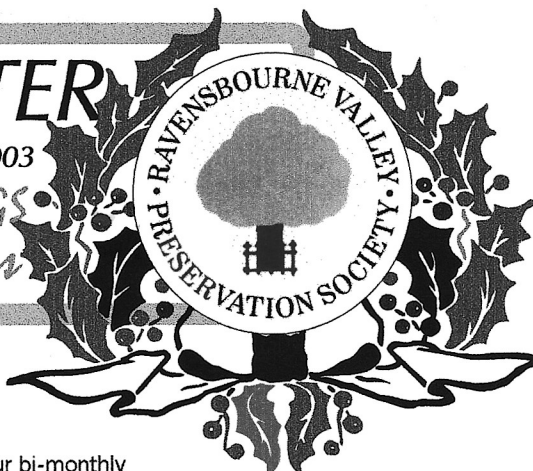


# NEWSLETTER

4/2003 December 2003

SEASON'S GREETINGS

*To all our readers*



## EDITORIAL

Every year, about now, we distribute our bi-monthly newsletter to each household in the area. The intention is to get it through everyone's letter box before Christmas and the New Year. This is also a good time to thank everyone who has supported the Society - actively or passively - over the last year.

Although the name of the Society sounds wide ranging, we are in fact a residents' Association covering an area broadly bounded by London Road, Beckenham Lane, Downs Hill/ Crab hill and McDonalds at the end of Ashgrove Road. We aim to be a pressure group on issues which do or could affect us locally. That means that we deal with the Councillors and Officers of both Bromley and Lewisham.

There have not been any really major issues over the year but a whole series of planning and transport matters which have kept the officers and some Road Reps busy. Also, of course, Beckenham Place Park which is still ongoing with any final solution still a long way off.

Enclosed with this Newsletter for those residents who do not yet support us financially, is a green slip. If, after reading the newsletter you would like to join us, just fill in the slip and pop it through the letterbox of your Road Rep whose name and address is shown on the slip. Also enclosed for those residents in Bromley is a green card which is aimed at making it easier for people to draw the Council's attention to maintenance problems in our streets. For more copies call at the reception desk at the Council Offices in Stockwell Close.

I have to appeal for a volunteer to take on the job of Road Rep for Elstree Hill/ Erin Close / Hillbrow. This is not an onerous task - just delivering 5 or 6 newsletters a year and in the late Summer / early Autumn, collecting subscriptions. The Elstree Hill Road Rep has the smallest load of all. Volunteers need not necessarily actually live in the roads to be served.

Finally - some information I hope none of you will need - none of the old telephone numbers for Bromley Hospitals are now recognised and the new numbers do not appear in the latest Directories. The new number for all of Bromley's NHS Hospitals is 01689 863000

## DATES FOR THE DIARY

Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> January 2004 - Members' Meeting 8.00pm, Bromley Court Hotel.

Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> March 2004 - Annual general Meeting, 8.00pm Bromley Court Hotel

All are welcome to attend any of our meetings, but please check the hotel "activities" board to make sure you go to the right room.

Peter Pain (Editor)

## **TRANSPORT**

### *Railtrack (Network Rail) - Shortlands Junction*

All of the civil engineering, rail and signalling work has now been completed. Although originally not expected to be finished this year, the landscape planting is also virtually complete. Now we have to wait for nature to take its course with the weaker of the 10,000 new trees being thinned out in due course to allow the stronger ones to thrive.

### *Gravel from Elstree Hill into Calmont Road / Warren Avenue.*

This time last year, it looked as though the debate about the responsibility for moving the washed down gravel would remain unresolved despite the fact that passing cars were sending stones onto parked cars and through the windows of nearby properties. However, thanks to direct representation by affected residents with photographic proof, Bromley managed to find some funding and contractors were employed to clear up Calmont Road and Warren Avenue, move the gravel back onto Elstree Hill, fill some quite deep ruts and do some regrading.. Since then there has not been any heavy rain and the situation seems reasonable. The testing time will come if we get any severe winter storms.

### *Bus Stops - Route 354*

Ever since its inception the buses on route 354 have been "hail and ride" in Foxgrove Road, Downs Hill, Ravensbourne Avenue and Farnaby Road. We have known for some time that this section of the route was likely to be converted to fixed stop operation. During the summer various fixed stop signs began to appear - some in very strange places. Some clashed with marked parking bays and one was in a position with no pavement serving it. To make matters worse the drivers apparently had not been briefed and made up their own minds on whether to stop for passengers who hailed them between these new stops.

