

**THE FINCHLEY SOCIETY**  
**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - 27 JUNE 2019**

**ANNUAL REPORT**

**CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

This year has been another busy year for the Finchley Society. At the end of March last year, we were delighted to meet and entertain our new patron, Miss Joanna Lumley, when she came to Stephens House. After meeting a number of committee members, Joanna kindly posed for some photos at the Spike Milligan memorial bench before lunching in the salon. She later met the Mayor of Barnet and formally opened the newly refurbished Visitor Centre.

Our April meeting was addressed by Roger Chapman with the theme to his talk being "The Campaign to Save our Footpaths". Roger began by saying that many of the footpaths that run through our area are not recorded as public rights of way and as such could be lost when the legislation on this matter changes in 2025. He went on to explain the actions that the 'Ramblers' and ordinary members of the public could take to get these footpaths listed before it is too late.

For our annual outing in May, we enjoyed a walk around the High Street in Barnet, guided by Paul Baker. Having started at St John the Baptist Church we followed a circuitous route ending up at Barnet Museum. On the way we passed the Victoria Bakery, the front step of which, is said to be Charles Dickens' inspiration of where Oliver Twist is said to have met the Artful Dodger.

During the summer we attended three events: The Coppetts Woodland Festival, the East Finchley Festival and the Stephens House and Garden Fair, to help publicise the society, meet some of our members and sell some books. The East Finchley Festival was held on one of the hottest days of the year and we were surprised at how popular our stand was until we realised that people were coming in to the shade to cool down! At all the events we were pleased to be able to say "Hello" to a number of regulars and sign up some new members. My thanks to all those members who have come along during the year to help erect and dismantle the stand or who have given up their time to staff it and help promote the Society and answer visitor's questions.

Our AGM took place on 28th June and the meeting was well attended. Our archivists produced an excellent display of books and artefacts for members to see after the main business of the meeting was concluded. My thanks to Tony Roberts and his team for their work throughout the year, especially the work currently in progress to make the records more available online.

Our annual dinner was held in July and once again we dined at South Herts Golf Club and enjoyed a splendid meal followed by an entertaining speech by Mr Martin Russell, the Representative Deputy Lieutenant for the London Borough of Barnet. My thanks to the

management and caterers at the Club for their hospitality. We have chosen the same venue for 2019 and will be holding the dinner on Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> July.

For quite some time we have been in negotiation to get a plaque erected to Octavia Hill close to the site of Brownswells in the High Road, East Finchley, and I'm pleased to be able to report that this was finally achieved thanks mainly to the efforts of Peter Marsh and Lynn Bresler. On Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> August we gathered at a newly created open space at the Green Man Centre. Peter Clayton from the Octavia Hill Society in Wisbech, Cambridgeshire, attended and spoke about the work done by the renowned lady before the plaque was unveiled. Our thanks go to the Octavia Hill Society, the Peabody Trust and the Green Man Community Centre for sharing the cost of the production and installation of the information plaque.

The speaker for our September meeting was to have been Dr John Hodgson speaking on "The story of London Buses" but unfortunately, he suffered a fall at Stephens House just before he was due to speak and was incapacitated. However, Andy Savage stepped in with no notice and spoke on the Ffestiniog and Welsh Highland Narrow Gauge Railway. We are extremely grateful to Andy who just happened to be at Stephens House at the time and had his notes and slides with him. Andy is the Executive Director of the Railway Heritage Trust and former chairman of the Avenue House Trust. Fortunately, Dr Hodgson was not badly injured and was able to leave hospital after some treatment. We are hoping to secure his attendance at some time in the future.

For our October meeting we left Stephens House and went a few hundred yards to St Mary-at-Finchley Church, courtesy of the Rev'd Philip Davison. In the fine and historic surroundings of this ancient church our speaker was Dr Roger Bowdler, who worked for 28 years for English Heritage/Historic England and is an expert in funerary art and design.

