowers which would benefit from clearing much of the ground ivy and bramble.

As a small group, the Committee likes to act as an enabler to help and encourage specific action groups to undertake various projects in the Suburb along the lines of the Bigwood Working Group, and has helped a small group of individuals take responsibility for the planting of 4 rose beds in Meadow Gate.

During the year the RA has helped to fund the Northway Gardens Organisation which has replanted and is now maintaining the flower beds in Northway Gardens with a grant of £2,394, and has paid £8,750 (with up to a further £1,250 promised) to the HGS Trust to part finance the Central Square Residents Association's plans for replanting and managing the flower beds in Central Square. With contributions from Barnet Council and the HGS Trust, the total spend in Central Square will be up to £40,000.

TONY GHILCHIK, Chairman (ratrees@hgs.org.uk)



EVENTS

The big crowds who flocked to Central Square to celebrate the New Year 2015 by watching the firework display once again testified to its popularity. "I do accept that fireworks are not everybody's cup of tea," writes Hella Schrader, an active member of the Events Committee; and she goes on to say that they "come with New Years and yes, they are loud."

Some pet owners, fearful for the wellbeing of their dogs and cats, would like to ban fireworks altogether. Whilst sympathising with their concerns, we feel that they should not find it too difficult to provide adequate shelter for their animals in the safety and relative quiet of their homes for a very few minutes after midnight. The vast majority of resident attendees just love to watch the magical New Year display and their clear message to the RA is to maintain this tradition.

Immediately before the fireworks, St Jude's Church played host at a convivial party organised by the Events Committee. Both the party and the fireworks mark important landmarks in bringing together the Suburb community. We send our thanks to St Jude's for their generosity.

The RA AGM took place on 30 March in The Henrietta Barnett School Hall, where we estimate the attendance to have been in the region of 120/130. The Events Committee organises this occasion, including the serving of refreshments, on an annual basis. Our appreciation goes to the school for permitting the use of the school hall for this event.

A fortnight before the general election, a lively and informative hustings, masterfully chaired by the Reverend Alan Walker, packed the Free Church on 21 April. All five prospective parliamentary candidates discoursed on a wide range of topics, ranging from Mediterranean boat people to the No 13 bus.

The annual Michael Rowley Memorial, at the Meeting House, featured Alan Walker himself as the speaker, giving a comprehensive and enjoyable talk about Walter Starmer's life and work, in particular the murals in St Jude's Church.

The big summer event on Central Square was the Fun Day Picnic on 28 June. Described as "an afternoon of fun and cakes and donkeys", the occasion suffered from an unwelcome initial downpour. Fortunately, a partly sunny day ensued, allowing the crowds of adults and children to picnic on the grass or at the reserved tables.

Face painters, donkey rides, Punch & Judy and Fizzie Lizzie, the children's entertainer, vied with each other in popularity. A magician from France, Fun Fair rides, cookery demonstrations and live music provided by 'Sounds of the Suburb' ensured that there was something for everyone.

On 20 September, about 40 of the Suburb's little people enjoyed their special RA Toddler Party at Fellowship House. The fun included dancing and singing with Eddie of Eeny Meeny Music, face painting, colouring pictures and listening to stories in the "Stories Corner". As for those scrumptious, mouth-watering cakes...

Fellowship House was also the venue for a New Residents Party, held on 15 November. David B Lewis, RA Chairman, in welcoming the 36 attendees, invited the new residents to join the Association and participate in its activities. RA Council representatives were on hand to answer questions about the Suburb and the RA's role.

DAVID LITTAUR, Chairman (raevents@hgs.org.uk)



2015 COMMITTEE REPORTS



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Following a public meeting in May 2015, the Residents Association launched a campaign against noise in the Suburb, in particular noise caused by petrol driven gardening equipment. A Noise Abatement Working Group was formed and has devised a scheme of red and yellow cards to enable neighbours to make complaints about noise (anonymously if they wish). There followed much publicity with reports in the Daily and Sunday Telegraph, Daily Mail, The Times, Sunday Times, BBC Radio 4 Today, London TV News and local newspapers, radio stations and web sites. Our next step is to draft a code of practice and persuade the HGS Trust and Barnet Borough to stop using blowers. To obtain a yellow card, RA members should contact ranoise@hgs.org.uk

Recent traffic proposals from Barnet include a one way system around the Brooklands Schools together with a large 20 mph zone with the aim of improved road safety but seemed likely to speed up traffic. The Association was not consulted on the original scheme which it found out about by chance. We held a public meeting in December 2015 which filled the enlarged room at Fellowship House with some 120 residents affected by the scheme. The meeting was highly critical of the proposals and passed a resolution criticising the plans with no one voting against. You can read more in the Roads & Traffic Committee report.

