

Newsletter

January 2014

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EDITORIAL

Before I write more I must wish all our readers a VERY HAPPY NEW YEAR - may 2014 bring you good fortune, good health and opportunities for as much work and as much idleness as you wish for. That goes, not only for our Members, but for all the other residents in our patch receiving this Newsletter.

That reference to "other residents" leads me to explain why many of you, who are not yet Members of our Society, are being given the opportunity to read this. For many years we have distributed our Christmas or New Year issue to all residents in our area in order to let them know that we exist and to give a picture of what we do or at least what we have done during the past year. Our hope is that if you are not yet a Member you will be persuaded to join us. We have now been active for some 26 years monitoring Planning proposals and reacting to any which we consider to be detrimental to our area. Our other interests include Roads and Traffic, Tree Preservation, and any environmental issues that might arise. We do not aim to be exclusively negative complainers. Sometimes we can praise proposals for change or just suggest constructive design modifications that we think would improve things. We have also frequently invested in local improvements including the Marker of the Greenwich Meridian where it cuts across Farnaby Road, various bench seats and some environmental projects for the Valley School.

We normally issue up to five Newsletters per annum to Members. If you are not yet a member please refer to the "Green Slip" included with your copy and consider joining us. In round figures, our Membership has steadily risen during the last few years and now approaches 500 households.

As existing Members will be aware, having passed my best before date, I wish to pass on this editorship to someone younger. I am delighted to be able to announce that this will be my last issue although I am even more delighted as already I am getting help from my successor, Euan McMaster of Downs Hill. I very much look forward to working with him over the change-over period - I am sure he will be a great asset to the Society. Euan will tell you more about himself in the February edition.

This is likely to be one of the last Newsletters in this format as we are moving towards making it easier to distribute by E-mail in future to save printing costs and postage - it should also make it more economic to include pictures - more of that later.

From me, this is not a goodbye - I hope to be around for some time yet but will try hard not to put too much of a brake on progress from my comfy back seat!

Leslie Tucker (retiring editor)

Date for the Diary

Thursday 6th March 2014 Annual General Meeting 8pm, Bromley Court Hotel

SITUATIONS VACANT

This has been an issue for the last two Newsletters but has now been partially resolved. The position of **Tree Warden** was filled by Tony Guyver before the last Newsletter and, as stated above we now have a new editor in waiting. Our **Webmaster** position has been filled by David England.

The only significant vacant post left is the one of “**Roads and Traffic Officer**” - for this we are still looking for a volunteer. There must be someone out there amongst all you competent people, you caring Members, you who have just retired and are now looking for something of interest to do. Just contact us through the website for a talk to find out more.

There is one more post of even greater significance where the present incumbent expressed a desire to stand down at some time: the incumbent is Clive Lees and the job is our **Planning Officer for Bromley**. This position is vital to the very existence of the Society and Clive would be a very hard act to follow - however he has expressed his willingness to carry on for the time being (many thanks Clive, we love you Clive) - but there would be no harm in us being able to identify a possible successor for Clive - we shall be looking out for a likely candidate from now on. Having a few heads tentatively rising over the parapet would be welcome!

THE SOCIETY LOGO

Recently this has been much debated. At our last meeting four options were compared - one was to keep the original Logo design - the second was to consider an interim design used on one or two recent issues of the Newsletter. The third involved the use of a new design offered by Malcolm Maclean who is a member of the Society and a professional graphic designer of things like logos. Without any briefing he replaced the original formalised oak tree with a cedar tree. Visually this was more interesting but, more importantly, he had happened on a significant association which we had with a particular cedar tree off Elstree Hill. (See that story in our 25 Year Review). In the end the meeting's preference was to use Malcolm's tree framed by the Society's name as you see it at the head of page 1. It was further agreed that we would use this on our Newsletters until our AGM and then put it to the vote. If it is approved we would adopt it for continued future use. We are grateful to Malcolm for his valuable contribution.

