



NEWSLETTER

For all residents of Sopwell

Sopwell Residents
Association

Issue 21

Autumn 2012

From your editor

Sandy Norman has very kindly given the job of editor of the newsletter to me, a long term resident of Sopwell, and I will try my best to continue the excellent work she has produced over the many past issues. Many things have happened in Sopwell since our last newsletter. The publication of our book, Sopwell: a history and collection of memories; Larks in the Parks; Willow Weaving at St. Peter's; numerous Jubilee celebrations and a Council election! Keep an eye on the forthcoming events in Sopwell this Autumn, come along if you can and don't forget English Heritage weekend, the second weekend in September.

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Barry Bateman

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If you live in Sopwell, you are automatically a member of SRA.

There is no charge to join and events are free.

Contact Details

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www.sopwell.org.uk

Jubilee celebrations

There were a host of Jubilee celebrations held in Sopwell in June and many residents made enormous efforts to organise and run street parties, which were enjoyed by many. The weather was kind to some and awful for others but whatever the conditions, Sopwell residents know how to have a good time. Here are a few examples of the fun experienced by our residents.

Liz Coulling wrote about the party in St Julians Road, which included residents from Prospect Road, The Brambles, Ashwood Mews and Ramryge Court. . "It was a great success with competitions for young and old including cheese rolling, best dressed house and royal cake. The weather stayed fine all afternoon and everyone enjoyed chatting to old neighbours and making new friends. The tug of war caused a rumpus when the rope snapped and all the children went flying though luckily no serious injuries!"

Diane Bailey also commented on this party and the many other activities that were included on the day. "We had a 3 leg race, face painting, kids fancy dress, crown making and, chalk pavement



art competitions. Play doh, play house etc for the younger ones, table tennis and excellent refreshments. All leftover money was donated to Grove House!"

Janet Edwards, wrote about a great day in Boleyn Drive, despite the weather!

"The Boleyn Drive Jubilee Street Party was a great success despite raining almost all day. We managed to get our marquees/gazebos, tables and decorations out before the rain really started and most people dressed in red, white and blue, although by the time we donned our raincoats, that was hard to see. The food we provided for ourselves and to share was plentiful and tasty and we had a scrumptious BBQ.

We managed to have some sports for the kids finishing in the rain with jewel/apple bobbing which despite the rain coming down ever heavier, could not stop the children trying to get at the apples! Plus crafts for the children and face painting for all. The ladies produced magnificent cakes for the cake competition, the music was great and many were outside beside a brazier until midnight when they continued indoors! Of course it was sunny next day as was everyone's spirit."

Larks in the Parks 24th June 2012

There was a slight prospect of rain on the day but the combined energy of the contributors and the attendees, kept the weather at bay, largely and what a day it was. We were kept royally entertained throughout the day by a host of different acts; including Dynamite Blues, The Mandeville Choir, Rae Kelly and Band, The Sounding Line Band and the Nicky Calder Big band. Also entertaining the crowd were Dan the Hat, juggler, the SkipHop Workshop and Whoops Hoop Performance and Workshop.

There were stalls galore on the field offering a wonderful array of delights. There was a craft stall, a fantastic raffle stall, a pocket money stall as well as Usborne Books and Dagenais Designs. If that wasn't enough, we had weaving, welly throwing and a free bouncy castle, and occasionally the adults let the children have a go! Also, in the actual pavilion there were numerous activities, which went down extremely well and last but not least we were treated to a delicious array of tea and cakes from the refreshment tent and excellent hot food from Kashu. The event was well attended by over three hundred people on the day and it was a tremendous success and congratulations to all the organisers and contributors.

Reflections on Sopwell and Verulam Children's Centre

I hadn't appreciated what an incredibly valuable resource our local Children's Centre is, until I began using some of its services shortly after my son Harry was born. For me, as a first time mother, the Centre was a lifesaver. Harry and I made friends, accessed information and health services, attended well-organised baby groups and received advice and support from other mums when we needed it. My confidence and enjoyment of parenthood undoubtedly grew as a result.

The Children's Centre aims to provide pre-school children with the best start in life, bringing together a range of services in one place. It also offers parenting sessions, first aid courses, literacy and numeracy classes for adults and it provides access to advice on a wide range of issues affecting families (such as local childcare options, healthy eating, managing money and helping parents find work).

