



July 2012

Friern Barnet & Whetstone Residents' Association

Friern Barnet and Whetstone Residents' Association

- We are non-political
 - We work for all residents in the area
 - We discuss issues with Local Councillors and Council Officials
 - Associated with the following bodies
- The Federation of Residents' Association of Barnet
 - The Finchley Society
 - Friends of Friary Park
 - North Finchley Environmental Forum
 - The Friern Barnet & District Local History Society
 - Coppetts Wood Conservationists
 - The London Green Belt Council

**WORKING FOR & SERVING THE
COMMUNITY FOR EIGHTY YEARS**

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Ollie Natelson receives recognition for environment endeavours

This year has been one of recognition for Dr Ollie Natelson, your Association's Environment Officer.

Firstly, in March this year, he was honoured with a Civic Award from Barnet Council for his volunteering work on the Coppetts Wood and Glebelands nature reserve continuously for over 28 years.

Then in May, he received from *The Observer* a National Ethical Award as an Unsung Local Hero for his work not only on Coppetts Wood and the Glebelands, but also for being part of countless campaigns to protect the natural and historical environment and also his campaigns for people with disabilities especially impaired eyesight

In a recent interview Dr Natelson talked about his early days as an environmentalist. It was in the summer of 1983 when he crawled through a hole in a fence along Colney Hatch Lane. Once inside he saw a rich jungle of wild vegetation—such a dense profusion of trees, herbs, shrubs, grasses. He'd seen nothing like this before, even in Africa a few years before. Later that year in September, he received notice of a planning application for converting this wild land into football pitches. At this time Ollie didn't know anything about local government, or councillors and how they got elected, or what "Barnet Council" was or did.

What was being proposed felt wrong, so he wrote and delivered a note to residents of Hollickwood Avenue (where he still lives), inviting them to a meeting at this house on a Sunday evening. The living room was totally packed. So, a committee was formed, a campaign started and Coppetts Wood Conservationists was launched (still vibrantly active today).

The campaign had a petition and they found a friendly councillor. Ollie discovered well-established conservation groups like the London Wildlife Trust and the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust who were keen to get involved. Suddenly a botanist appeared, who had been recording sightings for years. Then an entomologist living adjacent to the site, who discovered several rare insects on the site and recorded hundreds of creepy-crawlies on this site (and had also given radio broadcasts on nature). There was another local resident who had kept records of birds. Suddenly the campaign was looking exciting with lots of energy



and expertise.

The London Wildlife Trust took up the cause and produced a management plan for sustaining Coppetts Wood and this required some money from Barnet Council for their formal report (which included maps produced by Ollie). The group surveyed many sports pitches in the Borough and discovered of the 120 pitches, all were underused while others were not used at all, in the six week survey period.

Ollie asked why should Barnet Council waste public money by turning this wildlife site into new sports pitches – used by just 22 young men for 2 hours on only 40 days a year, when hundreds of men, women and children could use this site as a Nature Reserve for 365 days a year?

Barnet Council's Development and Estates Committee approved of the idea of turning Coppetts Wood into a nature reserve, which should be allocated £ ¼ million for erecting paths, fences, steps etc (they got some of it). A Management Committee was set up with Barnet Council represented along with the Wildlife Trusts and Ollie representing the Local conservationists.

One of this committee's early requests in the 1980s was for an Environmental Centre at Coppetts wood. But he hopes that now he has received this prestigious Ethical Award, he will fight to get one for us and our children for all time !

Furnitureland site in North Finchley gets go-ahead for redevelopment

After much discussion and many preliminary ideas and lying empty for years and years, the Furnitureland site is to be turned into offices and flats



Proposed new natural brass panel cladding and glazed top floor

Artists impression of the new building— the view is towards the Tally Ho— there is a tree on the other side of the road

Barnet Council has approved plans for the redevelopment of the “Furnitureland” site in North Finchley. The developers now intend to build a 5 story building made up of offices on the ground floor and 60 residential units on the remaining 4 floors.

There is much to be said in favour in the latest plan. The most obvious point is that, for a modern development, it is relatively modest in height. Fortunately we are not being given a monster like the nearby Tally Ho Tower. The fifth (top) floor is recessed and so helps to diminish the sense of massiveness. But even at five floors it does not blend in with the buildings on the same side of the High Road.

Local bodies, such as the Finchley Society, expressed real concern that approval for a building of this height would set a precedent for other developers to produce building of similar (or greater) height all along the High Road in North Finchley, and so produce a “canyon” effect. The proposed building is out of keeping with the semi-detached houses in Friern Watch Avenue and Ravenscroft Avenue, which flank the old Furnitureland site.

Concern is also expressed about the density of the proposed flats. The Council officers and developers think that it is reasonable to build at central London, rather than suburban London density. It is understandable that the developers want central London density but why the Council

planning officers want to turn Barnet into a borough that looks like Hammersmith (travel King Street in Hammersmith) is a mystery.

The building comes straight out of the pavement. There is not a tree or a bush or space for some grass at the front of the building.. The development would have looked better if they had produced a green frontage, similar to the NCR block on the opposite side of the road, where there is green space at the front and the sides of the building.

The parking provision for the residential accommodation and office workers is modest. If the office workers own a car, which is highly likely, they will seek to drive to work—and so put additional car parking pressure on the nearby, and not so nearby, streets. Currently the site has a wide pavement, hopefully this has been preserved.

Given the amount of empty office space at the moment in North Finchley and Whetstone, hopefully the developers know what they are doing and we will not have empty ground floor space for years to come (as has happened on the ground floor of the Tally Ho Tower complex).