His talk was on Major John Cartwright, who is buried in the Churchyard of St Mary-at-Finchley. John Cartwright (1740-1824) was an early and influential advocate of American independence, universal (male) suffrage, the abolition of slavery and many other causes. When he died, he was buried at St Mary's and an obelisk was raised above his grave.

The November meeting is when we hold the Jean Scott Memorial Lecture and the topic was "Nursing; the VAD Nurses in WW1", to commemorate the centenary of the end of the First World War. The talk was given by members of the Nurses Memorial Appeal who have established, and are continuing to maintain, a national war memorial in memory of 1500 nurses from this country killed in the two World Wars. It was introduced by Sonja Curtis, who is a trustee, and presented by John and Eunice Drewry, who are both patrons and consisted not only of slides with a commentary but the readings of contemporaneous writings from those involved in the conflicts.

In January 2019 we welcomed a neighbouring society from Highgate represented by two of their long-standing members and Vice Presidents; Janice Morgan and Michael Hammerson, who explained what their society does, the difficulties it experiences by representing an area spanned by several London Boroughs and the successes it has with working with the various planning departments.

At the end of the meeting we were delighted to make a presentation to Derek Warren who had announced that after many years he was standing down from our Environment & Transport committee.

The subject of Victoria Park and what work might be taking place has been a hot topic for many months among the residents of Finchley Central so in February we were pleased to secure the attendance of Mr. Matthew Gunyon, who is Barnet Council's Partnership and Development Manager of Greenspaces and Streets. He was able to explain what plans the Council has for the park following the consultation with the public.

In March, Helen Allen of Finchley Garden Village gave an illustrated talk, including a short video, on how the village came into existence along with other garden villages and explained the importance of being designated a conservation area with tight restrictions on any external work that might be done to the outsides of the houses in the village. She also spoke of the events held on the village green and the respect shown by the villagers for the unique war memorial.

I would like to express my thanks to Harriet Copperman who organises our monthly meetings, liaises with our speakers and ensures that everything is in place at the right place at the right time (including the Chairman!).

Away from the monthly meetings and outings, the various committees that work in the background have continued to be busy. These are; Administration, Environment & Transport, Planning, Public Relations and the Executive Committee who receive reports and sanction activities as required. Each chairman has reported separately below on his committee's progress during the year.

One of the issues that has continued to cause concern is that of College Farm, Finchley. The property was bought by College Farm Trust in 2006 with the published aim of opening the farm to the public but it has significantly failed to do so for a period in excess of twelve years. Greater concern was raised by the news that the Charity Commission had revoked the charitable status of the Trust in 2018 and the Executive Committee felt that we should try and take some action. Accordingly, we applied to the London Borough of Barnet to list the farm as an Asset of Community Value so that if it came up for sale there would be an opportunity for the community to make a bid ahead of any other potential buyers.

The matter attracted a great deal of public interest with over three thousand people signing an online petition supporting our application. I am delighted to say that when the matter came before the appropriate Council committee in March it received unanimous approval from all members.

I will close this report for 2018/19 by thanking all those who help make The Finchley Society what it is today. Some are well known to our members, some are not. Some are largely unseen such as Martin Summers, the Newsletter Distribution Manager, and our band of "Posties" who take delivery of a bundle of newsletters and then ensure that they are promptly delivered to our membership. Without this band of volunteers, it would be impossible to ensure the newsletter gets delivered to all our members with minimal cost.

Another unseen helper is Guy Nevill whose work entails visiting local supermarkets and bookshops in an effort to persuade them to stock the Society's collection of books. He then has the task of visiting the shops, ensuring the stock is in place, taking orders and delivering more books as needed as well as being involved in the management of the invoices.

I have briefly mentioned the committees who have met throughout the year and I must thank all those committee members who turn out in all weathers to consider important issues concerning the Society and Finchley in general. Special thanks must go to Lynn Bresler who takes the minutes for two committees, for David Coates who is our membership secretary and for Stephen Yeo, our webmaster who keeps the website in good order and sends out emails to members keeping them up-to-date with meetings and events.

