



ANNUAL REPORT – 2016/2017

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

I am proud to present the Society's Annual Report. It again shows how much work has been achieved by a goodly number of our members. These men and women serve the Society and its objectives without complaint and without the expectation of public acclaim. The committee meetings take place as planned in members' own homes at the time specified and Minutes are produced and circulated with a minimum of fuss. It is all very workmanlike and efficient.

And have you looked at the website recently? Stephen Yeo has done a wonderful job on it; a complete revision since last year and a site of which we should all be proud. Members are asked to bring this to the notice of any prospective new members in their circle of friends.

It has been an amazing year for the erection of plaques and information panels. We hope members will want to suggest other locations where we can celebrate the uniqueness of our area. Our next celebrity will be 'Lord.' George Sanger, the circus proprietor. Who else should we record?

I am also proud of the fact that we have been able to continue to support Stephens House and Gardens with over £2000 in room rentals. Incidentally, do remember that each meeting we hold costs over £100 so do come to see how we spend some of your membership fee. We have had excellent meetings with plenty of discussion and useful outcomes. What might appear to be a dry subject has often turned out to be something quite different.

If you haven't been to what we still call "Avenue House" recently do go and visit the grounds where the scars of winter and of the landscaping work are healing. Admire the new vistas and installations and enjoy the sight of local people young and old enjoying what is indubitably one of the jewels in the Finchley crown. Let's also put in a word for the Spike Milligan statue. It is now an integral part of the grounds - and much appreciated: recently I found a young boy sitting on Spike's lap reading a book. On another occasion a mother told me that it was her son's delight to come to the statue and pinch Spike's nose! So Spike lives on: it was always our aim to keep his memory alive. It is heartening to know that these young people seem to know how to do it.

However, there is a lot for the Society still to do: we don't always win the argument in the LBB Planning Committees and we certainly don't see eye to eye with some developers whose main concern is financial gain with no thought for the wider environment.

There are many challenges and I am sure members have their little list of gripes. My current ones include the proliferation of stickers on shop facades advertising the services of metal shutter repairers. Some shops sport more than 30 of these wretched labels. And what about illegal advertising using permanently parked cars which are clearly not roadworthy? These have

been a blot on the street scene for about 5 years now and there seems to have been no attempt to eliminate this practice.

Let me bring to your attention something called a "Community Heritage Centre". This one is at Mount Sorrell and Rothley in Leicestershire. It is a delightful building with a lively café and two display rooms in which a series of panels describes the history, geography, old buildings and local industries. An excellent example of how a local community can pool its resources. It was something that we thought we might achieve by acquiring the use of Church End Library if and when it became vacant. Ah well, we did try!

This is my last report as Chairman. I am standing down at the AGM, not before time. The Society is in good health and continues with a clear mission to look after our cultural heritage and the natural and man-made environment we enjoy in Finchley and Friern Barnet. Thank you, loyal member, for your continued support and interest.

David Smith

REPORT OF THE ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

The vacant post of minute secretary was filled by Lynn Bresler who joined the committee in September, relieving Rosemary Coates of the task who had covered for us for over a year.

Meetings: Harriet Copperman, our programme organiser, produced another interesting and varied programme. This is of course done a year ahead and runs from January to November and two of the meetings are public discussions with the topic selected only 2 or 3 months beforehand. Harriet also arranged an outing to The Royal Courts of Justice in May.

Projects: A photographic competition was organised to run over the course of two years after which time a calendar will be published. Every two months a picture is chosen from members' submissions to reflect the season and to be recognisably either Finchley or Friern Barnet.

Finchley Remembered II was finally put together, edited by Lindsay Bamfield and Lynn Bresler, and launched at Waterstones in North Finchley in September.

Mick Crick researched and produced a booklet on Thomas Reader White, the founder of Christ's College Finchley. On 9 December, the anniversary of TRW's death, a small ceremony was conducted at the newly refurbished memorial in St. Mary at Finchley churchyard.

Education is one of the four cornerstones of the Society and we are always open to take any opportunity to visit schools. David Smith met children at Pardes House School and in February Year 7 Children from The Archer Academy did a presentation at our afternoon meeting.

Funds from the Peggy Wells Trust were used to reinstate the missing blue plaques from the old Queens Head public House, now offices, and from the Finchley Memorial Hospital site. In addition to the latter, an information board was erected in the hospital's grounds explaining the reason for a plaque commemorating the residence of Joseph Grimaldi. The panel and the plaque were unveiled in October by the President of Civic Voice, Griff Rhys Jones, and the Mayor Barnet, David Longstaff. Earlier in the year the Mayor unveiled a plaque in Friary Park in front of the statue of Peace by Joseph Durham.