There were letters of protest to "London Buses" ( who have overall responsibility within the GLA for London's bus services). Copies were also sent to our local Councillor and the officer in Bromley who should have been consulted by London Buses. Nothing happened for seven weeks; we sent a reminder after which we were told that our first letter had not been received. There followed a reply to our "lost" letter and the next day we received a confirmation that they had never received it! Meanwhile the bus stops had been covered to read "this stop is not in use". It is now confirmed that these covers will remain until all work on the new stops has been completed - until then this section of the route will remain "hail and ride". No date could be given for this as Bromley have not yet placed hard surfaces down at all the new stops.

We have all experienced the results of inefficient management but the confusion caused by this shambles - both on site and in the correspondence, must rate it highly in any incompetence stakes.

### *Shortlands Road Bridge*

Work on this bridge over the River Ravensbourne to replace the original cast iron and sandstone structure with reinforced concrete bringing it up to modern standards was scheduled for completion at the end of September. It was only finished early in November.

During the work this junction has been a place to be avoided. Let us hope that the traffic recently diverted onto our local roads will now return to Beckenham Lane.

## PLANNING

### Unitary Development Plans (UDP's)

Both Bromley and Lewisham have been rewriting and updating their Local Plans. These Plans take into account central government guidance and set the scene for all developments in our areas. The Plans, when approved by the Secretary of State, become statutory documents.

Lewisham - have completed their plan, the public Inquiry has been held and its report issued. We are now awaiting the publication of the approved documents.

Bromley - has also completed their plan in draft and the public Inquiry started at the end of October and is continuing. It is unlikely that the approved plan will be available until next summer - about 3 years later than originally planned..

### Planning Applications - Bromley

4 Highland Road A proposal for a new block of 7 flats was rejected by Bromley and the developer appealed against the decision. The appeal was also rejected. The developer then put in an application to extend the existing building to provide 5 flats. That was approved by Bromley and it appears that work on site to renovate and extend the existing house has begun. However there has been a recent further application for outline approval of a new block with 7 flats. The only difference between this and the previously rejected scheme appears to be that the total number of bedrooms has been reduced by one. We await Bromley's decision.

Telecommunication masts - Shortlands Golf Course Both Vodafone and T-Mobile submitted applications for separate phone masts disguised as trees on Shortlands Golf course. Each was nearly 19metres high (60ft) and would have stood above the surrounding trees. Following objections by ourselves and many local residents, both applications were refused by Bromley. One of the operators lodged an appeal against the decision and the appeal was allowed. In the month when the appeal decision was announced, three other similar cases in the Borough were also allowed. There have been a number of other cases during the year when appeals by mobile phone operators against rejection have also been allowed.

14 Elstree Hill Work to substantially extend and modify this property started without any planning application being submitted. Six retrospective applications were made and most were allowed after visits, deferments and resubmissions. The latest one for modifications to the garage has received conditional approval. The most worrying aspects of these applications has been the poor quality of the supporting plans and the lack of information on how this steeply sloping property and the neighbouring property would be stabilised.

### Planning Applications - Lewisham

44 Coniston Road The original application for 5, three storey town houses on this site has been running for over a year. The main problem is that the site is officially in Coniston Road but it is the garden that has been sold for development and this will front onto Belgravia Gardens. For those who do not know, Belgravia Gardens is a cul de sac and the new houses would exacerbate the existing parking problems there. A modified scheme of 4 town houses with access to their rear for parking has recently been approved by Lewisham. It remains to be seen whether that parking area will actually be used.

## COMMUNITY PROJECTS

4/03

### Valley School

For several years now we have been helping to fund the Valley School with environmental projects. Now that the Sensory Garden has been completed we agreed to help fund their next project - a "Story Telling Chair" which was to have been fashioned out of the trunk of the horse chestnut tree at the school entrance that had to be felled for safety reasons during the summer. In the event the old tree was so decayed that it could not be used. Bromley are on the lookout for a suitable replacement. Perhaps global warming will deliver a few storms during the coming winter and they will, in turn, deliver a tree so that the seat can be placed in the school's new orchard as planned.