Sopwell and Verulam Children's Centre's Manager, Pippa West, and the team have created a safe, warm and welcoming environment and Harry and I love attending courses and groups there. Some play sessions have run through the summer, many outside to encourage healthy activity. Not surprisingly, the Centre received a really positive Ofsted report recently.

But I don't take it for granted. Children's Centres have to balance their two aims - to offer universal services to all families and to reach out to families in greatest need. The values behind this seem to be ever-changing and the measures of effectiveness getting tougher and tougher, both to record and to achieve. It seems increasingly difficult for Children's Centres to justify the need for their services in the community (and presumably avoid closure or amalgamation with other local Centres). Sopwell and Verulam Children's Centre received a 10% budget cut last year and it now has to rely on donations and small fees for some services. It must be sustainable to survive.

To help do this, it seems to me that parents just like me need to take a real interest in the services offered and engage with the Centre, through formal parent consultations and regular feedback that can be analysed as a means of demonstrating which services are most effective - and to help the Centre identify priorities going forward. By supporting our Children's Centre in this way we will, I hope, help secure it for future parents in the community.

Rebecca Prebble

For more information: Sopwell and Verulam Children's Centre, Mandeville Drive, St Albans AL1 2LE Tel: 01727 774090
<http://www.hertschildrenscentres.org.uk/sopwellverulam/index.html>

Forthcoming Events:

Evening Bat Walk 7th September 2012

There is an evening Bat Walk coming up on the 7th Sept from 7.15pm starting at the Nunnery Open space. Spaces are limited to 25 participants because of the number of bat detectors available. If you would like to attend, phone 01462 459395 or check the website: www.hertsdirect.org/walksandmore and look for Evening Bat Walk in St. Albans.

Mediation Hertfordshire Conflict Resolution Workshop 10th September 2012

Marlborough Pavilion, Old Oak Cottonmill Lane 7.30-9.30pm

Have you got problems with your neighbours? Do you want to know the best way to deal with them? Do come along to this really useful training session on how to deal with difficult situations, neighbour disputes or other community issues. The workshop is free to Sopwell residents. The leader promises that you will gain:

- An insight into some of the local issues which mediation has helped to resolve.
- An opportunity to talk about issues within your own community.

- An understanding of how mediation works.
- Learning some basic skills to deal with conflict and anger.
- Practising skills in a fun environment.
- Skills to use for any future difficulties.

History Walk 16th September from 2.30pm

This year we plan to use the book on the History of Sopwell to illustrate one of the many interesting walks around Sopwell: Mandeville to New Barnes. We will be meeting at the garages at the top of Mandeville Drive at 2.30pm.

Oxfam Herts Hike - Saturday 29th September 2012

The annual Herts Hike is a sponsored walk in aid of Oxfam that starts and finishes at the beautiful Heartwood Forest in Sandridge, near St Albans. All routes are circular and way marked. Different lengths of walk are available from a mini hike through to 18 miles. Walkers are asked to pay a donation on the day or get sponsored. This event is run entirely by volunteers and has up to 300 walkers each year taking part, with all proceeds going to Oxfam. A great event for the whole family! For more information and to enrol (no fee incurred!) visit www.oxfamstalbans.org or tel: 01727 869775

Sopwell history project

Our book was successfully launched on 21st May at the beautiful Sopwell House Hotel. Sopwell House kindly sponsored the launch which was a really enjoyable occasion. About 60 people came, many of them had contributed their memories. It was a very apt place for the launch as not only is it in the heart of Sopwell, it is one of our historic buildings (it was formerly New Barnes House) and it is of course featured in the book.

The launch event was opened by Councillor Eileen Harris, now the Mayor of St Albans and then Anne Main MP formally launched the book. The author, Sandy Norman, said a few words and thanked everyone who contributed to the book as well as those companies and organisations who sponsored us: Herts County Council, the Ver Valley Society, Pearce Recycling, Edgar Pearce, Verulam Golf Club, Blacks of Sopwell and Sopwell House. Guests then had the opportunity to buy a signed copy of the book.