My special thanks also go to Ali Dezyanian who took over as our treasurer last year and who has worked very hard throughout the year to bring in a new and more comprehensive accounting system.

My final vote of thanks is to Rosemary Coates, our hard working and efficient Society Secretary. Not only has she allowed her house to become the official postal address of the society but never does a single day pass without several emails arriving which need to be dealt with as well as phone calls and letters.

Rosemary and David also open their house regularly for committee and sub-committee meetings for which there is always a generous supply of biscuits, and they produce the bi-monthly newsletter ensuring that it goes out on time packed with news and photographs.

**Michael Crick, Chairman**

## **REPORT OF THE ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE**

**Committee:** The Agenda for the committee continues to grow. Thankfully, the small ad hoc Committee set up after the 2017 AGM has taken over the web site and publicity items and is now named the P R Committee - see separate report below.

Two laptops and a chair for the Archive Room have been procured from a bequest left to the Society by the Winton Family.

The "user guides" for all the various society's officers have now been completed and copies held on file and in the Archives.

**Meetings:** Harriet Copperman continues as our programme organiser and arranged the outing to Barnet Museum and a conducted walk around Barnet. We aim to have a local connection for most of our meetings.

**Projects:** We continue to monitor the whereabouts of the stained-glass windows in the old Church End library.

The first twelve winning entries for the photographic competition concluded with the overall winner, Donald Lyven, being presented with a prize at our November meeting. We will,

however, be continuing the competition and ask for photographs to be submitted which will be published in the Newsletter and on our web site.

The petition set up to have College Farm added to the Borough's list of 'Assets of Community Value' was successful thanks to the drive provided by our Chairman, Mick Crick.

A plaque to Octavia Hill was unveiled at the Green Man Community garden in August and although a plaque for "Lord" George Sanger has been designed, the fees for a planning application have increased threefold and negotiations are underway to see if these can be reduced before submitting the application. We have two other proposed plaques: for Anthony Salvin, architect, in East End Road and for Major John Cartwright, social reformer, at St. Mary's Church. An appeal was made in the newsletter for assistance with graphic design which was answered by two members offering their help.

**Annual Dinner:** Martin Russell, deputy Lord-Lieutenant for Barnet was our speaker at the annual dinner held once again at South Herts Golf Club.

**Education:** Unfortunately, we have had very little contact with schools this year probably because of the very busy curriculum which schools have to manage, although we do send them our Newsletter to try and attract younger members.

**Publicity:** As mentioned in the Chairman's report, Joanna Lumley become our patron and came to a combined lunch and official opening of the Visitor Centre at Stephens House and Gardens. There was also a "photo opportunity" at Spike Milligan's statue in the grounds.

A small celebration was held on 16 April by the statue to mark the centenary of Spike's birth.

The Society was represented at several local fairs by Mick Crick and a band of helpers who attended to publicise the Society's aims and attract new members. Members may be aware that we are also appearing on various Social Media sites thanks to the PR Committee.

**Newsletter:** This continues to be produced to a high standard six times a year. The re-organisation of the delivery team mentioned last year has taken place with several new "posties".

**Membership:** David Coates keeps the committee up to date with membership affairs. Currently we are slightly below last year's figures. The PR committee are aware of this and are busy devising ways to reverse the trend.

**Fund Raising:** The 100 Club sold 100 shares and thanks to the generosity of members well over £600 was raised for the rent of the archive room.

**Book sales:** These have continued steadily throughout the year and Guy Nevill continues to manage the accounts as well as exploring possible new outlets.

**Conclusion:** Comparing our Society with others we are fortunate in retaining our membership at a consistent level and this is because of the effort and enthusiasm of committees and all the other hard working non committee volunteers who give so much time to the Society.

***Peter Marsh, Chairman***

## **THE PUBLIC RELATIONS SUB-COMMITTEE**

Following suggestions made by members at the AGM in 2017, the PR Sub-Committee was formed to see how these ideas could be implemented. Its main aims would be to spread knowledge of The Finchley Society, to try and increase membership, especially with younger people, and to make better use of social media about the Society.