THE FUTURE OF THE NEWSLETTER:

The options have been debated, the main concern was whether members would prefer it to remain in its present form or if it should change in order to include pictures, more text of wider scope and be delivered by E-mail to those who could receive it in that way. Paper copies would still be delivered by Road Reps for those without computers. If the wider scope and improved presentation were to be achieved costs of hard copies would rise but this could be largely balanced if the take-up of digital distribution proved to be sufficiently great to reduce our printing costs of the paper copies that would still be necessary.

Our last newsletter made a strong appeal to members who could accept future Newsletters via E-mail to let us have their E-mail addresses. The response has been disappointing. (Only 20% so far) We need more if the future cost patterns are to balance.

To those members who have not done so already but have computers and would be happy to receive future newsletters by E-mail, we have to repeat the request made in our last issue. Here it is - gift-wrapped in a box this time, with the hope that it will be seen and acted on **IMMEDIATELY!**

Please send the information below VIA YOUR E-MAIL to our Membership Secretary,

Linda Muller on < l.m.mueller@hotmail.com >

YOUR NAME

YOUR POSTAL ADDRESS

This will confirm that you agree to receive future Newsletters and other RVPS documents via E-mail and for these purposes only.

Those who join this list - and we ideally need about 60 - 70% of you to do so in order to sustain an improved Newsletter at the present membership fee - could also be sent minutes of our Membership Meetings and any other "stop press" items between Newsletter issues.

If we were giving prizes for E-mail take up - Downs Hill would be the winners at 48% - bottom of the list at present is Ravensmead Road at 0%.

WEBSITE

David England, our new Webmaster is now up and running doing whatever webmasters do - we welcome him in this position which is forever becoming more important. I am sure that he will soon be co-ordinating his work with our new Newsletter editor.

You can contact David on <Webmaster.rvps@Outlook.com>

In order to restrict access to the principal parts of the Website to Members only, an experiment is being tried to gauge reactions. Anyone can access the Home page and Contact Details but other current information requires the use of a very simple password which is available to Members. The secret was revealed in our previous issue.

PLANNING

This has been a relatively quiet year as far as local planning submissions have been concerned but we update you on a few of the more notable ones below.

Billingford Elstree Hill: We are pleased that this appeal against Bromley's planning refusal for a block of flats in place of the existing house was recently dismissed! The principal reason was that the proposed building was simply too big for the site and would have had a negative impact on its neighbour at 27 Elstree Hill. Of course, a revised application is perfectly possible but presumably it would be for a much smaller building.

Sainsburys: have recently put in a planning application to relocate its motorcycle parking spaces. As the Planning officer uses this frequently he has objected! This report is not intended to whip up outrage but is simply included for those with a sense of humour!

35D highland Road: The appeal against refusal of planning permission for the over-height front fence was allowed. However, a condition of this decision was that the fence should be kept painted either dark green or dark brown which we think is an acceptable compromise and a great deal better than the original situation when the fence was painted white.

Italian Villa, Elstree Hill: During the year, we were pleased to hear that the Appeal against Bromley's refusal to permit an application for a change of use from residential to office and some minor building work was dismissed. The principal reason for the dismissal was that the change of use would have had an unacceptable impact on the neighbours.

10 Crab Hill: This application to remove a TPO on an oak tree said to be causing subsidence at 8 Crab Hill is rumbling on. There will be a meeting of Bromley's Development Control Committee (the big brother of plans subcommittees) on the 7th of January where the matter will be considered yet again. Notwithstanding this application, the insurer's agents have said that they will proceed with a root barrier to protect 8 Crab Hill, so even if the outcome of this meeting is unfavourable, the insurer may well not seek to have the tree felled anyway.

Land between Quasar and Shell Garage London Road: After a long period when this area was an unpleasant eyesore through serious fly tipping, someone has taken to cleaning it up very well for which we are all grateful.

44-46 Bromley Hill: The Society opposed a re-application for a major development at this address to demolish two semi-detached houses and replace them with a block of flats. The initial application for 9 flats over 3 floors had been lodged in 2011 and was successfully opposed by the Society at Lewisham planning stage and at a subsequent planning appeal. A further application was made early this year for a reduced scheme with 6 flats on 2 floors and a smaller footprint.