Our third public meeting this year was on the subject of Crime Prevention on the Suburb. Although we live in a low crime area, crime has increased recently and it was suggested that the Suburb Neighbourhood Watch might be revived. If anyone is interested in setting up a Watch in their own area, please contact me.

The Conservation & Amenities Committee has launched a revived campaign to stem the flood of paving-over of front gardens. Unfortunately we have insufficient support from the HGS Trust on this issue.

An important achievement this year is a plan for re-creating the gardens in Central Square which have been long neglected. Spearheaded by local residents, the Association has made a significant grant to this project and to another project in Northway Gardens, see the Trees & Open Spaces Committee report.

Thanks are also due to members of our other committees: the Events Committee particularly for organising two popular annual events, the Summer Picnic and the New Year's Eve Fireworks party both open to all; the Membership Committee which has an important but unglamorous remit; the Publications Committee which produces Suburb News and the Suburb Directory; together with the Association's representatives on other organisations and those who update our web pages, pick up litter, repair memorial benches or organise our notice boards.

All these volunteers do an immense amount of work for the Association and the Suburb and deserve our thanks. If you would like to volunteer please contact me with your interest at rachair@hgs.org.uk

DAVID B LEWIS (rachair@hgs.org.uk)



CONSERVATION AND AMENITIES (CONSAM)

Consam continues to keep up the pressure on all aspects of conservation in the Suburb, including opposing the significant problem of reduction of vegetation as a result of the paving over of gardens. The Committee's work was actioned by means of direct contact with the HGS Trust and the London Borough of Barnet, including via the Property & Plans Committee of the Trust and the Conservation Area Advisory Committee (which advises Barnet planners). The chairmanship of the committee has passed through several hands over the past year, before I took over the role at the end of October 2015; I am grateful to John Sells, the late Geoffrey Spyer and David B. Lewis, together with all others who have served on Consam.

PETER McCLUSKIE, Chairman (raconsam@hgs.org.uk)

- Several planning applications objected to
- HGS Trust alerted to infringements
- New basement guidance scrutinised
- Paving/hard-standing survey carried out plus ongoing liaison with HGS Trust
- A number of public realm issues, including signage and parking posts taken up with LBB
- Smart meter antennae on St Jude's Church successfully resisted
- A number applications for mobile phone transmitters successfully resisted
- Regular liaison meetings with the HGS Trust re-established

Come and discuss Suburb issues with your neighbours at the Residents Association AGM
Monday 21 March 2016, 8pm – Henrietta Barnett School Hall, Central Square
All residents welcome • Refreshments



MEMBERSHIP

During 2015 efforts were made to further reduce the operational cost of the membership committee. Increasingly email is used as a means to contact residents reducing the cost for postal mailing. In June 2015 around 650 membership renewal envelopes were hand-delivered via the usual volunteers and helpers further reducing the need for postal communication.

A New Residents Party was organised in November to which 148 new households were invited. The party was well attended and new residents had an opportunity to talk to RA Council members about the work of the RA and benefits of joining. While there is still a concern over declining membership numbers efforts are being made to benefit from existing advertising channels such as those of the Events committee to promote RA membership. Current membership numbers are: 1,609 Members, 50 Associate Members, 17 Life Members with Total membership: at 1,676.

HELLA SCHRADER, Chairman (ramembership@hgs.org.uk)



PUBLICATIONS

The Suburb Directory saw a complete redesign for the 2015 edition, which was overseen by Judith Samson with the help of our designers, 1st Impression. The result is a more attractive and more easily readable publication. It was for the second year running delivered with the spring issue of Suburb News. Charles Gale continues to find the local shops and businesses willing to participate in the Discount Scheme, and now also looks after the advertising.