The Finchley Society is now represented annually at various local fairs and festivals and in addition to selling the Society's and other local books, this enables us to speak to passers-by about the work of the Society, and we are pleased to say that quite a few people have become members at these events. We are currently looking at ways of disseminating information about events taking place in Finchley that members may like to take part in. We are especially concerned about those people who may feel lonely and, through the newsletter, are actively trying to encourage them to participate in these activities.

The Sub-Committee is aware of the enormous amount of work that is undertaken by the three main Committees within the Finchley Society but is concerned that information on this work is not shared with others. It will continue to encourage more information to be put on social media.

Several initiatives have been looked at including one to donate to the local food bank, and this was implemented in November. We are also looking to see if IT training could be provided to members. In addition, we have been trying to engage with local schools which has not been easy, but a copy of the newsletter is now sent to all schools in our area.

The Committee has recently appointed Paul Christian as the Society's Media Officer and Paul is now circulating information about the Society's activities especially on social media.

***Mick Crick, Chairman***

## **Report of the Archives Team**

The Society has welcomed Carol Vielba and Stewart Wild to the Archive team this year, alongside stalwarts Derek and Barbara Warren, all of whom work tirelessly on archives activities.

This year has been one of consolidation. The contents of each of our boxes are being catalogued and we continue to answer queries via the web site.

The Society continues to receive a trickle of accessions – of note this year is a 1920s commercial booklet of photographic views of Finchley (described as new and old!), alternating with contemporary advertisements, and also the Finchley YHA Group logbook of the 1950s and 1960s

The Archives have received a brand-new computer, thanks to the donation of the family of our late Hon. Secretary, Robert Winton, and the assistance of our Chairman Mick Crick.

The Society decided that providing the archive room with a broadband link could not be justified and instead, with the active assistance of Stephen Yeo, we are trialling a connection via a mobile phone network. This enables email enquiries to be received and responded to directly from the archive room, and for Society documents to be downloaded for storage. We plan to investigate the possibility of scanning and sending documents to the Finchley Society cloud.

**Tony Roberts, Archives Manager**

## **REPORT OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE**

Here are some of the issues we have discussed and acted upon this year: -

**Barnet footpaths Rights of Way Group:** There is positive news from the footpaths group. Roger Chapman has been working with Libby Martin of the 'Ramblers' on footpath issues across Barnet. This has so far turned out to be more productive than they had hoped for. They met with Jamie Blake, the Director of Environment for Barnet Council, and following that they made suggestions for Barnet to include in their draft Local Implementation plan (a bid document to the Mayor for funding over three years) and most of what they asked for has found its way into the draft L.I.P. which is now out for public consultation.

The Director of Environment for Barnet is receptive to considering inclusion of a "Rights of Way Improvement Plan" in the L.I.P. which would meet most of our aims in respect of getting footpaths onto the definitive map if it is followed through. They are encouraging all local bodies interested in footpaths to support what Barnet has included in its draft LIP so far and to ask for inclusion of the "Rights of Way Improvement Plan" as well.

**Pedestrian environment:** Barnet Council has drawn up a Draft Barnet Domestic Crossover Policy, this is the first time that Barnet has had a policy on the matter. As is evident in the Finchley area all the information regarding applying for a crossover and creating in-curtilage parking is in 'Guidance Notes' only so these are often flouted resulting in degradation of the street environment paving over complete front gardens, vehicles projecting over the pavement destruction of verges and paving. This policy relaxes the requirements for space but intends that residents sign up to their agreed arrangement which in theory has to be adhered to. Future contraventions will require the public to alert the council as routine inspections by Highways Officers are rare. Apparently, there will not be retrospective action on existing arrangements that do not comply.

**Road surfaces:** We would encourage all members to report potholes on the council web-site. Although the council carries out repairs as quickly as possible, they are unable to keep up with the state of roads in Finchley which continue to deteriorate and could take decades to rectify. But at least if we report the potholes and defects, we can feel we are being useful to some degree.