In the past it was suggested that accommodation for a library as well as a doctors surgery could be found on the site. Given there isn’t a bus garage next door, this would have been a more suitable site for a new library, than the one the Council has found in the Tally Ho centre.

Whetstone Society closes

WE sadly have to report that our companion organisation “The Whetstone Society” has closed. The chairman Mack McKenny, 85, has had to give up. He says that he no longer has the physical strength to carry on. “Mack” as he is known to local community, was chairman of the Society for more than twenty years. He has been a champion of local causes, well respected for his judgement, broad knowledge and keen intelligence, by those who came across him, both campaigners and local politicians. The Society and Mack will be missed.

Officers of Friern Barnet & Whetstone Residents' Association

Chairman: Harry Gluck
Deputy Chairman: Len Bull
Treasurer: Bruce Standing
Secretary: Michael Harold
Environment: Ollie Natelson
Web: Lol Patel
Parks: Richard Testar

Friern Barnet and Whetstone turn out to celebrate the Olympic torch



Gillian Griffiths

Friern Barnet residents celebrate Jubilee Day on the Village Green

On Sunday 3rd June about 100 residents of Friern Barnet turned out on a drizzly day to celebrate Jubilee Day on the Village Green next to the Friern Barnet Library building. A couple of marquees were provide for dampness protection.

Organised jointly by the *Royal British Legion (RBL)* branch in Friern Barnet Road and the *Save Friern Barnet Library Group (SFB LG)*. Both of whom were happy at the good turn out. The party started at 1 p.m. and lasted until about 4 p.m.

The deputy Mayor, Cllr Kate Salinger, looking pretty in pink (see photo) turned up at 2 pm to cut the special Jubilee cake made by Holly Howe, as were the cup cakes handed out to partygoers. Live music, folk style, was provided by local musicians.

The *Royal British Legion* had meals for those who wanted them and showed the flotilla on the Thames on its wide screen television. In the back room of the RBL building they put on display their collection of royal memorabilia. The deputy Mayor visited the RBL to view the flotilla and looked over the memorabilia.

Dr Ollie Natelson gave a talk on the history and architecture of the threatened Friern Barnet Library at 2:30 and repeated it at 2:30. A small Pop-up library was organised by the *SFB LG* for the day.

Beside the deputy Mayor a number of local councillors were seen—Brian Salinger, Barry Rawlings, Pauline and the new councillor Andy Ioannidis.



Father Adrian Benjamin retires

Father Adrian Benjamin, the vicar of All Saints Church in Oakleigh Road North has retired –but he will still be seen in the community for the next couple of months. It is Adrian's intention to depart to a quiet spot on the Lincolnshire coast. The familiar sight of him striding the streets of Whetstone and Oakleigh in his long cassock will just be a fond memory.

He has been vicar of All Saint's since 1975. Nowadays retirement in the Church is formalised at 65 years but when he was appointed there was no formal retirement age, so now at 70 years he has taken voluntary retirement.

To the outsider it would appear that Father Adrian has two roles, one as vicar and the other has community organiser and activist through his involvement in the All Saints Arts Centre and organiser of the Friern Barnet Sumer Show (among others). To Adrian, what may appear as two roles are in fact just one, concern for the parish.

His moment of national fame when he appeared in the TV program "The Search" - a team based elimination contest based on solving ancient puzzles. Adrian did well lasting to nearly the end. He says that following that show he was offered and accepted a Prebendary at St Paul's Cathedral.

His new home will be just a hundred yards from the coast, which will enable him to contemplate the sea and beach and their twice daily changes. He will have time to read the *Daily Telegraph* now, as well as the nibble—the *Telegraph is easier*.

A family man, Adrian is proud of his two children. His



son is a professional classical musician, and his daughter, Elise, has recently become a councillor (Conservative) in Surrey. He has four grandchildren.

On his appointment as vicar to All Saint's he said his mission was to keep the tradition of this church going and to bring in new ideas. He had three targets - dynamic worship both traditional and modern; to attract young people (300 turn up for the music gigs); to have an evangelistic drive, by improving communications by having a parish magazine, a sign board that could be seen by all three roads, by opening the north porch so the community could see that the church was open and to keep the church open all day.

When he started as vicar here, he had an ambition to visit every home in the parish, something he admits to not quite managing in 35 years. He says

that people he visited in Miles Way in the early days, he now communicates with via Facebook.

As well as caring for his flock, Father Adrian has been at the heart of the development of the Church's Arts Centre, which he sees as being community based rather than church based. The range of events promoted at the All Saints' Arts Centre is impressive in both its quality and its range, from professional wrestling to a muscular wordsmith like Germaine Greer, with lots of popular music gigs and serious plays.

Adrian has a fondness for the theatre and when asked if, as a young man there was a pull between the theatre and the church, he replied that it was always the church for him. Conversations with his cousin, who is a professional actor, and had (and still has) a liking for the church, reinforces Adrian's certainty that he took the right road.

Forthcoming Events

Friern Barnet and District Local History Society: "The Temple" by John Neal Wed 26 September

All meetings take place at St John's Church Hall, next to Whetstone Police Station, Friern Barnet Lane. Starts 7:45 p.m.; cost £2 to non-members.

Barnet Walks "The Battle of Barnet": Explore the famous battlefield of 1471 Wed August 29th 11am and Sun Sep 16th 2.30pm. Meet at junction of Great North Rd and Hadley Green Rd. £7:00, accompanied under 12s £3:00.

Incognito Theatre "How the Other Half Lives" by Alan Ayckbourn Sunday 30th Sep to Sat 6th Oct

all performances start at 8:00 except Sunday performances which start at 6 pm

Ticket Prices : £9 non-members, £8 members, £5 students.

Contacts

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