

# SOPWELL RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

# Community News

Winter 2021



## Dear resident,

I hope this finds you well, and keeping safe, and warm in these chilly months. I'm looking forward to our exciting new community and cycling centre opening in the spring, we will soon have somewhere to meet up for a cuppa, join an activity, meet old friends and new. For now, I'd like to wish all residents a joyful time over the festive season!

### Janet Charles

Chair of Sopwell Residents Association email [sra@sopwell.org.uk](mailto:sra@sopwell.org.uk)

## Sopwell Residents Association (SRA)

If you live in Sopwell, you are automatically a member of SRA. We'd love new people to join the SRA committee - or help us as a volunteer to do stuff like help distribute the newsletter on your street, help raise funds, lead some litter picks, and more! Email us [sra@sopwell.org.uk](mailto:sra@sopwell.org.uk) or see the website <https://sopwell.org.uk/>

### Sopwell Residents -stay in touch!

Our Facebook group is thriving with over 800 members! Can you help us get it to 1,000?

Stay informed. Join us now! Search Facebook groups for Sopwell Resident.

### Sopwell Ward Councillors:

**Cllr Emma Matanle** (Sopwell)

Email: [emma.matanle.stalbans@gmail.com](mailto:emma.matanle.stalbans@gmail.com)

Tel: 07946 375211

**Cllr Mandy McNeil** (Sopwell)

Email: [mandy.mcneil.stalbans@gmail.com](mailto:mandy.mcneil.stalbans@gmail.com)

Tel: 01727 855 523

**Cllr Sarwar Shamsher** (Sopwell)

Email: [cllr.s.shamsher@councillor.stalbans.gov.uk](mailto:cllr.s.shamsher@councillor.stalbans.gov.uk)

Tel: 07883 024251

### Herts County Council councillor

**Cllr Sandy Walkington** (St Albans South)

Email: [sandy@sandy4stalbans.org](mailto:sandy@sandy4stalbans.org)

Tel: 07802 177317

See more [www.stalbans.gov.uk](http://www.stalbans.gov.uk)

## Cottonmill Community and Cycling Centre

During the first part of the year the Cottonmill and Sopwell Hub campaign group, along with Verulam Cycling Club, Sopwell Community Trust and St Albans Scouts, took part in 'Design Team' meetings with the council and architects to finalise the design and specifications for the new centre.

We wanted to ensure that residents' wishes were included in the designs; especially the Changing Places toilet for people with disabilities, a Quiet Room for reflection, Community Café, Community Kitchen, Wudu washing facilities, halls to hire, eco-friendly design and small fruit orchard.



**Cycling Facilities:** The design also includes a purpose-built Cycle Hub offering bike servicing, sales, hire, repairs at affordable prices. Outside, in addition to the existing BMX dirt track, Multi-Use Games Area and football pitch, there will be a new Cyclo-Cross track, a Pump Track, and inclusive programme of cycle training sessions co-ordinated by the Cycle Hub, including all-ability cycling.

On 28th June, we heard the fantastic news that planning permission had been APPROVED!

During the summer a building contractor was appointed. In September, the old Marlborough Pavilion was demolished. This was both exciting and emotional for us, finally seeing three years of hard work coming to fruition.

**Funding:** St Albans City and District Council worked hard to secure multi-million pound funding for this inclusive community centre with linked flagship cycling hub and external cycling track/activities.

Unfortunately, due to current market conditions, the construction tenders came in higher than anticipated, and the Council asked community groups to help by raising £79,000 towards the unexpected increase in costs.

### DONATE #BuyaBrick #Crowdfunder

The groups launched the Cottonmill Centre Crowdfunder Campaign to raise £20k for the centre.

Thanks to local businesses for fantastic gifts/rewards for early donations; includes Youth Cycle Coaching, Lion King trip, Sopwell House Spa Day, Ye Olde Fighting Cocks BBQ party, tea for two people with Daisy Cooper MP, Sopwell-themed merchandise including 'Straight Outta Cottonmill' tote bag.

Or 'Buy a Brick' -your name engraved for £50 donation. Make Your Donation visit [www.crowdfunder.co.uk/cottonmill-centre](https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/cottonmill-centre)

Name a Room and Honours Board- For larger donations - see <https://cottonmillandsopwellhub.org/businesses/>

**Michelle Mackenzie**

Chair of Cottonmill and Sopwell hub

# Resident Action Works!

## For the last six years I have been trying to restore the grass, pavements and gulleys in my area, where Nuns Lane meets Gorham Drive.

