

NEWSLETTER

January 2013

1/2013

Web Site: rvpsbromley.org

E-mail: RVPS@talktalk.net



EDITORIAL

I have consulted a ten year old who has assured me that 2013 is not an unlucky number like 13 is believed to be. That being so it may not be a waste of time, ink or paper if I wish all our readers a happy, healthful and even a prosperous new year. Let's hope that my advisor is right and that at least some of our woes of recent years will be swept aside during the next twelve months.

2012 was not all bad - at least sports lovers and those who like diamonds must be well satisfied and by reading the contents of this Newsletter, I feel that most readers will think that generally our area has not been attacked by too many untoward development proposals since last January. The other great event of 2012 was that it marked our twenty fifth anniversary since our founding.

As is our usual custom, each year at about this time, we issue our Newsletter to all residents in our area - whether Members or not; in it we try to précis our activities over the previous year. This is such an issue. For those residents who are not yet Members of our Society this annual wider distribution is intended to enable them to learn that we exist and what we do - we hope that they will then decide to join us by using the "Green slip" enclosed. New members will receive a copy of our colourful "**25 Year Review**" which tells our story so far. Current Members have already been given their copies.

One thing that has pleased me during 2012 is the increase in the number of new (younger) members attending our regular meetings. This trend must continue if our Society is to continue to prosper as we move into our second 25 year period. I look forward to some of these young faces taking on the running of the Society as and when the need arises - which could be soon!

Leslie Tucker (Editor)

Dates for the Diary

Thursday 7th March - Annual General Meeting 8.00pm, Bromley Court Hotel

Thursday 2nd May - Members' Meeting 8.00pm, Bromley Court Hotel

COMMUNITY MATTERS

We do not have a heading for “Silver Jubilees” and as our 25th year has now passed into history, I do not want to invent one now - so here it is under “Community Matters”. It is only mentioned as this issue is intended to be a round-up of our activities during 2012. It was in June that we woke up to the fact that our founding had been 24 years and eleven months ago. It seemed too late to arrange a party so it was agreed that a special booklet would be prepared and issued to tell the story of our Society so far. It was issued in September to all Members and sent out to a select group of people who either would be interested to read about us or would not realise that they were interested in us until they had read it. Our Ward Councillors topped the list, but there were others. While we were about it, we had more copies printed than were currently needed so that we could ensure that new Members could also have a copy when they join. There are lots of coloured pictures in it so all those who have a green slip attached to their copy of this Newsletter - please note !

Ravensbourne River Enhancement

There have been two ambitious schemes in the last ten years or so to improve the appearance of, and accessibility to, the river between the Glassmill pond and Queen’s Mead. We have supported both sets of proposals but both have died a death due to lack of public funding. The more recent scheme has been in a deep coma for the last two or three years but recently there have been very slight indications of life - about the equivalent of the coma patient fluttering an eyelid - no more. The Environment Agency are now also looking at similar ideas in Beckenham Place Park. We are ready to renew our interest in supporting either or both of these endeavors if they are revived. However we are not holding our breath.

Warren Avenue Playing Field

I was about to refer to the story of the trees in Warren Avenue Playing Field as a mini-saga but bearing in mind the number of times it has been an issue on these pages, it is due to be upgraded to a real, full-blown saga. Those who have missed the early phases of this story should consider themselves lucky not to have to read more than this very condensed outline:- Mature trees dying - Lewisham unmoved - RVPS much moved - e-mails - more e-mails - meetings - more meetings - good news - new trees promised - better news - new trees planted - bad news - a drought - worst news - promised watering wasn’t - some new young trees dead (pause for breath return to 3 lines above and replay) - then new lot of new trees planted - drought - some watering as rain began and did not stop - some died but fewer. A new turn for the worst has been that some of the grass cutters have been over-zealous in their use of skimmers near to some of the young trees: their lives have been shortened after losing a complete band of bark just above ground level.

The present situation is that Lewisham have recently changed the contractor employed to plant/water/not water etc. which might be good news and might not - in the meantime the e-mail and meeting stages roll on. Ever hopeful.