Suburb News continues to be published quarterly and aims to provide all who live in the Suburb with local news of interest, profiles of residents and details of future events in the Suburb. We would like to thank all those who contribute to the paper and are very grateful for their efforts, which help make it a community publication. It is distributed free of charge to about 5,000 households throughout the Suburb by a team of over one hundred volunteers co-ordinated by Lorna Page.

Copies of both publications are available on line on the website created and maintained by Steve Morris at www.hgs.org.uk,

Introduced in December 2011 Suburb eNews, which appears when required, continues to promote activities and events in the Suburb. All RA members will receive this if they have provided us with their e-mail address. Please let us know if you are not receiving it and would like to do so by sending an e-mail to ramembership@hgs.org.uk.

The advertising in our three publications continues to cover the cost of production and in 2015 produced a small surplus for the RA. Suburb News needs an Advertising Manager to deal with all aspects from finding to retaining advertisers and the committee would be very pleased to hear from anyone interested in volunteering for this role.

TERRY BROOKS, Chairman (rapublications@hgs.org.uk)



ROADS AND TRAFFIC

The Roads & Traffic Committee had a typically busy 2015. During the early part of the year many residents were concerned about proposed alterations to the no. 13 bus route, which would have seen it withdrawn from Golders Green. Passengers wishing to travel to the West End would have been left with only a single alternative service, which was slower and often overcrowded. The R&T Committee joined other local organisations in lobbying hard for the retention of the no. 13, which happily was achieved.

The Committee also made representations on other important local matters. We opposed Barnet Council's proposed use of CCTV cameras to enforce banned turn and box junction restrictions on borough roads. We did this not because of any lack of concern about motorists breaking rules but because where local authorities have awarded themselves such rights elsewhere in London it has often led to unnecessary restrictions whose purpose seems to be to trap the unwary rather than better traffic control. It is too soon to know how Barnet will use its CCTV powers but a repeat this year of the practice of sending traffic wardens to enforce school yellow lines on bank holidays was not a good augury.

We commented also on Transport for London's proposed new cycle lane scheme at Henly's Corner noting that good separation between cyclists and vehicles will be essential at this extremely busy intersection. As construction of the lanes is likely to involve some work and possible overnight closures to parts of the junction we have suggested TfL take the opportunity to upgrade signage on the gantries because some residents tell us they find the present arrangements confusing.

Other developments noted by R&T during 2015 have included Barnet's installation of parking sensors in Temple Fortune (which are designed to relay information about pay & display bay occupancy), the timing of pedestrian crossing and traffic signal intervals at the Market Place, Falloden Way and Temple Fortune and the conversion of double red lines to double yellow at the Market Place junctions.

The Committee will always try to help residents overturn unjustified parking tickets. We have been involved successfully in many such cases again this year and we continue to monitor the effects of local parking restrictions and the way they are policed. In March we reported a TfL vehicle, which had illegally parked in one of that organisation's disabled bays in the Market Place and a Barnet Council lorry, which had been left in a similarly prohibited manner with its wheels on the kerb in Willfield Way. We are conscious too that displacement from the expanded controlled parking zones has again put pressure on residents living far from the source of the problems, which the CPZs were ostensibly created to resolve.

Using the RA's speed measuring equipment the R&T Committee undertook speed checks during the year in many prominent Suburb roads. We have found speed limits to be generally well observed although it is interesting to note that actual driving speeds were slightly higher in the 20mph zones compared with those we recorded in the 30mph roads. A full list of results may be found on the RA website at www.hgs.org.uk/ra/roadsandtraffic/index.html. Residents who would like to have their roads speed checked are invited to contact the Committee.

2015 ended anxiously for residents of more than a dozen roads in the Brooklands area as they awaited the result of a major traffic scheme consultation. Animated by the School Travel Plan the proposals seek the establishment of a large 20mph zone and a zebra crossing directly outside houses close to Brookland School. Around 120 residents attended a public meeting in December to explain to our ward councillors and school governors why these proposals were so objectionable to the school's neighbours. We must hope that 2016 will not bring forth any similarly intrusive proposals elsewhere in the Suburb.

GARY SHAW, Chairman (ratraffic@hgs.org.uk)