Other projects which were organised were a members' litter-pick along the North Circular Road and weeding and thinning-out the flower beds at Finchley Central Station. Finally in September the Society's Environmental Award was made at a small ceremony to Residents of Northway Gardens.

Publicity: We attended the Woodland Fair in Coppetts Wood in May and the East Finchley Festival in June and our stand at both these events had a professional look to it thanks to Mick Crick's eye for detail and hard work. The Society signed up new members at both events. We continue to publicise ourselves via various social media sites. A small number of car stickers have been produced to keep the Society's name in the public eye.

Annual Dinner: The 2016 annual dinner took place at South Herts. Golf Club and was a very enjoyable event although fewer members attended than last year. The after dinner speech was given by one of our own members, Bill Lethorn, who spoke about his early years as one of the last children of the Raj.

Newsletter: The newsletter is produced six times a year. It looks attractive in appearance and is informative and very professionally laid out. Rosemary and David Coates are to be congratulated on all the hard work together with the distribution team.

Membership: Both corporate membership and individual membership remain roughly the same as last year. Where other societies are experiencing falling membership this could be considered satisfactory but we cannot afford to take our "foot off the pedal" in recruiting new members.

Fund Raising: The 100 Club actually achieved 100 shares sold this year so at least £600 will be raised towards the rent of the Archive room in Stephens House and Garden. We continue to bring in an income from the sale of our published books. There is an initial outlay of course so *FRII* is not yet in profit.

Conclusion: The committee meets every two months and the agenda is getting longer because we are taking on more projects. Between meetings each member of the team puts in an enormous amount of effort, somewhat similar to the appearance of a placid swan on the surface paddling furiously underwater.

Peter Marsh

REPORT OF THE ARCHIVE TEAM

Cataloguing: The team has completed all the major catalogues for photos, slides, books, maps artefacts and legal documents and PDF copies have recently been sent to Stephen Yeo for the web site. The team is now compiling an index of archive material for people of note with a connection to Finchley.

Acquisitions: The archive continues to get a slow trickle of photos, books and documents for the archives. One member of our team has spent all year sorting out the papers donated by Bill Tyler. The lack of a filing system for correspondence has impeded the process.

Enquiries: The archives continue to receive a number of enquiries via the internet. Most are by members of the public requesting photos of places their ancestors lived or documentary

evidence for them being there. I estimate we can help in about half the cases. The archives have also assisted research on the Bothy, a research project in East End Road, supported *Finchley Remembered II* and are helping ITV in their documentary of Sir David Jason. We had two enquiries, related to developments, for historical evidence of underground streams in the area.

Digitisation: The archive team will be able to participate in whatever digitisation programme the Society eventually decides on.

Tony Roberts

REPORT OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

The Pedestrian Environment continues to be an important part of our programme and unfortunately this is likely to be the case for many years to come, although we have had some success with overhanging hedges. We have also found that it is quicker to report problems such as potholes and broken paving to Barnet Council www.barnet.gov.uk/citizen-home/report-a-problem, which takes you direct to the relevant page on their website, rather than going through other organisations. Another concern has been the registration of footpaths and alleyways as these must be recorded on Barnet's maps before a certain date and although somewhat ahead, time flies, so it is necessary to get recording.

Two of our members spent a considerable amount of time preparing a response to Barnet Council Parks and Open Spaces Strategy, but months later we are still waiting for a reply. We liaise with the Planning Committee on some cases and we are particularly pleased that after 3 planning refusals the owners of Brookdene in Holden Road have submitted plans that exclude the open space behind the site that is a green oasis by the Dollis Brook.

With help from Chris Church of Mapping for Change we placed 20 small glass tubes around Finchley to check on the nitrogen dioxide levels, and generally these gave reasonable results. The two exceptions were where traffic was waiting for the lights to change. The suggestion is that traffic should turn their engines off at such situations as many of the latest vehicles do automatically.

The 50th anniversary of the recognition and listing of Conservation Areas will be celebrated on 17th June 2017. As Barnet are about to update their list of Buildings of Local Interest we are checking our own list.

To show our appreciation of anything that has been done which improves the appearance of Finchley and Friern Barnet and is valued by the public, we have initiated an Environment Aware Certificate and the first recipients were The Northway Gardens Organisation for reviving and maintaining the rose garden.

We are pleased to welcome Peter Hale as our new chairman of the committee.

Derek Warren

REPORT OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE

The Planning Committee has been stable in the past year. Peter Pickering is Chairman, Avra Archer Secretary, and every other month Pat Dunnill makes us welcome in Cornwall Avenue, centrally placed for our meetings.