For those with connections to the internet – similar information to that here can be found on our web site – see address top of page 1. You get coloured pictures there too!

ROADS AND TRAFFIC

Ravensbourne Ave / Station Road / Beckenham Lane Junction

What was said in the last Newsletter is still valid, so here it is again. “Having been battling for too long to try to persuade the authorities to take action to raise the chances of drivers exiting Ravensbourne Avenue to turn right towards Beckenham, we have decided that we have achieved as much as we can for the time being. We will watch how things go for a while”.

Junction of Farnaby Road, Bromley Avenue and Warren Avenue

There has been a debate between us and Bromley’s Highways Department about the visual obstruction caused by the shrubs in the raised planting bed at this junction. The sight-lines between drivers exiting from Bromley Avenue and Warren Avenue were obscured and might have resulted in two cars emerging at the same time from the undergrowth and finding themselves on a collision course.

The bush was gently trimmed with no significant improvement being evident. A visit by more senior officers were arranged by our helpful Ward Councillor, Nicola Dykes but her experts judged the bush innocent of the charges made. This decision has been challenged by us but upheld by Bromley. We will continue to watch the situation without actively pursuing the issue for the time being.

Pavement obstructions

In our last issue we asked members to ensure that they checked that none of their plants or shrubs had grown across adjacent public footpaths. Of particular concern are branches which protrude at head height (of both children and adults). Branches of things like brambles, can be especially dangerous. One pavement particularly noted was the stretch in Madeira Avenue which passes the rear boundaries of gardens in Farnaby Road, but there are plenty of other examples. Since we first mentioned this the weather has not provided much of an encouragement to deal with it; however it is important that such obstructions are cut back as soon as conditions allow.

Land near the Shell garage on Bromley Hill

A resident brought to our attention that land near the Shell garage is being used frequently by fly tippers for all sorts of unsavoury rubbish. This is having a detrimental impact on the area, including house prices. There are various difficulties to surmount in dealing with this problem including uncertainties about ownership of the land, but we have been liaising with councillors to try to do something about it.

Oaklands Road,

Following a comment from a resident, we are investigating the possibility of a yellow line being painted on the road at the corner (inside curve) opposite the Mission Care Home. This will improve the sightlines on this corner enormously and improve road safety.

PLANNING

This year has continued to be quite quiet with regard to the planning applications in our immediate area. We would normally continue at this point with a quick review of some of the past cases which we would have dealt earlier in the year. This year, due to the recession (every cloud has a silver lining), there really have been no significant development proposals within our patch which have caused us undue pain. There have been significant issues outside our patch however which will be addressed later and there are some current local cases which follow.

Current Issues:

"Billingford" - Elstree Hill At the time of going to press, the Council has yet to make a decision about the outline application at Billingford to demolish the existing property and replace it with a block of flats. We have been very pleased to receive the support of two of our three councillors, namely Will Harmer and Nicky Dykes in opposing this application and we are hopeful that it will be refused.

This property is particularly well known to us - but not in a good way. There has been a catalogue of infringements of planning regulations over recent years which has kept the owners of this property in our headlines and kept Bromley planners busy issuing Enforcement Notices. Just when we thought things were settling down and the white boundary walls topped with dazzling white pineapples might eventually fade into the background, we have this unwelcome proposal. There are a significant number of local objectors to the idea of introducing a block of flats in this picturesque, unmade road.

The Italian Villa, Elstree Hill: The Appeal against the Council's decision to refuse an application for internal alterations at The Italian Villa, has been delayed but no details are yet available. However, when they are published, they will be posted on our website.

Ravensbourne Station: We are pleased to mention that at long last significant progress has been made at Ravensbourne railway station. Recently, an

application by Network Rail was submitted and approved for the construction of a solid fence alongside the existing pedestrian ramp access. This will effectively screen neighbouring houses, and thereby restore the privacy of residents from passing station users. Our thanks to Cllr Colin Smith for his on-going support.

