

# **Sopwell Residents Association**

## **Annual report 2011/12**

### **Committee structure and changes**

We have lost yet another committee member this year, Peter Segers, who was very active on the committee. Chris Pudsey, who has been on the committee since the beginning has decided to be a sleeping committee member. She will still help out from time to time on specific projects. We will miss them greatly. However, we have been successful in encouraging other residents to get involved so we welcome Willem Hofland. We have a wonderful team of newsletter deliverers. I cannot thank them enough for their support. However, as we say at every public meeting: we still need more of you to keep this Association alive.

The following people have put themselves forward for re-election: Ananda Armstrong-King, Jack Hill, Willem Hofland, Mark James, Sandy Norman, Chris Pudsey, Rob Sharman, Adelle Stapleton, Rick Taylor and Peter Wares.

The following wish to be re-elected as officers: Rick Taylor as Chair, Rob Sharman as Treasurer. We still do not have a Secretary following Peter Segers' resignation last year so most of the tasks have fallen to me. I am grateful to those committee members who helped with the minutes. Because of the lack of committee members we have decided to reduce the number of meetings a year. So with this AGM, there will be only five meetings. A lot of the business is done by email anyway.

### **Activities and events**

**Larks in the Parks 2011.** This took place last June and was very successful. The SRA held two stalls: a plant stall where the proceeds went to Mandaid; and a Sopwell history stall where we showed photos and encouraged residents to come forward with memories.

**Ramsbury Road Big lunch and open gardens** Ramsbury Road held its second annual Big Lunch on June 5th, once again tied in with fund-raising for the Odyssey Cinema. A communal picnic lunch was held in the road, after which James Hannaway declared the road open for an Open Gardens event. In spite of the first rainy day for a couple of months a good time was had by all (luckily anyone interested in gardens was happy to have a bit of rain!) They have now sponsored one seat and are on our way to a second.

**Autumn walk** Our annual history walk took place last September. Cllr Eileen Harris held the walk. We also had the city's archaeologist, Simon West, on hand to explain what lay beneath the Nunnery ruins.

**Litter pick.** We had our annual litter pick in March. Thank you to all those helped pick 20 bags or so of litter and recyclables.

**Willow weaving and scrape.** On the same day as the litter pick we held a willow weaving event in the Nunnery Green Space. A professional willow weaver was employed to show us how to construct a willow tunnel. The money to pay for the event came from the Community Spaces Sustainability Grant which we obtained for the boardwalk and path. It should look wonderful when established and be an area attractive to children. The tunnel is intended to be part of another path across to the boardwalk. If we can obtain funding, we would like to extend the tunnel. That is if residents feel it is a worthwhile project. The council had a scrape dug for us ( a large hole) which we raked over and sowed wildflower and wetlands seeds. The hole should fill with water in wet seasons and be a boggy area.

**Friends of Sopwell Green Spaces.** The SRA is part of this group which was originally the Nunnery Open Space Management Group. It has been extended to include all Sopwell's green spaces. It means, in practice, that events to improve the green spaces are covered by the council's insurance. Events have to be approved by the council of course. Three of the committee have had leadership training and Sandy Norman has had some first aid training.

**Sopwell Project.** The committee formed a book sub-group which worked on the feasibility of publishing the book now entitled Sopwell: a history and collection of memories. Failure to attract a commercial publisher meant the only option was to get it printed ourselves. Several quotes were obtained. We chose a friendly printer who was willing to defer payment until we had raised the necessary funds. We decided to print 2000 copies as that was more cost effective in the long run. A business plan was produced and potential sponsors were approached to help pay for the printing costs. It was estimated that with sponsorship and sales we could break even by December 2012.

**Mayor's Pride Awards.** The SRA nominated itself for a Mayor's Pride Award in the category Community Project of the Year for the boardwalk and path and we were delighted to have been shortlisted. We didn't win but we have a runner up certificate to be proud of.

**Conferences and meetings** Peter Wares attended the Annual Community conference. Peter is also our representative on the City

Forum. Sandy Norman was invited to speak on the Sopwell history project at the St Albans Local History Conference last October. Ananda Armstrong-King attended a meeting of residents' groups. Rick Taylor attended meetings with the police and neighbourhood watch.

**Boardwalk grant sustainability.** The SRA applied for and was successful in obtaining more funding to buy equipment and to hold events in the Nunnery open space. We have so far spent money on litter picking equipment and the willow weaving event. A willow sculpture event is planned for June with St Peter's school pupils and there will be a bat walk in September. We also have money for a moth identification evening but this requires laying out a white sheet over a light source the night before the event so we would need a willing resident living near the ruins to let us use their garden.

**Planning** We still keep a watchful eye on planning applications which affect the ward..

**Roads and pavements** Peter Wares produced a paper on the problems for cyclists since the new cycle routes were introduced. He will present it at the City Forum.

**Neighbourhood Watch** The SRA continues to work with the police and the Neighbourhood Watch. There was a meeting in January between the police and Sopwell and Verulam wards where issues included: problems with youngsters from Marlborough hanging around Praetorian Court; and mini-bike nuisance in Cottonmill Lane. Obstructive parking and speeding remains a problem in the major Sopwell roads.

**Communications** We have produced two newsletters in the past year and held two open residents' meetings. The website is updated regularly thanks to Peter Segers.

Sandy Norman  
May 2012