



# NEWSLETTER

Sopwell Residents  
Association

Issue 9  
Autumn 2006

## NEXT RESIDENTS OPEN MEETING 17<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER !

Please come along to our next residents' meeting which will be held in St Julian's Church Hall at 7.30pm on Tuesday 17th October 2006. This will be the 3rd meeting this year. The committee works hard on your behalf to put these meetings together so please spare a couple of hours to support us. It is a good opportunity to join with the community and make new friends. Most importantly, you get to have a say and influence the things that are happening in your community.

As well as having our local councillors along to answer your questions about all things Sopwell, we will have a speaker from the council, Jeff Minty, responsible for council estate inspections. Please come along and support him. We are also hoping that our local community police representatives will attend as well.

The meeting after this one will be in the Spring next year, so this is your last chance to air your views and concerns with others this year.

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## YOU ARE THE ASSOCIATION

When we were formed in June 2003, it was decided that all residents of the Sopwell ward of St Albans are automatically members of the Residents Association. There is no membership form to fill in or fees to pay. Since then, there has been some confusion by certain residents who say that they are not members. That is not true. If you have received this newsletter through your door, you are a member. As residents, you are entitled to attend all the open meetings and the Annual General meeting, and to receive a newsletter. The next open meeting is on 17th October (as detailed in this newsletter).

The committee works on your behalf on a voluntary basis. We meet every 5-6 weeks to discuss current concerns. We may have 15 voting members on the committee. We currently have 14 and are looking for one more person to fill the vacancy. If you are willing to work with us and have the time to spare, and are on email (most of our communication is done this way), please let the Secretary know via the postal address or the website. The work is not onerous as we try to spread the load between us. You never know, such a commitment might prove useful later on your CV!

## NEWS FROM OUR TENANT REPRESENTATIVE

Our tenant representative has been busy on your behalf. In July, she attended the St Albans District Health, Housing and Social Care Partnership forum where she learnt that there is to be a complete review of retirement accommodation within the district as the elderly population is increasing. The council will also be looking at the needs of gypsies and travellers; purchasing private housing and prioritising specialist housing schemes for the physically disabled.

The council is reviewing its garage sites to see if the garages are being used. At present there are 715 empty garages (23% of the total stock) and many are broken into and some are not used for the proper purpose. Jeff Minty has been appointed to organise inspections for the SADC. Jeff will speak about his work at our next open meeting on 17th October.

## History of Sopwell - Part 2 by Councillor Eileen Harris

The ruins, known as the Sopwell Nunnery, are in fact the ruins of Sir Richard Lee's unfinished manor house. As one of Henry VIII's military architects, he was given the land including the nunnery on the dissolution and had built a new house over the foundations. He then began to build a grander mansion but this was never completed. Sir Richard died in 1575. Later, parts of the house were dismantled and used to restore Sir Nicholas Ba-

con's manor house in Gorhambury. Some fine plaster medallions of Roman emperors were removed and these can now be seen at Salisbury Hall at Shenley. Sir Richard Lee was buried in St Peter's churchyard and his helmet, which accompanied his coffin, can be seen in the Hatfield Road museum.

Legend says that two local women lived as hermits beside the river and in 1141, the then Abbot of St Albans, Geoffrey de Gorham was so impressed by their piety, he established a nunnery there. The nunnery was called St Mary's of Sopwell which in time became Sopwell Priory. Originally there were 13 nuns but by the dissolution in 1537 there were only five nuns.

Much of our knowledge of the history of the area comes from the writings of Matthew Paris, a St Albans monk who lived from 1200 – 1259. He was the most reputable historian of his time. More about his life can be read at the British Library site <http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/themes/mapsandviews/mattparis/map.html>.

Abbot Geoffrey de Gorham - the name Gorham comes from Gorham Castle in France - was abbot for 36 years and he founded many cells. These were small religious houses that remained under the protection of the abbey, not only at Sopwell but also the St Julian's leper hospital, Cell Barnes and St Mary of the Prae (Praewood).

Where did other names of street in Sopwell come from? Michael de Mentmore was Abbott from 1336 to 49. Sir Ralph Sadleir married Ann the daughter of Richard Lee and shared in the break up of the Abbey lands. We also have Abbots Avenue, Nunnery Close, Nuns Lane, Monks Close, Martyr Close, Priory Walk.

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## Residents' AGM

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Sopwell Residents' Association held its third Annual General Meeting at The Marlborough Club on 12th July 2006. This was well attended by over 40 residents along with local councillors and two guest speakers. Following the formal business, which included the re-election of the committee and the appointment of Helly Sawyer as Vice-Chair, our guest speakers gave their entertaining and interesting presentations.