Greater Public Involvement - An Exciting New Approach: In the absence of planning applications, various of our members have been busily involved in maintaining the quality of the area in various other ways. In particular: - We have been testing a new 'problem reporting' arrangements for the Council which is a fully interactive Internet based system. We hope to be able to provide details shortly. We have been vigorous in getting pavements and roads swept and drains unblocked and generally kept to an acceptable standard. Reduced Council funding has meant a significantly reduced road sweeping budget but the road sweeping schedule is now available on our website. Please use this to ensure that the Council, or rather its contractors, are maintaining at least these new minimum standards.

A Feral Tree in Shortlands: For once, we are actively trying to remove a tree, rather than protect it! At the Shortlands traffic lights, there was a tree growing out of the base of the bridge (actually a culvert) over the Ravensbourne river. At first, the Council refused to remove it on the basis that it was growing on private land. However, this was very shortsighted as the tree was inevitably going to damage the bridge at some point. We asked Cllr. Colin Smith to intervene and following his doing so, the Council has now removed the tree and treated the stump - the bridge has survived. Our thanks to our member Mark Sumner for starting the ball rolling on this one.

Oak Trees, 10 Crab Hill: Two oak trees, protected by TPO's, at the front of 10 Crab Hill have been cited as the cause of a subsidence problem at 8 Crab Hill. The owners of both properties strongly object to the planning application to fell the trees (DC/12/03084/TPO) made by agents of the insurance company. The application will be considered by a planning sub-committee (probably on 24th Jan.) The owners, supported by RVPS, Copers Cope Area Residents Association, Councillors and concerned neighbours are hoping for a less drastic solution such as a root barrier. The short term, cost saving approach to subsidence by insurance companies, of felling trees and filling cracks is an increasing issue and having a negative impact in our area. Mature oaks are a valuable amenity for the area and should not be made a scapegoat for shallow foundations built on clay and the impact of two of the driest winters on record. It is interesting to note that there are subsidence problems in the area even where there are no trees.

Major Development Proposals in the Town Centre:

Bromley have approved and published a “Roadmap” to set out principles for the future development of the Town Centre. This is known as “The Town Centre Area Action Plan” or AAP. Principally it identifies twelve sites within the Town Centre in which new developments would be acceptable. It also defines the nature of such developments that would be encouraged in each case. It forms both an invitation to potential developers to make proposals and a constraint to ensure that they answer a perceived need in the area. This year has seen proposals made in two of these sites. One of these has been approved, one has been rejected. Also there has been an application for an hotel, commercial units and flats on the site of the old DHSS office at Bromley South but no outcome yet to report.

Bromley South Central : This is the larger of the two and has been approved. The site includes the multi-storey car park accessible from Westmoreland Road which has to be demolished. The development consists of 200 apartments, a multi-screen cinema, an hotel, an underground car park for about 400 cars and a row of shops/restaurants. All these (apart from the car park) will be set round a new public space accessible from Westmoreland Road and from the High Street through the narrow pedestrian corridor which at present leads to the old car park. This pedestrian access is one of the least satisfactory features of the design from the users’ point of view. The other main concern during the Consultation Period was the height of the residential block . At its highest it is 19 stories above the entrance level. There were objections to this by residents in Ravensbourne Road who could not welcome being shaded and overlooked by this block. During the construction period there will be a shortage of parking spaces in the area. We had pointed out these down-side points but on the whole we think that in the long term the new facilities will benefit the town.

Queen’s Gardens: This proposal for a building housing five new restaurants at the southern end of Queen’s Gardens seemed by most people to be both unnecessarily large a provision as well as being unacceptable, biting into this protected open space as it would. It would have been easier for the developers to have defended it had it been smaller and had it not encroached beyond the hard surfaced terrace into the garden area. A second, slightly smaller version was submitted later and this was also rejected. As it had been endorsed by Bromley, its rejection at the planning meeting was greeted by some Councillors with some disappointment - if not anger. However, although we were told that no appeal by the applicants was expected, one has recently been lodged. Further information on this will be added to our website when available.