There are seven lovely grassy areas with trees, but the grass had been overcome by dandelions and achillea; the gulleys were filled in with earth, weeds, and rubbish; the pavements were overgrown with weeds and grass cuttings left on pavement and roads.

Over the years I have systematically cleaned out gulleys, cut back mats of weeds to restore pavements, weeded the grass to help it recover, uncovered two steps, and picked up litter daily.

It is so rewarding to get appreciative comments from the pedestrians as I work! I have also lobbied the two councils to do a better job, via Cllr Sarwar Samsher and County Cllr Sandy Walkington. Both have been very proactive.

St Albans District Council has responsibility for grass cutting; Herts County Council for verges and gulleys. In September a meeting with councillors, officers, and residents resulted in small signs of progress, despite money shortages.

1. Grass-cutting contractors John O'Conner will blow cuttings back off the roads/pavements onto the grass. They have been asked to fit mincers, to avoid cuttings forming a mat (which kills the grass).
2. Greater consciousness by SADC of its responsibility for regular litter picking/pavement spraying.
3. Reminder that HCC can act in specific instances of bad encroachment on pavements, broken gulleys etc.

From Sandy Walkington's recent email: "People just need to fault report, fault report, fault report". To report: search 'Pavement or Verge Fault' at [www.hertfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk)

**David Kemball-Cook**

## Sopwell Community Trust

Raihaanah Ahmed, SCT Outreach Officer – award-winner St Albans Food and Drink Festival award for customer service for her lockdown work delivering food boxes to vulnerable people.

-SCT supports 400+ people with fresh fruit/veg boxes to their doorsteps.

Please get in touch if you/a neighbour would benefit from this service or if you can help pack/deliver boxes.

-Weekly supermarket donated bread available FREE outside at 71 Leyland Avenue/115 Holyrood Crescent.

To become a 'bread buddy', contact Outreach Officer, Raihaanah Ahmed.

-Free Adult IT lessons with tutor

Itzi Olberia. Tailored to individual need-spaces available January.

-Chair Nazir Uddin is helping to raise funds for the Cottonmill Community Centre. If you would like to make a private donation, Nazir would love to hear from you.

-More football/weekly children's sports activities starts January – all backgrounds and abilities welcomed. Football Tournament coming soon with Akik Rahmam

Facebook [@SopwellCommunityTrust](#)

Twitter [@sopwell\\_ct](#)

Email: [sopwellct@gmail.com](mailto:sopwellct@gmail.com)

Tel: **01727 649070**

## True Story of Sopwell Nunnery

Just down Cottonmill Lane opposite the old swimming baths are the ruins of Sopwell Nunnery, as it is known. But, it is actually a manor house built by Henry VIII's close friend Sir Richard Lee. Lee was a military engineer who helped Henry during war time in France and Scotland.

The Priory, or Nunnery, was initially founded by Abbot Geoffrey de Gorham in 1140. It is said he took pity on two poor women sheltering in woods covered with branches and bark. Another reason was that he wanted suitable accommodation for the nuns at the Benedictine monastery. St Mary's Priory was constructed and grew in stature.

Many high-born women entered the nunnery. One lady who resided there was the widow of the Duke of Clarence, Henry V's brother. The duke died in 1420 fighting in France.

During the Wars of the Roses, it was plundered by Lancastrian troops. It is rumoured that Henry VIII married Anne Boleyn there in 1533 – but this is a myth.

After the dissolution of the monasteries, Lee built his fine house in 1540; knocked it down and built a much grander house in 1565. Lee died in 1575. It stayed in the family until the mansion and lands were sold to Sir Harbottle Grimston. After that it was partially demolished and fell into disrepair. The last person to live there was in 1793.

The ruins are a legacy of a once magnificent house with 900 years of history.

### Steve Peters

volunteer with Sopwell Memories research project

*Ed: Walk the local history with the 5 Sopwell History Walks or buy Sopwell Memories book £12 [www.sopwellmemories.org.uk](http://www.sopwellmemories.org.uk)*





## ● Grow Community - Sopwell

**Join in with Grow Community – Sopwell, your local community food-growing group!**

We encourage and enable residents to grow their own food at home and in community spaces; reduce food waste; share surplus food in the community and with local charity groups.

Recent events include Autumn in the Garden, Willow tunnel tidying, Compost Workshop, Wildflower seed bombs and Wreath-making workshop.

Join monthly friendly working parties at the Community Garden, join an event or help plant seedlings. Email to sign up for regular news: [growsopwell@gmail.com](mailto:growsopwell@gmail.com)

## Tales from your Councillor

### Sarwar Shamsher

I'd like to share some insights about my first 6 months as your ward councillor, since election in May 2020.