Following the launch, the *Review* gave us some publicity as did the *Herts Advertiser* but unfortunately this came too late for the book signing in Waterstones. The book has been selling well and you all seem to be enjoying it. If you have enjoyed it, please tell your friends. Anne Main our local MP has been very enthusiastic about the book and very kindly wrote a glowing review,

"This is a charming and mesmerising book with thought provoking pictures and a fascinating trip down memory lane. This is a must read for anyone interested in the history of St Albans"

Here are just some of the other many comments received:

"Reading it brought back a lot of memories";

"It's a wonderful publication"

"It's fantastic, well done!"

"This is so good for Sopwell"

If you haven't bought your copy yet, please support us. It is still available directly from us, also at Waterstones bookshop, the Hatfield Road Museum and the Tourist Information Centre. You can also pick one up at Blacks of Sopwell. We are continuing to give a discount to Sopwell residents using the voucher below:

Yes please! I wish to purchase ... copies of *Sopwell: a history and collection of memories* at the reduced price £14.00. I enclose a cheque for £..... made payable to **Sopwell Residents Association**.

I understand that the books will be signed by Sandy Norman and delivered to me by courier.

Name:

Address*:

.....

Tel. No. or email (in case of query):.....

Please send or take this voucher with payment to one of the following addresses:

Sopwell history book, 23 Tavistock Avenue, St Albans AL1 2NQ.

Sopwell history book, 16 Ashdales, St Albans AL1 2RA

Sopwell history book, 35 Ramsbury Road, St Albans AL1

Sopwell history book, 84 Cottonmill Lane, St Albans AL1 2EP

Sopwell history book, 62 de Tany Court St Albans AL1 ITX

*Offer applies to addresses in Sopwell ward only

Willow Event with St Peter's School, Sopwell Nunnery

On the 18th June, Sopwell Nunnery was alive with the sound of children from St Peter's School getting creative in the great outdoors! They were learning the art of willow weaving, supported by volunteers from Sopwell Residents Association and Officers from the District Council.



Over 90 pupils from St Peter's Primary School attended the workshops, making the short but picturesque journey from the school gates, past the entrance to the boardwalk and into Sopwell Nunnery Green Space, where they were greeted with a tutorial on crafting their own pieces. Using as little as four pieces of willow, the children made beautiful fish, adding texture and colour through different types of willow and also had the opportunity to add their own touches to a larger butterfly piece, also made from willow.

SADC Community Project Officer, Ricky Manning, said, "I was very impressed, not only with the children's artistic talents, but with the enthusiasm and maturity with which they approached the activity. Both the art form and the venue, really lend themselves to creative learning and the day can be considered a huge success!"

The versatile, natural materials had been freshly harvested by Willow Weaver and workshop leader

for the day, Hazel Godfrey. She grows the willow sustainably on her own land in North Herts and, in addition to running educational workshops such as these, takes commissions for large 3D willow art.

In addition to the willow event with the School, The Sopwell Residents Association, local residents and Countryside Management Service volunteers wove a 15 metre living willow in tunnel this spring. The events and materials were funded by a sustainability grant received from Community Spaces.

Hazel said, "I was really pleased with the willow event. The team were brilliant and my special thanks to the volunteers. The last group took a lovely finished butterfly back to school and Mrs Norris tells me the children's fish will be displayed before they take them home."

Mayor Making Ceremony

You will all know by now that one of the Sopwell councillors, Eileen Harris, was elected Mayor of St Albans. On behalf of Sopwell residents, I was privileged to have been invited to the ceremony, where, Aislinn Lee, the previous mayor, handed over her mayoral robes and regalia to Eileen. It was held in the council chamber where all the councillors and aldermen were present for the occasion. Eileen and her deputy had to be formally elected before they could take over their roles. There were many speeches as well as the swearing in ceremony. I was delighted to hear that there was a mention of *Sopwell: a history and collection of memories* in the speech by Eileen's proposer! We wish Eileen all the best for her very important year.

Sandy Norman

Useful Contacts for Sopwell Residents

Councillor Eileen Harris: 831611: eileenharris555@btinternet.com

Councillor David Poor: 833670: david.poor@btinternet.com

Councillor Janet Smith: 763907: cllr.j.smith@stalbans.gov.uk

County Councillor Martin Frearson: 761878: mfrearson@ntlworld.com

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

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

Next issue

The next issue will be a special Christmas one which will come out in the winter of 2012. Then there will be the usual Spring and Autumn editions for 2013.

If you have any items for inclusion or you wish to advertise, please go to the website and leave a message. Advertisement charges: £50 for half a page and £25 for a quarter page.