

# newsletter

Friern Barnet & Whetstone Residents' Association



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## WHY DID VICTORIA LEAVE FRIARY PARK FOR POPLAR?

On Thursday 14 April, a gloriously sunny morning, a small crowd of us watched, fascinated, as the statue, the symbol of Friary Park, was very carefully hoisted from its granite cairn of rocks and laid, oh so gently, onto the waiting transporter, and driven away for "rehab".



The BBC was there too, with a drone, filming for the 6.30 Regional News. Local History researcher Nick McKie explained the event to camera, while FBWRA member Francine and even I had

our 30 seconds of fame on film. But why all the fuss?

Well, when in 1910 local philanthropist Sidney Simmons bought Friary Park for the enjoyment in perpetuity of his Friern Barnet neighbours (bless you, Sidney – and NB, his fortune evolved not from slavery but steam cleaning carpets!) he also acquired the following year the anonymous statue, domicile unknown for many

years, to welcome us into the Park and also in memory of the King, Edward VII, "the Peace Maker", who had died on the day the Park was opened. (See *THE FRIARY PARK STORY* by Mel Hooper)

Nick has recently established that the statue was in fact of Queen Victoria, and was commissioned by Prince Albert for the memorial to the Great Exhibition of 1851 in Hyde Park. The Queen, widowed soon after, preferred to have an image of Albert himself there.

The Times, reporting on the unveiling of the memorial on 11 June 1863, wrote: "The statue of the Queen, as personifying 'Peace', intended originally to have been the crowning figure, has been exchanged for that of the Prince by express desire of Her Majesty."

So the statue with its symbolic dove, work of the renowned sculptor J. Durham, after figuring in a catalogue of statuary and then in the RHS Garden for several years until possibly 1888, disappeared from public record for many years until Mr Simmons adopted her.

Funds, long sought, have now been found for cleaning and repair by Rupert Harris Conservation of Poplar. The broken spear (when did that happen? Can anyone remember?) will be replaced by a replica of the staff and dove that Victoria started out with, the stones are being pressure cleaned, and there are hopes that reinstatement can be achieved in time for a dedication ceremony during the Jubilee Celebrations.

We shall all be there again, to say "Welcome back, Victoria!"

YR

## Friern Barnet & Whetstone Residents' Association.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We are non-political</li> <li>• We work for all residents in the area</li> <li>• We discuss issues with Local Councillors and Council Officials</li> <li>• We are associated with the following bodies:</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Federation of Residents' Associations in Barnet</li> <li>• The Finchley Society</li> <li>• Friends of Friary Park</li> <li>• The Friern Barnet &amp; District Local History Society</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The London Green Belt Council</li> <li>• Love Whetstone</li> <li>• Open Spaces Society</li> </ul> |
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## DAME ALICE OWEN OPEN SPACE TO REOPEN AS WORK PROGRESSES

Better communication would have saved everyone a lot of time and energy. With the completion of the Pavilions Study Centre, the Council announced in March that the Open Space would be completely closed to the public from mid-April until the end 2023, an inordinately long time. This was by letter to a few residents with little notice and no public consultation. The closure will allow work to be carried out to reinstate and upgrade the pitches and improve the grounds with better drainage. It is clear that the site has been left in a terrible state and that to put this right will take time. Could some of the extensive damage to the grounds have been prevented with better site management by the contractor?



With the Council not replying to requests for information and clarification of their plans, a number of conspiracy theories evolved and flourished: that this was a ploy to close the grounds for redevelopment

(there is a precedent); that the involvement of Sport England would impose such a high specification for the pitches that the public would not be allowed back onto the Open Space; that the Council had no legal right to do anything with the grounds and Court proceedings would be started to stop all activity; plus concerns about the use of herbicides (Glysohate will not be used); and, importantly and not unreasonably, why all the space needed to be closed for so long? Some residents got up a petition, which will be heard in early June. Needless to say, residents were divided between these various "camps". FBWRA felt that what was needed were the facts about the Council's actual plans and their timeline. Sachin Rajput, local councillor at the time, was asked to help establish what these were and organise a meeting at the grounds. This he did very quickly and the subsequent onsite meeting with a group of residents, Council officers and the contractor not only clarified the plans but, importantly, led to some concessions on public access during the works.

It was confirmed that there are no plans to redevelop the site, change its use or close it permanently. The space will be returned to full public use by the end of 2023. Importantly, the Council and its contractors agreed that, rather than close off the entire area throughout the works, a section could be made available almost immediately for public access. Further space would be opened up as the work progressed. A very positive outcome.

MJ

## BARNET COUNCIL'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE COMMUNITY

In our February edition we wrote about the relationship of the Council administrative organisation (not the Councillors) with the Barnet community. We wrote that there seemed to be a sense that the Council is increasingly remote from the community and that it seemed that increasingly Council staff don't live in the Community they serve. We now have some hard facts on this - the responses to a Freedom of

Information Act request that we submitted disclosed that of the seven members of the Council's most senior management (the "CMT" just two (29%) have a home (not necessarily their main residence) in the Borough and only 19% of other senior staff in Council departments have a home in the Borough. Perhaps unsurprising, but disappointing.

DT

## OTHER RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATIONS

If you know of any local residents' associations in the general Friern Barnet and Whetstone area (even if they cover just a single street), please would you let us know of them? Send us an email to [fbwra@btinternet.com](mailto:fbwra@btinternet.com) Please don't include – associations that are management associations for blocks of flats or informal

Facebook or WhatsApp groups, or any of the following: Barnet RA, East Barnet RA, Friern Village RA, New Barnet Community Association, Totteridge RA, West Finchley RA, Woodside Park Garden Suburb RA or The Finchley Society.