**Victoria Park:** A report from Brian Plen, chair of the Friends of Victoria Park:- The Master Plan for development of the park has been approved by the Council and the programme of carrying out the second option is now being planned in detail and will come back for budgetary approval by the relevant sub-committee. Because of government-imposed austerity the park is no longer locked at night and the rusty litterbins will have to await replacement in phase one of the Capital Fund redevelopment. The Friends of Victoria Park continue their vigils, litter-picks and soon an online Tree-trail. Our hope to re-green the Sensory Garden has been dashed as all our bulbs were trampled by children.

**Cherry Tree Wood:** The re-formed Friends of Cherry Tree Wood held their AGM in January with Roger Chapman as chair which was a very positive meeting. An activity programme has been drawn up which includes preparing a bid for bins, benches, flower beds and paths, options for the Pavilion site following demolition, activities studying the flora & fauna of the wood and looking further ahead to proposals for the tennis courts, café, toilets and playground refurbishment. FoCTW new website is [friendsofcherrytreewood.home.blog](http://friendsofcherrytreewood.home.blog)

**North Finchley SPD:** We still await the results of the 2017 Barnet consultation on the Supplementary Planning Document. In early 2018 Barnet Council proposed the setting up of a monitoring board the 'North Finchley Partnership Board' and they agreed that The Finchley Society would be represented. We have heard nothing since and there seems to be a considerable delay in progressing this. We are especially interested to learn how traffic management is to be proposed in detail as the success or otherwise of North Finchley hinges on getting this right.

**London Green Belt Council:** Stephen Cooper is representing The Finchley Society on the London Green Belt Council. Although the LGBC dealings are appropriate for London as a whole, the area covered by The Finchley Society has only two small pockets of land which come within the green belt.

**2019/2020:** We endeavour to attend appropriate council committee meetings and keep in touch with relevant agenda items. We would like one or two new members to join us on the committee.

**Derek Warren:** Derek, a long serving member of the Environment & Transport Committee, has retired from the committee and we thank him for all his work and with his special interest in the natural environment.

***Peter Hale, Chairman***

## **REPORT OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE**

The Planning Committee has been stable in the past year. Peter Pickering continues as Chairman and Avra Archer as Secretary. We meet every other month and Pat Dunnill makes us welcome at her home. We have developed close relations with the Friern Barnet and Whetstone Residents' Association and their Treasurer, David Thompson, attends our



meetings. We have had responses to our appeals for more members, and Mark Lawrence has joined us.

**Objective:** Our objective is to preserve the local, heritage, and conservation character of Finchley and Friern Barnet, and to support local people in efforts to resist inappropriate development. We are vigilant to prevent the loss of family houses to flats in the quintessentially suburban areas of Finchley.

**Procedure:** We have Monitors for each ward: Mary Hogben for East Finchley; Avra Archer and Mark Lawrence for Church End; Sheila Shannon and Brenda Barrett 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 keep us informed. We are represented on the Conservation Area Advisory Committee for the conservation areas in Finchley. Each week we are sent a list of planning and tree work applications by Barnet Council, which the Monitors study. 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.

We press for enforcement when planning rules have been broken. Developers may, without planning permission, demolish or convert existing properties and applicants may, instead of doing that for which they have permission, ignore it and build something different.

**Cases:** The most common applications are for extensions, loft conversions, rear extensions into back garden; basements (which may pose a particular problem if they are near to a spring line); and adding extra storeys onto blocks, especially along the High Road. There are also applications, which it is hard for the Council to refuse: for conversions of offices to residential under the rules for permitted development, and applications for Houses in Multiple Occupation, which are appropriate in some locations but very undesirable in others. Larger developments in our area are less frequent but can be very contentious. We continue to be surprised, sometimes pleasantly, by some of the decisions by the Council and by Inspectors on Appeal. A particularly interesting saga has been the intention of two separate developers to replace the old Finchley Central Police Station with a large and overbearing block of flats. The first developer pulled out after refusal of planning permission and sold on the site to another. Two further planning applications were made and refused by Barnet Planning Committee - despite officers' recommendations to approve. Both went to appeal and in both the Inspector upheld the refusal - much to the pleased amazement of local residents. This has been a tale of 'Resident Power'. A group of residents who had no experience of planning issues formed themselves into a Residents' Group against the proposals. They kept up the pressure, over a long time, and managed to stop what would have been a horrendously large development - and hopefully achieve a better outcome. We understand that the developers are now negotiating with the Group to come to some compromise.

