



ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2014/15

Chairman's Report

I must begin my report on a sombre note. In the death of Carol Halls last November we lost, not only a long-standing member of the Society but also a pillar of its very structure. Carol epitomised that urge to achieve and to overcome any obstacle. She continued to work for us to the very end despite bouts of poor health and periods in hospital. Those of us who worked with her over many years really do feel bereaved. I do not use the word "irreplaceable" lightly but she is. Our one consolation is that she suffers pain no more and is at eternal rest.

I am writing this on March 18th. My desk-top calendar supplied by one of our corporate members, CPI, tells me that on this day in 1959 EMI discontinued the manufacture of 78 rpm singles. What great progress has been made since then in the reproduction and dissemination of live and recorded music! Our quality of life has, by and large, improved by similar leaps and bounds but I ask the question: are we any happier with our environment now than we were 30 or 40 years ago? It is true that much has improved – we have only to look at photographs of London buildings just after the Second World War to realise how dirty and harmful our air was then.

However, we are not living in some kind of Utopia. There are many challenges to face. It is good to read in other sections of this report that The Finchley Society is grappling with bad planning applications and with a general indifference towards the environment. There is more to do – and we need more people to do the work. Some of you will remember that a few years ago I mentioned that, by my estimation, 8% of the membership took an active part in our work. That figure is now down to 7%. Of course, we owe these members our heart-felt thanks for their great contribution throughout the year (and in many cases, throughout the years!)

but we need more people to do more tasks. 'Many hands make light work': can you step forward? Can you take on a new responsibility? Can you see a job that has your name on it?

When Rosemary Coates agreed to take on the post of Honorary Secretary I promised her that we would find someone to take on the post of Secretary to the Administration Committee. So far we have failed to find that person with the result that Rosemary uncomplainingly continues to run both the Executive and the Administration Committees. This is a good example of how one new recruit could help the Society greatly in its work. And here is another: some years ago Harry Sharpe took on the task of the monitoring of estate agents' boards. He did a good job. Who does his job these days? No one, I think. We also need more members on our Committees. I am appending a full list of committee members and appointees at the end of this report so that you can see who does the work of the Society and where we need new blood. If you feel diffident about joining a committee you can always attend one of its meetings before committing yourself.

Two aspects of the street scene at the moment make my blood boil: One is the proliferation of illegal plastic banners on fences and walls and also the use of vehicles used as advertising hoardings parked permanently in our streets. I find it cynical and offensive. If you do too please let me know and we will take some action – even form a new committee. The second is the positioning of commercial advertising boards on our roundabouts. I think the original idea was that a local company would sponsor a roundabout and thus contribute to its maintenance and even improvement. Having seen how well the French local authorities care for their roundabouts (imaginative planting and even the addition of artefacts reflecting local industries and crafts) it makes me weep to see how badly we do it here.

Do continue to use the "Fix My Street" website. It is effective and despite all the gloom I do get the impression that a lot of people on the Council side are doing their level best to improve the local environment.

Finally, may I ask you to be someone who thinks "WE must do something about that" rather than "THEY should do something about that".

Thank you for your support and encouragement.

David Smith
Chairman

Report of the Administration Committee

The present Administration Committee consists of six members two of whom are not always available to attend leaving four and they are also members of the Executive Committee. I am aware that in order to broaden our interests, and to spread the load, we need to recruit some new, fresh members. We also lack a minute secretary, this role being temporarily filled by the Society's Secretary, who is also the newsletter editor, too many jobs for one person! Can anyone help, please?

Archives: Tony Roberts continues to control this important section of the Society and welcomes enquiries for pre-booked visits or for a drop-in visit on Monday mornings in the basement of Avenue House. On our web site, by clicking on *Society Activities/Archives/Main subject index* a comprehensive list of the files held in the archives is revealed. A great deal of time has been spent compiling this. Thank you Tony.

Meetings: Our programme organiser, Harriet Copperman, has arranged an interesting programme for the year and is already busy with next year's. As hinted at in last year's report, and after consideration, we have reduced the number of meetings by one, thus saving some outlay to offset the increased charges at our main venue, Avenue House. The two afternoon meetings were very well attended.

At the suggestion of Stephen Yeo we have recorded one of the meetings to see whether it is feasible to provide an audio copy for members unable to attend.

Projects: Lindsay Bamfield is currently editing "Finchley Remembered Part Two" to follow our very successful first edition. We hope to publish this in the summer.

A year ago we approached the Friern Barnet and District Local History Society and the Friends of Friary Park to join us in erecting a plaque explaining the significance of the statue in the park. This project has now been extended by applying to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a grant to clean and restore the statue, its plinth and surrounding area. This is a much longer process which is continuing.

A small plaque congratulating Finchley Catholic High School on building a new Sixth Form Centre is in the process of being installed. Further explanatory signs are being considered elsewhere within our area of benefit.

Annual Dinner: The 2014 annual dinner took place at South Herts Golf Club and was attended by a smaller number of members than previously. We were

entertained by Malcolm Godfrey, manager of Stephens House & Gardens, who spoke about The Royal Naval College at Greenwich.