### Replacement Street Trees

Bromley are currently replacing some of the street trees that have had to be felled for one reason or another. In general they are trying to respond to frontagers who want a tree in the pavement outside their house and in a summer like the last one, are prepared to water it regularly until it becomes established.

## BECKENHAM PLACE PARK

### Future Management

Although a preferred tenderer to manage the park and golf course and bring the Mansion and Homesteads into productive use was selected some 2 years ago, little has progressed. Initially Lewisham were unable to make decisions because they were in the process of a large reorganisation involving a Mayor and cabinet plus the consequential internal rearrangement of responsibilities of Council officers. Since then the tenderer has revamped his plans and introduced several unacceptable features such as a new build 200 seat conference centre, a 50 bay golf driving range and extending the golf course into the Common to make up for holes lost to the driving range. The Working Party has been promised a decision early in 2004, but no one is holding their breath.

### Present Management

Lewisham continue to oversee the Park with Glendale management contracted to run the golf course and maintain the rest of the park except Summerhouse Field which is maintained by FC86, a charity which provides football for youth. Lewisham have retained direct responsibility for the buildings and the formal gardens. They have also initiated a fair amount of ecological work which will be covered in the revised Management Plan when it is published.

In brief, the work done so far covers:-

Woodland: continuing clearance of invasive species such as sycamore, holly and rhododendron. Over 750 stems have so far been felled and treated with herbicide.

Grassland: restoring parts of the Railway Field, Crab Hill and the Common to hay meadow is in its second year and the results are beginning to show. Some other areas, especially of the golf course are being managed for conservation. So far about 13 hectares (over 150,000 sq yards) have been worked on.

Wetland: partial dredging by hand of the ancient pond near the Mansion has been done to control eutrophication. The remainder will be dredged by machine when funding can be obtained.

Surveys: surveys of plants, animals, birds and insects have been instituted and are ongoing. Results are not yet available.

#### Area east of the river accessed from Old Bromley Road

This area contains a childrens' play area, an under five's club, a pavilion with toilets, a car park and some grassland. The childrens' play area is progressively being made safer to meet modern standards. The paddling pool in the play area is scheduled to be replaced by an active water feature consisting of randomly programmed fountains set at ground level. These will give the benefit of no standing water, reduce rubbish deposited and be greater fun for the children.

Also, within the general area, there are possible plans for a group called the "Ilderton Project" to use part of the area and the pavilion. The project runs junior citizen activities and are supported by the police, fire brigade and the local Council. What they provisionally have in mind is to put a lightweight storey on top of the existing brick pavilion/changing rooms and then create areas illustrating potential dangers and teach organised groups of children how to anticipate and cope with them. They also address outdoor activities such as road safety both as pedestrians and as potential drivers using electric go-carts on a track. All activities are supervised.

Another possible idea in the early stages of investigation for this area is a small skate park which might be linked to the Ilderton Project.

## **SECURITY**

### Keyholder Listing

Many householders with alarms will be aware of changes regarding notification of keyholders to either the police or local authority. However information appears to be variable, so we have tried to get to the bottom of this and as far as we can find out, the facts are as follows:-

In January 2002 the Metropolitan Police deleted all of their keyholder records because they were not accurate and did not comply with the latest Data Protection requirements. However, under the London Local Authority Act of 1991, residents and businesses with audible alarms are required to register their details with the local police and local authority. To fill the gap left by the deletion of the police records Bromley initiated a new keyholder data base. Unknown to either Bromley or the local police, the Metropolitan Police headquarters contracted "Metkeyholders" to produce a new database. This has been given little publicity other than registered alarm companies being required to notify their customers through their annual maintenance contracts. Unfortunately we have had reports that not all companies are doing so. Nor, of course does this arrangement take account of DIY alarm systems.

If anyone has queries there are two helpline numbers.

The first is 0800 1977711 and is for the basic system which is available only to owners of audible alarms and is free. It is simply a list of keyholders for the alarmed property. This free registration is only available by telephone.

The second number is 0870 0601212 and is for the premium service which is available to everyone (with or without an alarm). It allows further information about the registrant's home to be recorded - ie - name of GP, preferred plumber etc. The charge for this premium service is £15 per year. In this case registration can either be by telephone or on line at [www.METKEYHOLDERS.org.uk](http://www.METKEYHOLDERS.org.uk) where more information is available.