In East Finchley, following the granting of approval to the former GLH and Valona House site opposite the tube station, after a very lengthy process of mitigating the worst aspects, the developer tried to slip through a whole additional floor below ground and some changes to

the windows as 'non material' amendments. Following pressure this was withdrawn but we remain vigilant. Work has however not yet started and there are real concerns that the developer is waiting for the adjacent Park House, owned by the Council, to come on the market. These two sites together with the entrance to Cherry Tree Wood and directly opposite the listed Tube station are in a key position in the urban landscape.

The new owners of the listed school building in East End Road, formerly the Bobath centre, succeeded in gaining permission for some demolition and rebuilding changes. There are key sites at the top of Church Lane and by Budgens that have been granted approval on appeal, and we wait for work to start. There are additionally two sites providing much needed housing for Barnet Homes that have gained permissions through the year and where work has already commenced.

**North Finchley:** The Supplementary Planning Guidance was approved by the Council early in 2018, but there has been little to see for it - indeed the promised Partnership Board has not so far materialised.

**Locally listed buildings:** Barnet Council undertook to review their Local List of Buildings of historic or architectural importance starting in 2017. It is still ongoing. Volunteers, including members of the Planning Committee, guided by a consultant went out to photograph and describe buildings already on the list and to add new buildings of note. These are all now with the consultants and the Council to check, verify and sort into a final list. Once a building is on the list then this should be considered by planners when reviewing any related applications.

**Barnet Local Plan:** In 2018/9 the Council did not, as had been expected, begin its consultation on the next Local Plan. The new London Plan, with which Barnet's plan will have to be in general conformity, is undergoing 'Examination-in-Public'. We expect Barnet to have to plan for a significantly larger number of dwellings as the need for more new homes becomes ever more urgent, and East Finchley in particular may be targeted for densification.

**Peter Pickering, Chairman**

## **COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND APPOINTEES**

### **Executive Committee**

Chair: Mick Crick

President: David Smith

Vice-President: Lynn Bresler

Vice President: Peter Pickering

Vice President: Peter Marsh

Hon. Treasurer: Ali Dezyanian

Hon. Secretary: Rosemary Coates

Harriet Copperman OBE

Tony Kirkham

### **Administration Committee**

Chair: Peter Marsh

Secretary: Rosemary Coates

David Smith

Minute Taker: Lynn Bresler

Mick Crick

David Coates

Harriet Copperman

### **Environment and Transport Committee**

Chair: Peter Hale

Secretary: Stephen Cooper

Peter Pickering

Tony Sarchet

Brian Plen

Brenda Barrett

Gardi Vaswani

### **Planning Committee**

Chair: Peter Pickering

Secretary: Avra Ploumi-Archer

Mary Hogben

Jacques Astruc

Sheila Shannon

Pat Dunnill

Brenda Barrett

## **Appointees Ex-Committee**

Archives Manager	Tony Roberts
Distribution Manager:	Martin Summers
Insurance Adviser:	Stephen Ross
Book Sales Co-ordinator:	Guy Nevill
Local History Secretary;	Martin Ellman
Media Co-ordinator:	Paul Christian
Equipment officer	Mick Crick/John Parsons
Membership Secretary	David Coates
Web Site Manager:	Stephen Yeo
Programme Secretary:	Harriet Copperman OBE
Newsletter Editors:	Rosemary and David Coates
Minute Secretary (Executive Committee)	Lynn Bresler
Legal Advisor:	Tony Kirkham
Education Secretary:	Lynne Ashley and Adele Nevill
Independent Examiner	Vacant