BECKENHAM PLACE PARK WORKING PARTY

As established members will know, this “Working Party” was set up by Lewisham Council back in 1994 after the total rejection of the scheme for a large Tennis Centre plus a second Golf Course, plus a Golf Driving range to be set up in the park. It would have effectively ended free public access to most of the park as well as being contrary to the restrictions on building on Metropolitan Open Land - which Beckenham Place Park was and remains.

The purpose of the working party was to provide a point where Lewisham could consult with those groups which had objected to the proposals on what should be done instead. RVPS had opposed the plans and has since been represented at the meetings. A great deal of time and effort has been spent during those 18 years for very little real result. The main issue throughout has been the need to establish an acceptable management regime which is financially viable, meets the planning constraints and yet maintains the historic character of the Park and Mansion for public use.

There have been several cycles of consultants being commissioned, reports being made, tenders being obtained and considered. On each occasion there has been no positive result. During the summer of 2012 Lewisham were trying to persuade two “preferred tenderers” to agree to work together by each dropping their respective parts which Lewisham did not like and adopt the features that they did like. It was a forlorn hope. One party was financially challenged but were the better choice from the public good viewpoint while the other seemed less strapped for cash but did not meet the local needs of the public. When agreement between the two proved impossible Lewisham decided to begin the whole process yet again from scratch. The brief will be changed next time so that the Park and Mansion will be combined into one project. There are some advantages in this approach - at least in theory - let us hope that a long term solution can be found before the Working Party is twenty years old. Another pressing need is for the insurance claim for the rebuilding of the burnt out Stable Block to be agreed by the insurers.

Not a lot of people know this! (Did you?)

The man who created the character, *Modesty Blaise*, used to live in Highland Road - his name was Peter O'Donnell. He died a few years ago. Not only did he write over 90 stories in the comic strip which ran in the Evening Standard for about 40 years and in many other publications world-wide, but also a series of 13 novels of Modesty's various adventures; films were made of some of them.

If you know of any other past residents in our patch who are “famous” or just “interesting”. Even “notorious” might be welcomed if we could tell all without being sued. Please let the Editor know at <leslie_tucker@madasafish.com> Maybe it could become a future snippet here.

R.V.P.S. OFFICERS (January 2013)

Chairman	Leslie Watmore
Vice Chairman	Peter Pain
Secretary	Tony Morton
Treasurer	Brian Sanders
Auditor	Pura Atkinson
Planning Officer-East	Clive Lees
Planning Officer- West	Mike Mielniczek
Membership Secretary	Linda Muller
Newsletter Editor	Leslie Tucker
Roads & Traffic Rep.	Brian Atkinson
Tree Warden	-
LBBRF Delegate	-
BPP Joint Working Party Rep.	Leslie Tucker
Hon. Legal Advisor	Richard Thomas
Web Master	Clive Lees

ROAD REPRESENTATIVES

Bromley Ave. Grasmere Rd.	Leslie Tucker
Brackenhill Lane & Close Highland Rd. /Karen Ct.	Linda Müller
Coniston Rd / Ullswater & Hawkshead Closes	Barbara Price
Downs Hill / Crab Hill	Barbara Brown
Elstree Hill / Erin Close / Hillbrow	Roger Legg
Farnaby Rd	Roger Thelwell-Pichler
Madeira Avenue	Brian Atkinson
Oaklands / Spencer Rds.	David Page
Ravensbourne Ave. (evens)	Ann Rowswell
Ravensbourne Ave. (odds)	Ann Freiter
Ravensmead Road	Carolyn Campbell
Warren Ave.	Clive Lees
Calmont Rd /Ashgrove Rd. Belgravia Gdns/Ambleside	Rita Smith

Footnotes: (mainly for non-members wishing to be new members)

We issue at least 4 Newsletters to members each year but usually more. Our next one will include the Agenda for our AGM held on the first Thursday in March at the Bromley Court Hotel. Our regular Members' Meetings are also held at The Bromley Court Hotel on the first Thursday of every alternate month – May, July, September and so on. Each meeting is open to all Members.