### We think you should know!

There has been at least one serious mugging recently in Farnaby Road. One of our members was walking back home from Bromley town centre as the shops were closing on a recent

Saturday evening. Near her home in Farnaby Road a man came up to her and asked for her money. When she protested he struck her with a stick and ran off to his car and drove off with her handbag. Although her credit cards were "stopped" almost immediately, within the next hour her card was used at the Orpington Marks & Spencer for goods to the value of about £500 and later it was used again in Tooting. It has been suggested that this is not the first attack in this area - perhaps involving the same man. The victim's husband is concerned about the effectiveness of the street lighting in Farnaby Road. In view of the shading effect of the many trees in the road it is suggested that Bromley should consider reviewing the spacing of the streetlights.

In the meantime - BE AWARE AND TAKE CARE!

---

### **THE RVPS - SO FAR -** (By Leslie Tucker)

This is the first of what we hope will be a series of articles in future newsletters outlining the history of our patch and of the Society.

This Society does not, as its name may suggest, attempt to preserve the whole of the course of the River Ravensbourne from its source in Keston to its confluence with the Thames at Deptford. Whilst we are not indifferent to threats or enhancements proposed to the other reaches of the river, our principal interest is centred on the area where we live and so is usually restricted to that part of the valley from Shortlands Village to the "Garden Gate" including Beckenham Place Park.

### **WHY DOES OUR AREA LOOK THE WAY IT DOES?**

The areas of higher ground, separated by the river and its flood plain, have given this area its particular character. In turn, the character of these two valley sides have been determined by their respective histories. Originally they were covered by ancient woodland.

#### *Cator to the West*

The major human influence on the west bank of the river must have been John Cator's purchase, in the 18th century, of what is now Beckenham Place Park. He built the mansion and laid out the park. Having established the estate the family lived elsewhere for most of the 19th century and leased it to others. They sold off some peripheral land for development and had ambitious plans to build on the park itself but mercifully, these were never carried out.

In 1927 the LCC bought the park and mansion from the Cator family to preserve it for public use at a time when the Bellingham and Downham estates were being built. The park already accommodated a golf course at that time. In 1965 the GLC took over from the LCC and in 1971 the ownership of the park and mansion was transferred to Lewisham although part of the area was within Bromley Borough until the boundary changes of 1994 since which time the whole of the park has been within Lewisham.

#### *Lord Farnborough and Samuel Cawston on the East*

Meanwhile, on the other side of the valley, Bromley Hill House had been built on the top of the wooded ridge - it now forms the core of the Bromley Court Hotel. Its grounds extended northwards to the "Garden Gate" and to Beckenham Lane in the south. Its east and west boundaries were London Road and the river respectively.

There were three entrances to the estate, each with a lodge - one at the "Garden Gate", (which gave its name to the pub - recently transformed into a McDonalds), one off London Road (opposite the present junction with London Lane) and the third at the junction of Highland Road and Beckenham Lane - this was the last of the lodges to be demolished.

Most of the land on the slopes and up to London Road were left as a woodland garden, with viewpoints, picturesque shelters and long winding paths. The gardens gained sufficient fame to be visited by George IV and later by William IV and Queen Adelaide as well as many of the Great and Good of the period. The owners, from 1801 to 1838 were Lord and Lady Farnborough, he was a friend of William Pitt and a man of renowned artistic taste. Lady Amelia was an accomplished watercolour artist and was also largely responsible for the gardens where she made use of the many natural springs to create water features. She has left a valuable collection of her paintings which records her famous gardens. These also became known to the townsfolk after being opened to the public for one day a week during the summer months.

The coherence of the estate was lost after Samuel Cawston purchased it from Lord Farnborough's nephew in about 1880. He lived in Bromley Hill House and created the pattern of roads branching off London Road and sold off building plots for large Victorian villas. The coming of the railways meant that there was a ready market for such houses in the area with their owners being able to commute to the City easily for the first time.

He also built Christ Church in 1887 as a "Chapel of Ease" for himself, his estate workers and local residents. He appointed the first minister but there seems to have been no doubt that Mr. Cawston made all decisions affecting the use of the church. After two years his influence was very slightly reduced when it was licensed by the Church of England as a "Proprietary Chapel". Soon after building the church the same Samuel Cawston built a "Childrens' Church" in Highland Road. The building ceased to be used as a Sunday School in the early 1920's and at some stage was converted to flats. In the more recent past it has served as a Reformed Synagogue and is at present being extended.