Firstly Allen Challender, the Council's Litter Enforcement Officer, spoke on the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005. His department receives over 250 calls a day from residents to do with refuse collection, kerbside recycling, street cleaning and abandoned cars.

Secondly Maria Cutler, the Abbey Line Community Rail Press Officer, gave an update on the "Abbey Flyer". The Abbey Line has been selected to become one of the UK's first official "Community Railways". The Community Rail Development Strategy is looking to increase passenger volume and income, manage down the cost of running the line, without compromising safety or service whilst involving the local community (i.e. Sopwell) in the development of its railway. More information on this can be viewed at [www.abbeyline.org.uk](http://www.abbeyline.org.uk).

A discussion followed on various topics including safer routes to schools, highway and footpath issues, travellers camping on our green space.

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## SOPWELL NUNNERY OPEN SPACE

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**Benches:** Readers may remember that our grant application for work on the Nunnery site included two benches – and will now be wondering where they are! Unfortunately, because the site is a Scheduled Ancient Monument, even the small amount of disturbance necessary to install benches needs the consent of English Heritage. This is likely to be forthcoming, but an application process has to be gone through, and we understand this may take a little while.

**Asbestos:** The asbestos found on part of the site has now been removed, and the safety fence taken down. The trees and scrub on this area cover some more ruins, which English Heritage would eventually like to protect by felling one or two of the larger trees (their roots can damage walls etc.) and adding some topsoil and prickly native plants such as bramble and dog-rose.

**Wildflowers:** Wildflower 'plugs' (pot-grown plants which can be 'plugged' into holes in established grass, rather than scattering seed) have recently been planted in part of the spring and summer meadow areas near the river, using some of the money left to the association by Anne Kalozci. It is hoped that these will spread themselves, providing a bit of colour and helping to attract butterflies and other insects. See if you can spot them next year!

**Green Flag Award:** Building on their success with Clarence Park, the district council would like to apply for a Green Flag Award for the Priory and adjoining allotment sites in combination. SRA would only have a small amount of involvement in the actual work for this, but the support of local people is an important part of the application.

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## LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

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During the summer, the initial public consultation for the council's new 'Local Development Framework' (LDF) took place. The LDF will replace the old District Plan, and covers a wide range of topics related to how the district should be planned and run. The consultation consisted of discussion of issues facing the district, and questions – some specific and some more open-ended – about how local people think they should be tackled.

The SRA committee felt it was important that we should take part in this process, and has responded by sending a submission to the council covering topics which have been raised by Sopwell residents, in correspondence or at public meetings. Other issues which we did not feel qualified to comment on will no doubt have been covered by other interest groups in the district. For details of our response please see our website [www.sopwell.org.uk](http://www.sopwell.org.uk).

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## **Rail freight terminal on Radlett Aerodrome**

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We understand that the application won't be considered by the planning committee until the end of the month, so if you are concerned about this proposal and haven't yet written to the council, it is probably still worth doing so.

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## **THE COST OF LITTER**

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Earlier this year the SRA helped in the annual litter pick. Across St Albans 24 groups were involved in the litter pick and 4 ½ tonnes of litter was collected. The SRA together with Cllrs Janet Smith and Eileen Harris picked around the retail park on Griffiths Way and the Sopwell Priory site. While we were picking litter a passer-by made the remark "they shouldn't be doing it, it's the council's job." Indeed it is the council's job. Under the Environment Act, the Council are the Duty Body with responsibility for clearing the streets of St Albans of litter. In fact they spend about £1 million a year doing it and we foot the bill through our council tax.

The bad news is the litter is getting worse particularly with fast food packaging, a 12% increase across England. Try walking anywhere in Sopwell for more than 50 metres without seeing packaging from junk food. So if you are happy to spend this sort of money for the council to pick up the rubbish of people too lazy or ignorant to take it home or put it in a bin then all well and good. Most people would rather see such money spent on schools, libraries and roads. Not all litter comes from dropping the packaging from fast food as the email sent to us from a resident in Leyland Avenue graphically describes:

"At last, the bank holiday season is over. No more half torn, brown refuse sacks, revealing the lifestyles of the residents of Sopwell, are to be seen. No more, the assortment of discarded waste, spilling out onto our green verges, whilst they sit, silently polluting our district, waiting for collection, 2 days before the refuse collectors said that they would call...