We were successful by further reducing the scale and mass of the block along with changes to the parking provisions and preventing residents in Calmont Road from being overlooked. The application has now been approved by Lewisham.

There were a number of applications in Downs Hill and Ravensbourne Avenue for side and rear extensions and garage and loft conversions which were largely unopposed.

ROADS AND TRAFFIC

Extension of Restricted Parking Zone: Residents in Oaklands Road, Spencer Road, Bromley Avenue, Madeira Avenue and perhaps some others, have recently been sent a notice by Bromley that asks for their opinion on whether they would like their roads to become a restricted parking zone or not.

It is a preliminary survey of opinions to enable the Council to decide if they should prepare firm proposals for further consultation with those affected.

We believe that this is in response to a private survey calling for the existing parking zones in the area to be extended to include Oaklands and Spencer Roads. Both roads have suffered from excessive commuter parking for many years. Bromley require all responses to be made by 30th January.

It is not for this Society to have a view on this matter - it is down to the residents affected. Individual views can be coloured by whether they are car owners or not, whether they have any off road parking or not, if they have a lot of visitors or not. These decisions are always difficult but **we do suggest that everyone should give a considered response bearing in mind the current situation in their road as it affects them**, and also considering the fact that, if residents parking permits were to be involved, they can cost £40 per annum.

As an example, although there is some commuter parking in Bromley Avenue at present, most people probably would not want restricted parking to be imposed as things are. However if Oaklands Road became restricted opinions may well change due to the likelihood of displaced vehicles spilling into Bromley Avenue. Such changes of view could be made during the final consultation stage.

Highland Road: We are grateful for the fact that Bromley have resurfaced this road which had been in such a bad condition for so long - not a pot hole now in sight! We wonder if they would have done this without our years of badgering.

BECKENHAM PLACE PARK

The most recent meeting of the Joint Working Party was held in the Mansion on 12th December, Leslie Tucker attended. The most important issue remains the long term future of the Park and its listed buildings.

The promise of significant action is stronger now than at any time in the last twenty years.

Lewisham are actively engaged in making bids for multi-million pound Heritage Grants for both park and buildings. The first stage bids are programmed to be made by the end of February 2014 after a consultation period with local interested parties (including RVPS). A decision is expected in June.

If this first stage is successful then the principles presented in it will be developed into detailed plans and work on site could begin in late 2015. At the same time the Environment Agency intend to prepare a Flood Alleviation Scheme for the Ravensbourne River with that part of their plans which affect Beckenham Place Park being co-ordinated into Lewisham's proposals for the park.

There is a lot of work to be done and a lot of decisions to be made. We should support these bids, there will be few other chances to find ways of building a sure future for the park. We hope to be able to report more by the time of our AGM or soon after.

ANOTHER SCAM

This may not be a new scam but it has been tried on one of our most trusted officers; he admits to have been nearly taken in - but, in the end, he wasn't. His account of what happened follows:-

"The person on the phone announced himself as a Police Detective of Holborn Police Station and gave his name and number and that they had two people under arrest there suspected of some misdemeanor concerning my bank card.

He wanted to ask me for some details. I responded that I needed to confirm his credentials before proceeding further and he advised that I should dial 999 and explain that I needed the relevant confirmation. This seemed odd but I went along with the suggestion; rang off, dialled 999 and was told that the details were genuine, and I was transferred (apparently) back to Holborn Police Station.

The recipient of the transferred call repeated the claim that they had two men under arrest etc etc; and then asked me what my bank balance was. I replied that I had no idea but would check and phone him back in due course. He tried to insist that I should not ring off. However I insisted that I preferred to do so, and he thereupon abandoned the call.

I reported this to the Met Police Safer Neighbourhoods Team who explained that the trick was that when I rang off to dial 999, the scammers did not ring off and were able thus to maintain their connection with me, so that my supposed 999 call merely reconnected me with them, enabling them to proceed as described".

If they had not abandoned the call his account details would have been available to the scammers and his bank balance could have been transferred to them.

Be warned !