Old maps show that Estree Hill originally gave access to the stables and other outbuildings serving Bromley Hill House - some of which remain and have now become an attractive house on the north side of the road. Further down the slope were the large walled kitchen gardens to the house. To be seen still are two sections of the garden walls protruding between houses in Warren Avenue.

Although the estate was broken up by Cawston's developments, the steepness of much of the west-facing slope has inhibited building and meant that a significant amount of woodland remains.

### The Valley Bottom

The land in the valley bottom has largely escaped development being the river's natural flood plain. Right up to the 1930's, parts were still wetlands - and included water meadows, reed beds, watercress beds and small lakes. These were to finally disappear under rubble dumped from war-damaged London in the late 1940's. The flat, grassed area between the railway and river, known as "The Common" is the result.

One of the Society's main aims is to resist changes which could further obscure the general character of this part of the valley. It would not be realistic nor desirable to resist all change and, unless near neighbours bring problems regarding small extensions to individual houses to our attention and ask for advice, we do not usually pursue such applications. Larger developments, or alien activities which can change the character of a street are another matter.

In a future issue we will remind you of how, why and when the Society was founded.



## **R.V.P.S. OFFICERS (DECEMBER 2003)**

Chairman	Elizabeth Davies, 12 Ravensmead Road, BR2 OBT
Vice Chairman	Peter Pain, 74 Madeira Avenue, BR1 4AS
Secretary	Tom Griffin, 9 The Chestnuts, Oaklands Rd. BR1 3SJ
Treasurer	Brian Sanders, 41 Farnaby Road, BR1 4BL
Auditor	Wally Carlross, 28a Parkhill Road, BR2 OLF
Planning Officer-Bromley	Leslie Tucker, 5 Bromley Avenue, BR1 4BG
Planning Officer-Lewisham	Paul Bennett, 12 Elstree Hill, BR1 4JE
Membership Secretary	Paul Bennett, 12 Elstree Hill, BR1 4JE
Newsletter Editor	Peter Pain, 74 Madeira Avenue, BR1 4AS
Railway Rep.	George Hodson, 20 Ravensbourne Avenue
Roads & Traffic Rep.	Arthur Barwell, 14 Grasmere Road, BR1 4BA
Tree Warden	Arthur Barwell, 14 Grasmere Road, BR1 4BA
LBRRF Delegate	
Police Consultative Com. Rep.	Kay Lincoln, 12 Ravensmead Road, BR2 OBT
BPP Joint Working Party Rep.	Peter Pain, 74 Madeira Avenue, BR1 4AS
Hon. Legal Advisor	Richard Thomas, 118 Ravensbourne Ave, BR2 OAX

## **ROAD REPRESENTATIVES**

Bromley Ave./Karen Ct./ Grasmere / Highland Rds. Brackenhill Lane	Leslie Tucker, 5 Bromley Avenue, BR1 4BG
Consiton Rd / Ullswater & Hawkshead Closes	Barbara Price, 85 Coniston Road, BR1 3BZ
Downs Hill / Crab Hill	Barbara Brown, 34 Downs Hill, BR3 5HB
Elstree Hill / Erin Close / Hillbrow	(POSITION VACANT - VOLUNTEERS PLEASE!)
Oaklands / Spencer Rds.	Daphne Robeson, 2 Lynton Court, London Rd.
Farnaby Rd (1-108)	Audrey Burford, 90 Farnaby Road, BR1 4BH
Farnaby Rd (109 +)	Maureen Johnson, 69 Farnaby Road, BR1 4BN
Madeira Avenue	Brian Atkinson, 94 Madeira Avenue, BR1 4AS
Ravensbourne Ave. (evens)	Ann Rowswell, 164 Ravensbourne Avenue, BR2 OAY
Ravensbourne Ave. (odds)	Ann Freiter, 128 Ravensbourne Avenue, BR2 OAX
Ravensmead Road	Kay Lincoln, 12 Ravensmead Road, BR2 OBT
Warren Ave./Calmont Rd / Ashgrove Rd./Belgravia Gdns	Alan Weatherley, 50 Warren Avenue, BR1 4BS