This is a plea from one proud resident, to another – your rubbish is LITTER and therefore if you put it out the night before it is to be collected, it becomes a feast for foxes, cats and rats. Put it out two days before, the problem is doubled and the mess will end up all along your road and in your drive-ways. Please try and put it out the morning of collection, it would make Sopwell a much cleaner place to live.

And as for next Bank Holiday season bags? Brown? Purple? Orange? White? Whatever the colour at Christmas, please remember one thing... read the bag. It will tell you the exact date of when to leave out your rubbish. Clever, eh?"

Remember the Litter Hot Line is 0845 125 8000 and the email address is [a.cleanerdistrict@stalbans.gov.uk](mailto:a.cleanerdistrict@stalbans.gov.uk) and it is for litter in its widest sense, litter, graffiti, chewing gum, fly posting and fly tipping, etc..

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## **BULB PLANTING**

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It's that time of year again already! Over the past two years, committee members have planted bulbs at selected sites in the ward, and we hope to do the same again this year. We don't have a date yet, but if you would be interested in joining the 'planting party', or have suggestions about places that would benefit from a bit of spring colour, do let us know and someone will get back to you once we have more details.

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## **STREET DANCING CLASSES! From Monday 25th September at Sopwell Youth Centre**

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'Kick It' street dance classes start on Monday 25th September at 6.30pm at the Sopwell Youth Centre. The Youth Centre, situated on the corner of Cottonmill Lane and Leyland Avenue will also be open during half-term week and will include a variety of arts and sport activities for young people. For further information about any activities at the Sopwell Youth Centre please call: 01727 827667, text: 07960 742148, or e-mail: [sa.arts.development@leisureconnection.co.uk](mailto:sa.arts.development@leisureconnection.co.uk)

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## **NEWSLETTER DELIVERERS WANTED**

We are always looking for residents to help deliver your newsletter. Perhaps you could deliver down your street. If you would like to help in the future, please contact Joanne Hodson on 07976 521455.

### **I. Problems - if you want to report:**

an abandoned vehicle	819391
litter, flytipping, graffiti	0845 125 8000 or a.cleanerdistrict@stalbans.gov.uk
problems with parks & open spaces	819366
problems with refuse collection	819285
mice, wasp nests, etc.	819440
non-working street lighting	01438 737320
abandoned Sainsburys trolleys	847707
abandoned Homebase trolleys	857113
noisy neighbours	819406/out of hours 811155
litter to be cleared by McDonalds	864676
a damaged bus shelter	0800 590889
potholes, broken pavements*, etc.	01438 737320
a water or sewerage leak	08459 200800
<i>*Fault reporting online (anything from flytipping to potholes) go to <a href="http://www.hertsdirect.org/">www.hertsdirect.org/</a> and click on <b>highway fault reporting</b></i>	

### **2. Contacts - if you want to contact:**

Herts County Council	01992 555555 or <a href="http://www.hertsdirect.org/">www.hertsdirect.org/</a>
St Albans and District Council	866100 or <a href="http://www.hertsdirect.org">www.hertsdirect.org</a> (24-hour hotline for the above) 01438 737320 or 01923 471320
<b>a Sopwell councillor:</b>	
Janet Smith	763907 janet.smith1@ntlworld.com
Eileen Harris	831611 harris@stalbans555.fsnet.co.uk
David Poor	833670 David.Poor@ntlworld.com
<b>The Community Police Officer and Support Officer:</b>	
Sharon Foster	796042 Sharon.FOSTER@Herts.pnn.police.uk
Jill Brown	796042 jill.brown@herts.pnn.police.uk
<b>a Sopwell Church:</b>	
St Stephen's, Watling Street, St Albans (C of E)	862598
St Julian's, Abbots Avenue (C of E)	837475
St Bartholomew's, Vesta Avenue (RC)	850066

### **3. Recreation - if you want:**

to rent an allotment	819329
to contact the Youth Services	753116
to join St Albans Sub-Aqua Club	01438 832315
to book the Marlborough Club	866100 ask for Sue Vale

#### **Contact the Sopwell Residents Association**

Sopwell Residents Association, 23 Tavistock Avenue, St. Albans, Herts, AL1 2NQ

Email: [info@sopwell.org.uk](mailto:info@sopwell.org.uk), Internet: [www.sopwell.org.uk](http://www.sopwell.org.uk)

If you wish to advertise and reach 3000 homes, then please contact us via email: [advertise@sopwell.org.uk](mailto:advertise@sopwell.org.uk)