



Sopwell Residents Association

NEWSLETTER

for all residents of Sopwell

Issue 14
Spring 09

Welcome

Welcome to the Spring edition of the SRA newsletter. It has been several months since our last edition so we have lots to tell you.

The main thing is that unless we get some more support from you, the residents, to run the SRA, this may be the very last newsletter you read. We desperately need more blood! Do please respond to the call. Similarly the Rainbows and Brownies need someone to keep them going too.

It's not easy being green! I recently fell off my bike and broke my leg near the hip and had to have a full hip replacement. I was using my bike to go to Westminster Lodge to use the gym and the pool as I thought it would save on petrol and help the environment. Well it worked for a while but I have decided to give up the bike as being too dangerous for me. Several good things came out of being hospitalised, incapacitated and housebound though. I found out how friendly and helpful people are. It has definitely restored my faith in human nature. To all my friends, neighbours and fellow SRA committee members I wish to send thanks through this column.

Annual General Meeting- 12th May

The date for the AGM this year is Tuesday 12th May. It will start at the slightly later time of 8pm and be held in the Marlborough Pavilion, Old Oak, Cottonmill Lane. I know we have to compete with television soaps and sporting events but it would be nice to see as many of you as possible. Please do try to attend as this may be your last AGM if we fail to attract some more help and support from you. We are hoping to attract a decent speaker or two. The meeting should last no longer than an hour or so followed by refreshments. This is also your opportunity to meet the committee face to face and for you to tell us what you want us to do.

Larks in the Parks - 28th June

Do come along to this annual event which will take place on Sunday 28th June from 12 noon until 5pm. The theme for this year will be the environment concentrating on the reduction of everyone's carbon foot print. It is early days yet to announce the full programme but some of the attractions which are being investigated are: a disc jockey, a graffiti workshop, music from local bands, a bike powered (or Scalextric powered) smoothie maker. We hope also to be having an artist working on a robot made of recycled materials hopefully with help from the children. There will be other activities which will involve the children in thinking about the environment. Added to this there will be refreshments and maybe Indian food but you are encouraged to bring your own picnic as well.

It promises to be another great occasion. Let's hope the weather stays fine.

Sopwell gets plugged into the National Cycle network

To mark the completion of Sustrans 6/61, a short celebratory family ride along part of it is being planned for late Spring. To find out more about the 12,000 miles of Network routes and where 6/61 goes to, go to www.Sopwell.org.uk.

Mobile Police Unit

The mobile police unit will be at Sainsbury's car park on 30th April from 9am – 2.30pm.

The SRA Quiz report.

So where were you all? Several of your committee spent a long time devising questions, making cakes and organising a fun social event for you to attend last September and only three people apart from the committee members turned up. We thought something like a quiz would encourage more residents to turn up but we were wrong. Back to the drawing board to find a formula that appeals to more of you but it would help to have some input..... If you would like to make suggestions, please send them via the web site.

Those of us who did attend had a good time and the cakes were delicious!

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If you live in Sopwell, you are automatically a member of Sopwell Residents Association. There is no charge to join and events are free.

Contact details
43 Leyland Avenue
St Albans AL1 2BD

info@sopwell.org.uk
www.sopwell.org.uk

Please help keep the SRA going!

When we started up six years ago, there were many keen members willing to support the organisation and we had a full complement of committee members and newsletter deliverers who stayed with us for a few years. Over the years, we have persuaded a few more helpful people on the way to join us when many of the original crew had to resign for various reasons. However now, we have several vacancies on the committee and the army of newsletter deliverers is shrinking rapidly. This means that those left have had to undertake more and more of the work which is unfair. We have reached a crisis point which we must address now as otherwise soon there will be no-one left as everyone will get fed up and leave! ***Now is the time for you to come forward to help us if you still believe that we are relevant to you and you want to help Sopwell.*** At committee meetings, we discuss items relevant to Sopwell in line with our constitution, e.g. improving the environment and creating a better sense of community.

