

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
- | | |
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| • The Federation of Residents' Association of Barnet | • The Friern Barnet & District Local History Society |
| • The Finchley Society | • Coppetts Wood Conservationists |
| • Friends of Friary Park | • The London Green Belt Council |
| • North Finchley Environmental Forum | |



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Friern Barnet turns out to celebrate National Library Day



The residents of Friern Barnet turned out in force to celebrate National Library Day. On a bitterly cold February afternoon (it snowed later that evening) about 200 local residents gathered outside the old Friern Barnet Town Hall to celebrate the library service that is available and to mourn the loss of the Friern Barnet library.

The first event was a walk along Friern Barnet Road to the Friern Barnet library. Motorists and

some bus drivers expressed support by honking their horns. At the end of what turned out to be a leisurely walk, there were some speeches on the steps of the Library – Martin Russo (Save Friern Barnet Library Group), Barry Rawlings (Labour councillor) Kate Salinger (Conservative councillor), A.P. Poppy (Green candidate), Andrew Dismore (Labour GLA candidate), Tamar Andrusier (Save Friern Barnet Library Group) among others. The speeches were short and although faint at times, as there was no P.A. system, were well received.

Local opinion wants this library to be kept open and it regrets the loss of public space. The councillors who run Barnet Council have been running down the library service for the last ten or twenty years. In Friern Barnet library's case, the opening hours reduced (closed Mondays, closed lunchtimes, only open till 5 pm, except Tuesdays). Complaints to the Council that the opening hours were user unfriendly fell on deaf ears. It was suggested that the library open later and close later (so fit in with residents working hours).

After the impromptu speeches, most of the local residents went into the library to join the activities. There were some word games for the children on one side of the library. This involved anagram searching for various well known characters from

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Friern Barnet & Whetstone Residents Association

AGM

**Thursday 19th April 2012
at 7:30 p.m.**

**at St John's Church Hall, Friern
Barnet Road, N11**

All Members Welcome

**The meeting will be followed by a
presentation from**

**John Dix ("Mr Reasonable") on —
"Outsourcing: Is it the way ahead"**

... Friern Barnet turns out to celebrate National Library Day

books and word searches of famous authors', residents also enjoyed a couple of talks by local people. First, Shereen Pandit spoke of growing up in South Africa, and her joy of finding free public libraries when she came to England. She then read a piece about her early life in South Africa and when she discovered reading and books.

Shereen was followed by Boyd Tonkin, literary editor of the Independent. He started reading at Friern Barnet library. He lived nearby in Ashurst Road and every Satur-

day would walk to the library and take out three books. He read all sorts of books, and everything on cricket. For Boyd Tonkin it was important to have somewhere to walk to in a few minutes. Range of material in the library was not great but the fact that it was on the doorstep mattered. "Accessibility is more important than size of stock." He said that he owes his career to Friern Barnet library and "it would be a tragedy if it were to close."

HG

Your Residents Association applies for Village Green status for open space in Friern Barnet Road

Your Association together with the Friern Village Residents' Association have applied for "Village Green" status for the open space in Friern Barnet Road—between the British Legion on the corner of Ramsden Road and Friern Barnet Library, and opposite St John's church.

This space has been used, for as long as anyone can remember, for rest, leisure, social events and recreation. There are flower beds, benches available for local people to take time-out on their way to the shops or from school, or from walking their dogs. And, local residents want to keep it that way.

Dozens of local residents (living within about 50 yards) have completed the requisite forms and these have been submitted. The Council have posted notices locally, as well as placing an advertisement in the local paper, to see if there are any objections.

There are other open spaces that could do with Village Green status. There is, for example, the green space to the side of the old Friern Barnet Town Hall, where the old iron calf used to stand. Whatever happened to the



iron calf? Did *Health and Safety* insist on its removal?

It is hoped to use this green space later this year for Jubilee celebrations.

HG

Forthcoming Events

Friern Barnet and District Local History Society: "Gypsies in Barnet" by Hugh Petrie Wed 28 March;
"Treasures and the Tower of London" by Garry Wykes Wed 25 April

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 'Dickens and Victorian Barnet' Dickens knew Barnet's pubs, schools and workhouse extremely well. In this bicentenary year of his birth, explore the connections.