Newsletter: The newsletter has now been made available electronically as part of our policy in reaching a younger membership. The distribution of hard copies of the newsletter continues to be ably managed by Martin Summers and our team of postmen and women.

Advertising: The display panels on the southern platform at Finchley Central station were replaced early last year and the panel beneath the bridge at East Finchley tube station was also in need of upgrading and has recently been changed.

Another method of advertising our forthcoming meetings was introduced by Stephen Yeo. This is "Mailchimp", an IT communication which reaches all our members with email.

Membership: Although corporate membership has declined we have gained more individual members mainly due to the walks organised and lead by Mike Gee. At the time of writing, membership numbers are very near those of twelve months ago.

Media Group: Karine Barsam continues as our media coordinator and will be working with the Society's newly appointed webmaster Stephen Yeo to promote the Society via Twitter, keeping in touch with the local press.

Fund Raising: The '100' Club will be continuing to raise funds next year. Thanks to the generosity of some winners we are able to get very near to our target of £600. In addition the Committee agreed to again hold raffles at our monthly meetings, with members donating the prizes as far as possible.

Education Officer: We have been fortunate in finding two members in Adele Nevill and Lynne Ashley who between them hope to be able to fill this vacancy. One of their first jobs will be to research amongst members for anyone who is willing to speak to school children.

Conclusion: The centenary of the beginning of World War One fell within the year and at the suggestion of Civic Voice we commemorated this by including two talks with WW1 connections. Similar topics will be introduced to continue this theme.

Our Terms of Reference require us to encourage members' involvement in the work of the Society but we do need to keep up with modern methods of communication. Some of us are struggling to do so but in order to keep the Society going we need

to attract new younger members to our committees including the Administration committee. Offers gladly accepted.

Peter Marsh

Report of the Environment and Transport Committee

Under the chairmanship of Mike Gee the Committee was very active in 2014. The 'Finchley in Bloom' competition was a great success – it attracted 53 entries. With good press coverage, it drew attention both to the Society and, more importantly, to the value of gardens at the front of houses instead of the sterile expanses of concrete or brick that are becoming more and more prevalent. Mike Gee continued his successful programme of walks and related slide shows, particularly “Visions of a Garden City” which explored the Hampstead Garden Suburb and “Greenways from Friern to Osidge”, that followed a slide show at Osidge Library. Derek Warren contributed notes on wildlife to the Newsletter.

The Committee continued to monitor changes happening to or proposed for the green spaces of Finchley, especially the environmental aspects of the way in which the Avenue House Estate Trust proposes to develop the Stephens House and Gardens estate. Other green spaces being watched over included Briarfield, Victoria Park (including funding tree planting), Swan Lane, Princes Park and Tillingham Way, where the Committee had a success when it got dangerous razor wire removed from fencing bordering the open space adjacent to the Dollis Brook bridge.

On the transport front, the Committee continued the lobbying for a bus service to serve the new Finchley Memorial Hospital, following a survey it carried out in April in conjunction with the Friends of Finchley Memorial Hospital and its presentation to the Council's Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee; it is hoped that all the effort of the Society and many others will eventually bear fruit. Peter Hale also initiated work on the pedestrian environment with a pilot in East Finchley that highlighted a number of issues for pedestrians that are not confined to one part of our area. We believe there should be a change in perception of the Pedestrian Environment, with higher standards recognised and expected.

The Committee is in need of new blood so, if you feel that you can contribute to this important section of the Society, please do come forward. Although much of the work of the Planning Committee has an environmental aspect, as do many of the things the Society publicises in its newsletter and discusses at its meetings, it

would be most unfortunate if a large amenity society did not have a thriving section dedicated to environmental and transport matters.

Report from the Planning Committee

This has been a sad year for the Planning Committee. Carol Halls had been our chairman since 2007; she had guided us in a thoughtful and common sense way, and we miss her greatly. Since her death Peter Pickering has been acting as chairman. Avra Archer is our Secretary, and every other month Pat Dunnill makes us welcome in Cornwall Avenue, centrally placed for our meetings.

We have monitors for each ward – Mary Hogben for East Finchley, Avra Archer for Church End, Sheila Shannon for West Finchley and Jacques Astruc for Woodhouse, while Peter Pickering keeps an eye on that part of Totteridge ward that is within the old borough of Finchley. Robert Newton is of great help with his knowledge of the workings of Barnet Council and his enviable power to see the flaws in the documents submitted by developers in support of their applications. Stuart Warner has kept us in touch with the area covered by the Dollis Park Residents Association.

Our objective is to preserve the local, heritage, and conservation character of Finchley, and to support local people in efforts to resist inappropriate development. We are particularly vigilant to prevent the loss of family houses to flats in the quintessentially suburban areas of Finchley. Through the weekly email alerts from the Planning Department of Barnet Council, we receive a list of the planning and tree works applications for reviewing. Comments are submitted on behalf of the Finchley Society either by email, letter or direct comment on the Barnet website, and are sometimes followed up with a speaking appearance before the Council committee and perhaps also by representations to an Inspector on an appeal.