DT

## FBWRA'S FIRST 'IN PERSON' AGM IN THREE YEARS

FBWRA was delighted to hold its first AGM in three years and be able to greet members in person. Attendance was good as was members' participation. There was a range of questions from the floor, for example, regarding what cooperation occurs with other Residents' Associations on local matters such as Barnet House and North Finchley regeneration. We were able to report that FBWRA already does this either via the Federation of Residents' Associations in Barnet (FORAB) or direct with relevant ones.

The finances continue to be in good shape. The Chair referred to the appalling situation in the Ukraine and proposed a donation from FBWRA's funds. Members unanimously approved £1000 to go to an appropriate group providing support to Ukrainian refugees, especially children, settling in Barnet. In the event that a suitable organisation could not be found, the committee will look more widely to make this donation. *See also right*

We were also pleased to welcome local resident and long time member Carolyn Killen to the Committee. Her interest and past experience in environmental

matters will be a particularly helpful addition to the Committee and ways will be found to put her musical skills to good use.

Looking forward, the Chair advised that there would be a greater primary focus on local issues such as highways, potholes, safety of zebra crossings and on increasing membership; town planning matters though would not be neglected.

A short refreshment break was followed by an excellent presentation on Totteridge & Whetstone Station and the GNR Horse Hospital that originally stood there by Hugh Petrie, Barnet's Heritage Development Officer.

### UKRAINE REFUGEE SUPPORT

Friary House, in Friary Park, which provides premises for several community organisations, is not fully used; so it is one of a number of options under urgent consideration, to also provide the important support point in Barnet for Ukrainian refugees.

## A CHANGE OF FOCUS

At the Association AGM last month we explained that we intended to change FBWRA's focus and to concentrate more on local issues, such as potholes and safety of zebra crossings and less on town planning (although planning matters are also local).

We have made a start. Initially we are looking to get a better understanding of how the Council approaches such issues, so we have sent in a string of Freedom of Information Act requests on things such as pothole repairs, criteria for taking measures to increase highway safety, repainting road markings (many are now dangerously faded- and one of our FOIs is about changes to the specifications for the paints used for road markings), and the design of pedestrian crossings.



When we have the responses and have analysed them we intend to work on a few specific cases and some more general issues (for example, do the current safety criteria take proper account of "near misses" as well of actual accidents?).

We would also be grateful for a little help from you, our members. As a starter, we would like to hear of any "raised platform" or humped pedestrian crossings (zebra or light- controlled) in the Friern Barnet and Whetstone area – if you know of any please would tell us where they are? Also, if you use them (as a pedestrian) or drive over them, what do you think of them? Send us an email to [fbwra@btinternet.com](mailto:fbwra@btinternet.com)





## THE QUEEN'S PLATINUM JUBILEE

### The Queen's Platinum Jubilee Weekend 2nd - 5th June

Street parties galore in FBWRA's local area, where we are told that there are more street parties planned than in the rest of the Borough put together. The double Bank Holiday has tempted many to negotiate the various application forms and apply for street closures to allow safe street celebrations to take place.

We understand that cucumber, fish paste, egg and cress, but possibly not Spam, will be included in many of the lunches, afternoon teas, buffets and picnics planned, together with jelly and trifle.

Singalongs and, though not invented in 1952, discos, and dancing will also feature. The British public seems to have embraced outdoor celebrations and, possibly

as a consequence of the pandemic, enjoys partying on the street with friends and neighbours.



### Jubilee Party Photo Competition

If there is one in your area, please take photos and enter our **Best Jubilee Party Photo** competition. A prize will be offered for the best photo. These should be sent to [fbwra@btinternet.com](mailto:fbwra@btinternet.com) by 1st July.

## SUMMER SPLASH 2022

**Sunday, 26th June 3.00 - 5.00pm**

**Friary Park Bowling Club, Friary Park N20 0NR**

You are invited to our free Social at the Bowling clubhouse in the park. Inside if wet.

If dry, you can try your hand at bowling....

Please RSVP by email if possible to [fbwra@btinternet.com](mailto:fbwra@btinternet.com)

*The Splash is our headline social event to catch up with members and friends and meet new ones over a glass of wine and a nibble.*

## PLANNING NEWS

### Repeat telecoms mast application defeated

Members who receive our "Mailchimp" emails will know that there was recently a repeat planning application for a telecoms mast at a site in Friern Barnet Road opposite the Friern Barnet library and close to the listed St. John's Church. The application was very similar to the earlier (2021) proposal – and the location was unchanged. FBWRA objected on the basis the siting was detrimental to the setting of the church and the library (which has non-statutory "locally listed" status). Members and others also objected (thank you).

We are happy to be able to report that the planning

officer has refused this repeat application – the report makes it clear the telecoms company had not done enough to overcome the reasons for the refusal of the earlier application- the detrimental effect on the setting of the listed church and the adverse impact on the character of the surrounding area.

### Barnet House planning appeal

The public inquiry on the developer's appeal against the Council's failure to make a decision on the application in good time ("non-determination") started on 10 May. At the time of writing the result isn't known.

**MEMBERSHIP** of FBWRA costs only £5 per household per calendar year. It provides quarterly newsletters, email updates, information on local issues, social events and a chance to influence what happens in your neighbourhood. Application forms from [FBWRA.org](http://FBWRA.org) or from FBWRA Treasurer, 12 Macdonald Road N11 3JB