Objective: 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 still vigilant to prevent the loss of family houses to flats in the quintessentially suburban areas of Finchley. But the pressure for development in our area has continued unremittingly during the year - the population of London is growing, and if the Green Belt is to be preserved it seems that density will inevitably increase further. It is important that the infrastructure keeps pace.

Procedure: 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 looks at that part of Totteridge ward that is within the old borough of Finchley. Other members of the Society and people from Residents Associations and the like keep us informed. We are represented on the Conservation Area Advisory Committee for the three conservation areas in Finchley.

We receive by email from the Planning Department of Barnet Council a list of planning and tree works applications each week, and the monitors study them. Comments are submitted on behalf of the Society by email, letter or direct comment on the Barnet website, and may be followed up with a speaking appearance before the Council committee and by representations to an Inspector if there is an appeal.

Enforcement: We press for enforcement when planning rules have been broken - it is unfortunately becoming more frequent for developers, without planning permission, to demolish or convert existing properties or the applicant has not complied with the permission granted, ignoring it and building something different. The Council's Enforcement Team have not been very robust in getting these breaches rectified – presumably because of the time and cost involved, and the opportunity the developer has of succeeding in an appeal. In the scheme of things the planning department believes the breaches which we have drawn attention to be relatively small. However, in our view such breaches affect the integrity of the area and send out the wrong message to residents and potential developers.

Basements: The building of basements is spreading into Barnet. To date, Barnet Council (unlike some other London councils) has not come up with a meaningful policy. As things stand, if there are no changes to the outside of the building, it can legally be 'permitted development', so that the Council has to grant permission, and as long as the development is started – even just a small excavation – the permission remains valid until the developer decides to complete the work, which could run into many years. Attached properties are then blighted and their future sale made more difficult. The current situation devalues planning laws and ignores the impact on the community.

Cases: During 2016/17, the Committee has had reported to it well over a hundred cases. A contentious one has been the redevelopment of Brookdene on Holden Road; we, and the London Wildlife Trust, objected; councillors twice refused the application against the advice of officers, and were supported on appeal; a revised application has now been made. The proposal to replace the former Finchley Police Station by a seven-storey building with seventy apartments was refused. All along the High Road above North Finchley there have been a succession of developments, some permitted as change from office to housing, which all need careful scrutiny and some comment.

East Finchley: There has been much activity in East Finchley over the proposals to redevelop the GLH site opposite the tube station. Despite supporting residents in their objections and speaking against at two committee meetings and endless words pointing out contravention to policy, it looks as if we shall not be successful. Meanwhile we wait to see if our opposition to a Shisha establishment, operating without the benefit of permission at the old Alexandra pub in Church Lane in the guise of a restaurant, is successful. More applications have very recently arrived that will certainly change the face of the East Finchley High Road so there will have to be more scouring of documents, policies and drawings and carefully considered words to write.

Consultation: We have been involved in a consultation by Barnet Council on the future of the Finchley Central/Church End area. We do not yet know how the Council will take this forward.
Peter Pickering

COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND APPOINTEES

Executive Committee

Vice President and Chair; David Smith
Vice President: Peter Pickering
Vice Chair: Harry Branchdale
Hon. Secretary: Rosemary Coates
Lynn Bresler
Harriet Copperman OBE
Mick Crick
Peter Marsh
Brian Watkins

Administration Committee

Chair: Peter Marsh
Secretary: Rosemary Coates
Minute Taker: Lynn Bresler
David Coates
Harriet Copperman OBE
Mick Crick

Environment and Transport Committee

Chair: Peter Hale
Derek Warren
Peter Pickering
Mick Crick
Brian Plen
Tony Sarchet
Gardi Vaswani
Vacancies: Committee Secretary

Planning Committee

Chair: Peter Pickering
Secretary: Avra Ploumi-Archer
Mary Hogben
Jacques Astruc
Harry Branchdale
Pat Dunnill
Sheila Shannon

Appointees Ex-Committee

Archives Manager
Distribution Manager:
Insurance Adviser:
Book Sales Co-ordinator:
Local History Secretary;
Media Co-ordinator:
Equipment officer
Membership Secretary
Web Site Manager:
Programme Secretary:
Newsletter Editors:
Minute Secretary (Executive Committee)
Legal Advisor:
Education Secretary:

Tony Roberts
Martin Summers
Bill Lethorn
Guy Nevill
Martin Ellman
Mick Crick
Mick Crick
David Coates
Stephen Yeo
Harriet Copperman OBE
Rosemary and David Coates
Lynn Bresler
Cheryl Rudden
Lynne Ashley