Sun 29 April Meet outside High Barnet station booking office. £7 adults, £3 children

Incognito Theatre

"Stags and Hens" by Willy Russell, Director Sonja Taylor

Sunday 18 March to Saturday 24 March; all performances start at 8:00 except Sunday performances which start at 6 pm
Ticket Prices : £9 non-members, £8 members, £5 students.

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Private Events in Public Parks gets the thumbs down from Barnet Residents

Last October, the London Borough of Barnet sent out a letter advising the recipients that the Council would be consulting with Friends of Parks Groups in relation to its Events Policy, which would include the hiring of Barnet parks and open spaces for Private Events

Eight parks were highlighted to be part of the pilot scheme, these were: Highlands Gardens (Barnet), Victoria Park (Finchley, N3), Scratchwood (Mill Hill), Edgwarebury Park (Edgware),

Oak Hill Park (East Barnet), Lyttleton Playing Fields (Finchley, N3), Princes Park, (NW11) and Hendon Park (Hendon). Obviously, if this scheme were successful, then other parks might be brought in to the equation.

They asked those receiving the letters for their views and provided a reference to a consultation website “engage.barnet.gov.uk” and asked for comments, ideas or suggestions on ways the Council could encourage improved resident involvement. (The consultation ended on 16th January.)

Across the borough residents and Friends of Parks members submitted their views. The Friends of Friary Park were amongst those invited to write, and the chairman sent in a letter firmly against the idea of hiring out Friary Park. He cited litter, parking, noise, anti-social behaviour and unauthorised usage of the ‘facility’ amongst the many worries that we held. Would these events close the parks to all other park users, would there be people trying to gate-crash, would people be thinking that they could have a ‘closed-party’ without contacting the council first?

The Hendon & Finchley Press published on Thursday 26th January had the following headline:

Councillors vote for private park events despite vehement opposition

In a written response to a question from Cllr Schneideman, (Labour), Cllr Brian Coleman admitted that the consultation had received 428 responses against the policy – compared to nine in favour. He added that he believed the majority of responses were the result of an organised campaign.

Who has been organising a campaign?

Friends of Friary Park can assure Cllr. Coleman that our response is not part of an organised campaign, but of a



Local residents are concerned that Friary Park will be hired out for private events.

fear that this is just one step down the road to privatising our local parks. Many of which were given to the local inhabitants for public use ‘for all time’.

Friern Barnet & Whetstone Residents’ Association can assure Cllr Coleman that they did not organise a campaign against ‘Private Events in Public Parks’.

The Council has pointed out that this new policy is nothing new, parks can already be “hired”, for example, the annual Friary Park Summer Fair. But the Summer Fair is a “public” event, residents simply have to pay to enter. What the Council is proposing to exclude residents from private events.

Another concern is how the events are going to be managed and who is going to manage them. The Council’s policy of contracting out everything means that the Council will have nothing to do with events other than collecting money. (Hopefully they will insist on a large deposit to ensure that the parks are properly cleaned up by the event organisers.)

Also of concern is the effect that such a policy will have on occasional users of the parks. How will they feel when they turn up at the park and find that it is closed, possibly patrolled by large security guards, possibly with large Alsatian dogs. There will have to be security, anyone hiring out a park for a birthday, wedding or bar mitzvah celebration will not want the waifs-and-strays of Friern Barnet, Whetstone or Totteridge gate-crashing their event.