As you are no doubt aware, we have asked for help before but this has not often been forthcoming. We want to know why. We know that most of you are busy and have no time but there must be a few of you who could help us.

If you don't come forward we may have no option but to wind up! I think that most of you will agree that this would be great pity given all that we have achieved and all that we want to achieve.

So, if you still think we are relevant and want us to continue then please contact us. Leave a message on info@sopwell.org.uk or phone Sandy on 865061 or Rebecca on 811711 and we will be delighted to hear from you.

Sopwell history project

I was very interested to read about the Committee's idea of collecting information about the history and environment of Sopwell. The history part is of particular interest to me as I have studied the history of the Priory Park area for several years and have produced a booklet about it. For those who don't know this term, until quite recently it was the name of the estate which comprises Approach Road, Cornwall Road, Ramsbury Road and the old part of Riverside Road. I think it would be great to support the SRA project and to compile a history of the whole area. History doesn't have to be Roman (though of course there *were* Romans in Sopwell!). I have suggested to your committee some areas where we may write our own history but of course we need your input.

Have you ever asked yourself who lived in your house before you? And before them? When was your house built and was it part of a development? When was the road put in? What was there before the road? Do you have the deeds to your house?

Perhaps you have a neighbour who grew up in Sopwell. Maybe you could pop in and ask them to tell you what it used to be like living in this area years ago. Don't forget your pencil and paper or better still if you can record them on tape – with their permission of course!. Make a note of their contact details and the date(s) you talk to them.

Do you know or your neighbours know when the Abbey Line was built and how it affected St Albans? When was the Gas Works built? Does anyone remember Mercer's Chronometers? Some of the answers are fairly well known, but they haven't been looked at particularly in relation to the Sopwell area. There are many easily available sources for much of it. For example, St Albans Library has past Electoral Rolls and old street directories, old maps, the Herts Advertiser on microfilm back to 1855 when it was founded, as well as more general histories of the city, some of which have information relevant to this area as well as the city centre. Both the City library and the Library of the Arc & Arc (The St Albans Architectural and Archaeological Society) have many other more specialized pieces of information. That's just for starters!

The current plan is that eventually we will put it all on the Internet. The committee will plan how to collate the information. I'm sure the information we collect will be of interest not only to all residents of Sopwell, but also to many others in St Albans.

Anne Wares

The History of Priory Park, £10, is available from Anne Wares 35 Ramsbury Rd

Greener Sopwell - trees and bulbs



Some of us went on a walk around Sopwell last Summer where we identified areas where the Council could maybe

plant trees. This is all part of the plan to help make Sopwell greener and a more pleasant area to live in. Subsequently, we sent an email to the Council department outlining our suggestions. If you have a new tree planted in your street, it may be in an area which we suggested. If there are any new trees outside your house, please look after them and water them in dry spells in the first year and report any vandalism – if you like you can leave a mes-

sage on the SRA website and we will pass it on. If you feel that a tree could be planted outside your house or nearby, let the Council know. Each October/November they get together to plan where to plant them. Contact the Trees and Woodlands Section on 819372 or email: treewardens@stalbans.gov.uk

By now you should have spotted even more daffodils in Sopwell especially in the green space opposite McDonald's. Last

November we planted another 160 or so, near the railway crossing. Didn't they
and it was us who planted the crocuses look wonderful!

Our web site

Some of you may have seen that we have been making extensive changes to the SRA web site www.sopwell.ork.uk. We are trying to keep it up to date and make it more interesting and relevant. Hopefully it will also help those new to Sopwell find out more about our area. It is by no means perfect so bear with us while we try to get it right. Any comments welcomed.

The ongoing project on the history and environment of Sopwell – please see Anne Wares article above for details – has had some input already, mainly on the origins of Sopwell plus an explanation of some of the more interesting Sopwell street names. Please have a look and if you want to make suggestions and comments, please do.

Calling all railway enthusiasts living in Sopwell

The St Albans branch of the Locomotive Club of Great Britain meets on the second Thursday of each month from September to May in the Chiswell Green United Reform Church Hall, Watford Road St Albans AL2 3HG. They meet at 7.30pm.

