

Sopwell Residents Association

Annual report 2012/13

Yet another year has passed and your Association goes from strength to strength. We have now been in existence for ten years. From modest beginnings, where we were mainly fire fighting litter and abandoned supermarket trolleys (so to speak!), we are now recognised as the voice of Sopwell and the preservers of the past. A list of everything we have done over the past ten years was collated by Jennifer Taylor for our wonderful 10th birthday party in May this year. There are a few copies here tonight and it is available on our main website. I hope you agree that the list is impressive.

Committee structure and changes

I am pleased to announce that two of my committee hats have been removed. During the year, Barry Bateman agreed to join the committee and has proved to be a useful member having taken over the role of newsletter editor, and Jennifer Taylor joined the committee to be minutes secretary.

Our treasurer, Rob Sharman has unfortunately decided to resign from the role but we hope will remain active on the committee. He did a wonderful job especially with all the different budget heads to contend with. We are extremely fortunate in having immediately recruited Dom Tang to be his successor.

We will be losing Ananda Armstrong-King this summer not just from the committee but also from Sopwell. This will be a great loss to the association. She has been a very willing committee member as well as a valued friend. Who will make the cakes now? Ananda, we wish you well for the future. Our loss will be Dorset's gain, no doubt.

The following people have put themselves forward for election/re-election: Barry Bateman, Jack Hill, Willem Hofland, Mark James, Sandy Norman, Rob Sharman, Adelle Stapleton, Dom Tang, Jennifer Taylor, Rick Taylor and Peter Wares.

The following wish to be re-elected as officers: Rick Taylor as Chair, Dom Tang as Treasurer. We still need a Secretary. I am still in the Acting role. I would really like to shed this role and concentrate wholly on the More Memories Project. Please come forward if you are interested.

Activities and events

Sopwell Project The biggest event last year was, of course, the launch of the book written and compiled by yours truly, *Sopwell, a history and collection of memories*, which took place at Sopwell House on 20th May. Anne Main MP and Councillor Eileen Harris, the Mayor elect, formally launched the book and the day was a great success. The book has been well received and sales have been good but we still have not yet managed to break even, although we are nearly there. I have attended several book signing events, two of which were in Waterstones. I have also spoken to several local groups and associations about the project to raise money to pay for the publication.

In July, the SRA applied for and was successful in receiving a Heritage Lottery Funded Grant of £10,000 under the All Our Stories programme to continue to collect memories and research the history of our area. The More Memories Project was formally launched on 18th May this year and will last until 30th April 2014. Our tenth birthday was also celebrated at the same time.

Autumn walk Our annual history walk took place last September. Chris Pudsey led the walk this year as Councillor Eileen Harris was occupied being the Mayor. Chris used our book on the History of Sopwell to illustrate one of the many interesting walks around Sopwell: Mandeville to New Barnes. Participants all came back to Sandy Norman's house for refreshments afterwards. Feedback on the event was good.

Litter pick We had our annual litter pick on 7th April. Thank you to all those helped pick several bags of litter and recyclables.

Willow tunnel and weaving workshop Following the construction of a willow tunnel last year, pupils from St Peter's School attended a willow weaving workshop where they made fish and butterflies using willow. The tunnel was reshaped in February and the new growth was tied into the existing structure.

Jubilee Street Parties In June last year, despite the dreadful weather, street parties to celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee were held in Boleyn Drive, Holyrood Crescent, Prospect Road, Ramsbury Road and St Julians Road.

Larks in the Parks This was held on 24th June last year and was another successful event. The SRA had stalls to sell plants and our History of Sopwell book. Over 300 people attended.

Bat walk This was organised on 7th September by the SRA in conjunction with Countryside Management Services and funded by the remainder of our lottery funded Community Spaces Sustainability grant. Over thirty people attended the walk in the Nunnery Green Space to learn and hear (through sensors) the bats that frequent that area of Sopwell. The event was extremely successful.

Bulb planting On 21st October, over 300 bulbs were planted on the island green space in Abbots Avenue by a small but dedicated band of residents. The resulting display this Spring proved that it was a worthwhile event.

Conferences and meetings

- Peter Wares attended several meetings of St Albans City Forum.
- Sandy Norman was invited by St Albans and District Council to attend the annual Green Flag Award ceremony on 19th June to receive the Green Flag for the Nunnery Open Space.
- Sandy Norman attended a meeting of the Combined Group of Residents Associations on 15th October.
- Sandy Norman attended the St Albans Civic Society Awards where our Fenny's Boardwalk got a favourable mention.
- Sandy Norman spoke at the St Albans Local History Conference on 27th October. Barry Bateman also attended.
- Jack Hill and Rick Taylor attended the St Albans and District Strategic Partnerships Conference.
- Christoph Lutz and Ananda Armstrong-King attended a thank you party for volunteer groups in December at the House of Commons hosted by Anne Main MP

Communications We have produced three newsletters in the past year and held two open residents' meetings. Thank you to our happy band of newsletter deliverers. The website www.sopwell.org.uk is updated regularly thanks to Peter Segers. As part of the More Memories of Sopwell project, we have started a regular blog post on blog.sopwellmemories.org.uk.

Sandy Norman
June 2013