I have been working with residents in finding solutions to their housing needs, overgrown grass verges, fly tipping, potholes, planning, complaints re collection of bins, parking issues, and helping voluntary groups to support individuals affected by Covid 19.

I write emails, make phone calls on behalf of residents, do site visits and meet SADC officials, lead councillors and councillor colleagues. I feel very supported working with my fellow excellent ward councillors Emma Matanle, Mandy McNeil, and our esteemed county councillor Sandy Walkington.

## ● Alban Way Cycle Counts

In this latest graph showing the daily average number of cycle trips made between March and September 2021 on the Alban Way, it's pleasing to note a healthy revival of cycling as a leisure pursuit following the long period of restricted travel due to the Covid -19 pandemic. With now over 300 cycle trips per day recorded at the Alban Way/

Cottonmill Lane Bridge junction, - compared to 250 in 2016 - this has become the county's third busiest cycle route.

**Peter Wares**



*Data from Herts Traffic and Transport data department*

## ● Citizens Advice St Albans & District

We're still here to help. How to get advice: Call 01727 811118. Open Mon to Thurs 10-4pm, Friday 10-1pm Civic Offices, St Peter Street. Or chat to adviser online or email see <https://citizensadvicestalbans.org.uk/>

## ● St Albans Old People's Trust

60 years+ in need, hardship, or distress. Help with mobility/household aids, cooker, washing machine/fridge; help in the home/cleaning/shopping.

Tel: **01727 814644** email: [grants@staopt.org](mailto:grants@staopt.org)  
[www.staopt.org](http://www.staopt.org)

I also attend many evening meetings of full council/various committees, e.g., Housing and Inclusion, Overview and Scrutiny and Housing Liaison Consultative Forum. Being a councillor can be overwhelming at times with real pressure on my time management as I am a full-time secondary school maths teacher and jointly responsible (with my wife Zakia) for bringing up our five daughters aged 7-22.

The upside vastly outweighs the downside: it is so pleasing to see the Cottonmill community centre being erected at the old Marlborough Pavilion site as we speak -the result of many devoted community leaders, residents and members of various local voluntary organisations working collaboratively with St Albans District Council, a fine example of true community spirit. Well done to all involved! Please contact me if I can be of any assistance.

**Cllr Sarwar Shamsher**



# SOPWELL HOUSE

## Sopwell House Jobs!

We are searching for local, talented individuals to work at Sopwell House, our beautiful family run hotel that's on your doorstep! With the right drive and a desire to deliver genuine hospitality in a friendly environment, you may well be just what we are looking for. We have part time, full time, evening and casual roles available - some live-in positions too - so get in touch and join our growing, successful and award-winning team.

**Current positions** – updated daily: managers, supervisors & waiters, chefs, porters, housekeeping, marketing, spa & pool personnel, and spa therapist positions. Visit [abhotels.co.uk/careers](http://abhotels.co.uk/careers) or email [careers@sopwell-house.co.uk](mailto:careers@sopwell-house.co.uk)



### ● St Stephen's and St Julian's Churches

Serving the Sopwell area of the parish - We'd love to welcome you to join us in celebrating Christmas this year. Do come along to any of the events and services listed below.

See [www.ststephenandstjulian.org](http://www.ststephenandstjulian.org)

Facebook [@stephenandstjulian](#)

### ● St Julian's: 3 Abbots Avenue, AL1 2HY

**Sat 18 Dec:** 5-6pm: Community Carol Singing outside the church around the Christmas Tree

**Christmas Eve:** 4pm: Crib Service

**Christmas Eve:** 11.30pm: Midnight Mass

**Christmas Day:** 10.00am: Family Communion Service

### ● St Stephen's : Watling Street, AL1 2PT

**Sun 19 Dec:** 10.30pm: Christingle Service

**Sun 19 Dec:** 6.30pm: Carol Service by Candlelight

**Christmas Eve:** 4pm: Crib Service

**Christmas Eve:** 11.30pm: Midnight Mass

**Christmas Day:** 8am: Holy Communion

10.00am: Family Communion Service

**Contact:** Parish Office

Alison Pether (Parish Administrator) Tel: 01727 862598

or email: [office@ststephenandstjulian.org](mailto:office@ststephenandstjulian.org)

## Be in our Spring/Summer issue 2022

SRA newsletter goes to 3,000 Sopwell households. If you have items for inclusion or wish to advertise, please email us:  
**sra@sopwell.org.uk** Advertisement charges: **Half Page Colour:** £100; **Quarter Page Colour:** £50; **Eighth page colour:** £25