Please contact their branch secretary, John Green on 01727 861839 for more details.

Brownie and Rainbow leaders wanted

After many years as a Brownie and Rainbow leader at St. Julian's Church, Abbots Avenue, Cynthia Douglass says that it is urgent that she finds some people to take over these units, as she is moving to Norfolk.

Rainbows are a pre Brownie group made up of girls from 5 until 7 years of age. At present, they meet on a Thursday evening from 4:45 until 5:45pm in St. Julian's church hall. There is a desperate need for someone willing to train to be the leader or two or three people to share the leadership.

Brownies are girls aged from 7 until 10 years and they also meet on Thursday from 6pm until 7:30pm.

Cynthia has one person willing to train to lead the group, but she could do with another leader to help out. Volunteers are needed to avoid having to close these Units which both have long waiting lists. If you are interested in helping, please contact Cynthia on 01727 864373 or email: douglassbc@waitrose.com.

Sainsbury's proposed changes

You will probably have read in the local press about Sainsbury's plans to increase the space of the store and their car park. Plans have been submitted to the council with regard to building development and car park expansion. Residents in the locality of Sainsbury's, may be especially concerned. It is under consultation until 17th May and a decision is due to be made on or before 1st June. We would be interested to hear your views on the matter. To find out more about the plans, please visit the Council website: <http://www.stalbans.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/planning/planning-applications/planning-applications-search.aspx>. The application reference is: 5/2009/0189. Also you may like to log on to our website to let us know what you think. If you would like to join local residents in petitioning against this application please contact via e-mail (rebecca_prebble@hotmail.com).

Leyland Avenue street party

Residents on Leyland Avenue arranged a street party on 31st January. Not wanting to be out in the cold, the party was held just around the corner at the sub-aqua club on Cotton-mill Lane.

Invitations to the party were delivered to every house in the road and about 40 – 50 residents of all ages came along to enjoy the party.

The neighbours decorated the club with fairy lights, fresh flowers and table clothes. The bar was open and serving drinks, and everyone attending brought along food to share. There was a live band (Leyland Avenue residents of course),

which performed a range of songs and contributed to the lively atmosphere. In fact, this sparked interest from a number of other musically-minded residents, and jamming sessions are now a regular event in Leyland Avenue.

Leyland Avenue residents have held street parties on several occasions before, although not for a couple of years, so it was great to do it again and have so many neighbours join in.

There was a lot to talk about, from how the area has changed over the years and how many times someone had moved house in the same street, to who has lived on the road for the longest time and who is the youngest resident.

It is all too easy not to have time or opportunity to chat to our wider neighbours so this was the perfect opportunity to

welcome new faces to the street and catch up with neighbours we hadn't bumped into for a while. The party was a resounding success and there is already talk about a summer party.

Rebecca Prebble

If any other Sopwell street has organised or is thinking of organising a party one in the future, please let us know.

Useful Contacts for Sopwell Residents

Councillor Eileen Harris: 831611 or eileenharris555@btinternet.com

Councillor David Poor: 833670 or David.Poor@btinternet.com

Councillor Roger Axworthy: 812681 rla@notmhs.fsnet.co.uk

Litter fly-tipping, graffiti: 0845 1258000 or a.cleanerdistrict@stalbans.gov.uk

Faulty road or pavement surface: 01438 737320 or www.hertsdirect.org/highwayfaults

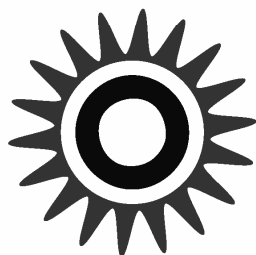
Solar water heating can
reduce your hot water
heating bills by up to 70%

- Reduce your Carbon footprint.
- Latest super-efficient technology.
- Heats water even on cloudy days.
- Works with your existing boiler.
- Locally based in St Albans.
- Complete installations from £2850.
- Ask us about available grants.

For more details or to arrange a visit to a working system

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or visit us online **www.smallsolar.co.uk**



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