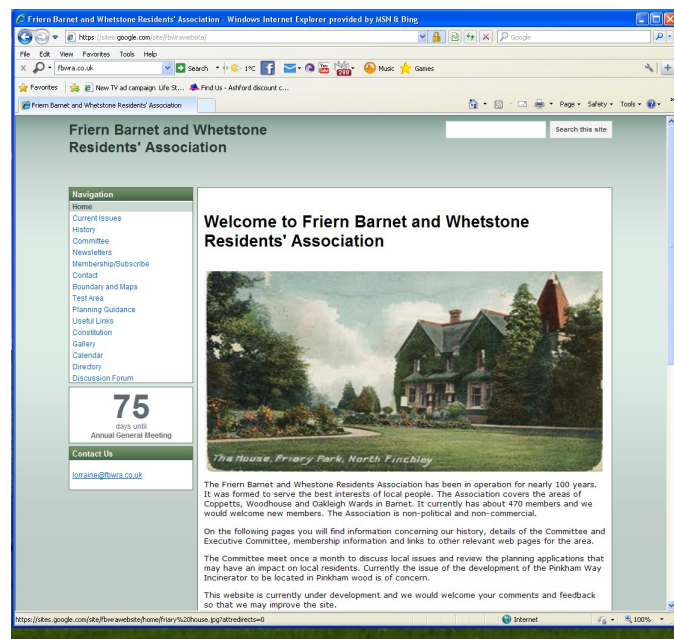
How will parents with young children feel when they turn up at the park one Saturday and find it closed for a private event; and, the following Saturday they turn up at the park and find it closed again. Will they not say to their children, “there’s no point in going to that park, it’s always closed”? HH

Your Association launches its web site

Good News, we now have our website www.fbwra.co.uk up and running. It is still under development but please do take time to have a look and let us know what you think. The website can be accessed by typing in the web address www.fbwra.co.uk or by searching under Friern Barnet and Whetstone Residents Association.

Over the course of the year we hope to be able to add more useful information to the site. It would be helpful if you could let us know what you would like to see added to the site. Please send any ideas to the email address at the end of this article. We think it would be useful to add a forum for members to be able to discuss matters and exchange ideas and information or even set up street wardens if members are interested. We would also like to include information on local events and policing matters.

The website is being developed and managed by Lorraine Patel and you can contact Lorraine directly at lorraine@fbwra.co.uk. LP



Council insists Friern Barnet Library must close for ever

Barnet Council policy for reducing its library service means that Friern Barnet Library in Friern Barnet Road will shut its doors for ever on 31st March 2012. The Council initially stated that three libraries were to close—those in Friern Barnet, North Finchley and Hampstead Garden Suburb.

It seems that the Library in North Finchley will stay open until a new library in the Artsdepot is opened. The residents in Hampstead Garden suburb have come to an agreement to keep their library open.

The Council's desire to close libraries is twofold—to reduce staff and to obtain money by selling off the buildings where they can.

It is rumoured that the Artsdepot will cost £90,000 a year to rent and, no doubt, the Council will have to pay the cost of modifying the building, as well as fitting out and equipping. The costs of these changes, with consultants and architects fees, will hardly be modest. Latest rumours are that the Council are considering having a library "located in various places" within the Artsdepot.

When the Council announced its libraries policy and the effects it would have, concerned Friern Barnet Residents quickly formed the "Save Friern Barnet Library Group", with a number of young mothers having active and leading positions. A petition was drawn up and over 3000 signatures were collected. The Group organised a number of events around the Library which illustrated that the library lies at the heart of the local community.

The drive within the Council to close the library was led by Councillor Robert Rams (East Barnet). At a Council Scrutiny Committee meeting on 5th September 2011, questions were asked by the public, to which Councillor Ram gave the briefest of answers. When asked by

the Group when the Artsdepot library would open and how much it would cost to establish a library within it, Councillor Rams was not able to give a date or a cost.

Councillor Rams was asked to keep Friern Barnet Library open at least until the Artsdepot library was opened. This he was unwilling to do. It was pointed out that when Totteridge library was sold off, promises were made to establish a new library in a more suitable location in Totteridge or Whetstone. In the event, the money was spent and a new library never happened. To this Councillor Rams said that such a thing happened on somebody else's watch, it wouldn't happen on his.

Since that meeting Councillor Rams has been unwilling to discuss keeping the Library open with local residents—he has handed it over to council officers.

The Council stated that it would listen to community proposals and have offered Friary House as an alternative location for a volunteer run library. The Group stated clearly that Friary House was an unsuitable location, no mother with young children would walk through the Park on a dark winter's night. The Council said they would consider installing additional lighting. The Group pointed out that extra lighting would not assuage the young mothers' concerns.

The Group's proposal to the Council said that they wanted a library led by a professional, council employed, librarian (with volunteers to reduce costs) and that they wanted to be part of the Barnet library system. They also proposed extending the use of the library as a community hub. Some residents say that the Library is being closed for political reasons, the savings are marginal. A lot more money will be spent on a lot less worthy causes.

HG