During 2014, the Committee has had reported to it well over a hundred cases. Some of these have related to the continuing construction of large blocks of flats along the High Road from Tally Ho Corner to Whetstone. Other notable ones have been in Church End – the refurbishment of Avenue House Grounds ('Stephens House and Gardens'), Gateway House with the proposed new library, the activities (or inactivity) of Pardes House School and the so called 'Old School House' – and the expansion of Oak Lodge School

The Spike Milligan Statue Fund Report

The members of the Committee, Barbara and Derek Warren, Carol Halls and David Smith were all immensely relieved when it could be announced that the order had been given for the bronze statue of Spike Milligan to be cast. It has been a long time coming: our first committee meeting took place on 1st April 2004 when we were quite confident that the money would be raised within a couple of years. Our advisers were wrong but our spirits were undaunted. We sought the Patronage of well-known members of the entertainment world including one Beatle, one Rolling Stone, three members of the Monty Python team, three members of the Milligan family, two of the Secombe family and one of the Sellers family. We had tremendous support from Joanna Lumley who came to a fund-raising dinner in Finchley and from Maureen Lipman who came to lunch in Finchley and then proposed an entertainment that took place at Middlesex University in 2010. Barry Cryer created two original pieces for us: an appreciation and an "Ode to Spike". Roger McGough supported us by donating books of poetry to be raffled and Denis Norden and Kathy Lette were always willing to provide sound-bites for the media. Lynsey de Paul, who sadly died last October, was a supporter by actually attending our events in person. We must also pay tribute to Michael Gerson whose initial generous donation got the finance into gear.

Finally, we must thank John Somerville, the sculptor, who worked so hard all that time and who fought against serious illness, including a liver transplant and a stroke, to produce such a popular piece of artwork.

The unveiling ceremony took place at Avenue House on Thursday, September 4th. We were blessed with dry weather and the presence of eight of our Patrons, together with The Mayor of Barnet and a number of serving and former members of The Royal Artillery (Spike's regiment during the war). We received unstinting help from the management and staff at Avenue House and (at last!) enthusiasm from the national media. (We should say that the local press was supportive from the start and we thank the Times, the Press and The Archer for their coverage of our fund-raising efforts.) We also need to record our thanks to Janett Durrant, previously Manager at Avenue House, who did a lot of behind-the-scenes negotiation with the London Borough of Barnet to ensure official approval of the statue and its positioning in the grounds of the estate.

By Christmas the grass in front of the statue had completely worn away which is proof of the popularity of this statue to a national figure and to our friend and former President, Spike Milligan.

Report from The Archive Team

The archive team consisting of Tony Roberts, Margaret Cullen, Jane Mitchell, Barbara and Derek Warren have spent their Monday mornings (and other times) in the archive room at Avenue House on a regular basis throughout the year in order to administer the Society's archive material, find answers to queries and be present for visitors wishing to consult our documents for research purposes.

Enquiries have been received by email from around the world on history, relatives, objects and places in Finchley, requesting information and photos. This year the Society has assisted artsDepot with material for their exhibition on Tally Ho.

A key task this year has been cataloguing the photos, now almost complete. We have 1232 loose photos in various locations, 750 or so in albums and about 1400 postcards in the Andrew Forsyth collection.

Tony Roberts,
Archives Manager

Committee Members and Appointees

Executive Committee

Vice President and Chair: David Smith
Vice President: Peter Pickering
Vice Chair: Harry Branchdale
Hon Secretary: Rosemary Coates
Hon. Treasurer: Rosemary Crampton
Harriet Copperman OBE
Mike Gee
Peter Marsh
Mike Walsh
Brian Watkins

Administration Committee

Chair: Peter Marsh
Secretary: Rosemary Coates
Shirley Avery
Harriet Copperman OBE
Karine Barsam
David Smith
Vacancies: Committee Secretary
and members

Environment & Transport Committee

Chair Mike Gee
Peter Hale
Robert Newton
Peter Pickering
Derek Warren
Vacancies: Committee Secretary
and Committee members

Planning Committee

Secretary Avra Ploumi–Archer
Jacques Astruc
Harry Branchdale
Pat Dunnill
Mary Hogben
Robert Newton
Sheila Shannon
Vacancies: Chairman and
Committee members

Appointees Ex – Committee

Archives Manager:	Tony Roberts
Distribution Manager:	Martin Summers
Finchley Remembered II:	Lindsay Bamfield
Insurance Adviser:	Bill Lethorn
Book Sales Coordinators:	Guy & Adele Nevill
Local History Secretary:	Martin Ellman
Media Co-ordinator:	Karine Barsam
Equipment Officer:	Mick Crick
Membership Secretary:	David Coates
Web Site Manager:	Stephen Yeo
Programme Secretary:	Harriet Copperman OBE
Newsletter Editor:	Rosemary Coates
Minute Secretary (Exec C):	Lynn Bresler
Legal Advisor:	Cheryl Rudden

Education Secretary:

Lynne Ashley and Adele Nevill