SNOW FRIENDS

It's that time of year - or soon will be. Nature is likely to have its annual winter fun by messing up our comfortable daily lives by turning our roads into skating rinks and our footpaths into one big banana skin. Up to a point such natural disruptions

can be welcomed as an occasional reminder that we city dwellers are not entirely in charge of our destinies. Of course, snow is beautiful stuff but it can be tiresome and outstay its welcome. If you need help during any part of the unwelcome part of this period, or wish to help others - perhaps older than you, then contact "Snow friends" who can advise you how to help in your street.

One of our long-standing members who is a co-ordinator willing to act as a point of contact for potential "Snow Friends" is Marcus Oliver at <marcusoliver@btinternet.com> . "Snow Friends" are organised and supported by Bromley - see more information on their website. The idea is that public spirited residents, particularly if they live in a side street with little traffic and which is unlikely to be a priority for gritting, can be helped to help themselves to maintain access to their homes after snow falls. It could even be fun as well as being useful.

If you wish to join an established group in your road or to set up a new one, it would be a good idea to do it before we are all knee deep in the white stuff!

MIND THE GAPS

There are a great many street trees missing in our area. Some have died prematurely from disease or simply from old age. Others may have been struck down by wayward traffic or vandalism. We should be grateful if you would please provide details of missing street trees to our Tree officer in order that he can press Bromley or Lewisham for a replacement. Our tree officer is Tony Guyver who can be contacted on < anthony541@btinternet.com > or see his postal address on page 8.

REPORT PROBLEMS

In our last issue we recommended a website that can be used for reporting problems to the council. It is www.fixmystreet.com

Since December 2012, RVPS has reported at least 140 problems to the Council through this site!

You might use this site to report the following two unwelcome illegal immigrants if you find any.

Oak Processionary Moth : If you have oak trees in your garden or if you go walking under oak trees, perhaps in Beckenham Place Park, do please look out for this dangerous caterpillar and moth. It is dangerous to humans and can kill oak trees and must be treated by experts. More details on how to identify it are on our website.

Japanese Knotweed : We found some Japanese knotweed in the Millwall training ground and we have been advised by Millwall that they are consulting professionals as to how to deal with this menace. See website for details. More has been identified in Beckenham Place Park.

R.V.P.S. OFFICERS January 2014)

Chairman	Leslie Watmore
Vice Chairman	Clive Lees
Secretary	Beatrice Osborn
Treasurer	Brian Sanders
Auditor	Pura Atkinson
Planning Officer-East	Clive Lees
Planning Officer- West	Mike Mielniczek
Membership Secretary	Linda Muller
Newsletter Editor	Leslie Tucker (Euan McMaster to take over for next issue)
Roads & Traffic Rep.	-
Tree Warden	Tony Guyver
LBBRF Delegate	-
BPP Joint Working Party Rep.	Leslie Tucker
Hon. Legal Advisor	Richard Thomas
Web Master	David England, Webmaster.rvps@Outlook.com

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	Wendy Watmore
Elstree Hill / Erin Close / Hillbrow	Roger Legg
Farnaby Rd (nos. 1 -108)	Roger Thelwell-Pichler
Farnaby Rd (nos. 109 +)	Kay Shaw
Madeira Avenue	Brian Atkinson
Oaklands / Spencer Rds.	David Page
Ravensbourne Ave. (evens)	Ann Rowsell
Ravensbourne Ave. (odds)	Ann Freiter
Ravensmead Road	Peter Saunders
Warren Ave.	Carol Davidson
Calmont Rd /Ashgrove Rd. Belgravia Gdns/Ambleside	Rita Smith

Footnotes:

If you are connected to E-mail please let us know as stated on page 3. Your co-operation on this as soon as possible would be greatly appreciated – and necessary if we are to improve our future Newsletters in a sustainable way.

All new members responding to our invitation to join us will be given a copy of our coloured booklet originally issued in 2012 to mark the first 25 Years since our foundation in 1987.

“STOP PRESS: Our Road Rep. For nos 1 to 108 Farnaby Road, Roger Thelwell-Pichler, will stand down after distributing this issue. We thank him for his past efforts. We shall soon need a new volunteer to take over. Contact our E-mail for details if interested.