

# newsletter

Friern Barnet & Whetstone Residents' Association



## in this issue -

- 1. Victoria Statue returns
- 2. FBWRA Members' Survey
- 3. Committee News
- 4. Committee News
- 5. New Pond in Friern Barnet
- 6. Once More unto the Breach
- 7. Ukrainian donation
- 8. Planning News

## VICTORIA BACK WHERE SHE BELONGS.....



Friary Park's iconic statue of Queen Victoria as Peace, removed in April for restoration and returned in late September to her rocky eyrie, was re-dedicated by the Mayor, Cllr Alison Moore, at a short ceremony on Wednesday 6th December.

The sun shone from a cloudless sky on a large, cheerful, chatty gathering of supporters of the Park. The Mayor refreshed our knowledge of the statue's origin and refurbishment, ending with a timely, touching reminder to us all of its abiding message of peace to all who pause there as they pass.

So, take another look. Can you see the change in her? Stripped of that familiar, weathered green she is now the brown of her original electroplated copper, fit and ready to oversee the Park for a further one hundred and eleven years. What else? She also now holds a symbolic dove and orb atop a staff, as in 1861 – and it is this dove that so long delayed her return.

(It had been hoped that the celebration of her reinstatement might coincide with the Jubilee celebrations – which feel so long ago now, don't they?)

Planning permission had been sought, this being a listed monument, for the restitution of the dove, in bronze. Unfortunately the dove proved to be far too heavy for the staff, and it was mainly the reapplication for use of a lighter material for the dove that so delayed Victoria's return.

Recent discoveries about the origin of the statue are explained on the updated plaque there, presented jointly by our local History Association, Residents' Association (us, you!), Finchley Society, and Friends of Friary Park.

A short video was made of the September 28 re-installation by LBB's Media Officer, and can be found on: **Barnet Council restores historic Peace statue in Friary Park – YouTube.**

YR



## FBWRA MEMBERS' SURVEY

### A good response- thank you

With the August edition of the Newsletter we sent members a Questionnaire. Thanks to all who responded – we are delighted with the replies- 52 in total, from a membership of 310 households (excluding Committee). That's a 17% response rate, which is good. It gives confidence in the overall picture from the responses.

### Who responded?

78% of individuals responding were aged 75 or more and a further 16% 61 -74 – so 94% over 60! 90% of those who responded are retired or (a few) semi-retired. Only 1 household had under 18's living with them (grandchildren). So, overall our membership is elderly. That's perhaps unsurprising – many clubs and organisations report difficulties in getting members, but there is a clear message – now the pandemic is (hopefully) behind us, we need to get some younger members (of course, all members are welcome!).

### Membership of local organisations and activities

54% belong to local organisations or sports clubs. U3A branches were commonest (17%), followed by The Finchley Society (7%). Golf and bowls clubs were the commonest sports categories.

70% take part in sports or pastimes. Walking is popular (14%), but golf (16%) was the commonest activity of those requiring facilities, followed by bowls (13%), swimming (12%) and tennis (9%). Generally local facilities were considered adequate, except for badminton and swimming (it was suggested pools were too crowded). We have few cyclists (3%), which may be explained by our age profile.

### Local issues of concern

84% of those responding listed one or more local issues concerning them. The "top four" were the issues that we gave as examples in the questionnaire. Perhaps it was a mistake to give a "lead" in that way, as it may have resulted in the responses being skewed – but the intention was to give members an idea of what we considered "local" issues.

The issues and percentages mentioning them are -

- Pot holes 54%
- Parking 52%
- Litter 42%
- Vandalism 20%
- Crime 18%
- Planning/over-development 15%
- Speeding/ road safety 13%

There are then 4 issues each with 5-7% response rates- trees in residential roads (it isn't clear exactly what the issue is- too many/ too few/ poor maintenance?), fly tipping, lack of new social housing and congestion.

The bottom tier, each of which was mentioned by only 1 – 3 people, contains disabled facilities, hospital parking charges, local buses, threats to leisure facilities, lack of healthcare facilities, loss of council services, green spaces, environment (no-one mentioned pollution as such), too many cycle lanes, unattended road works and the deterioration of the North Finchley High Road.

### How members perceive FBWRA

Hardly anyone suggested changes in FBWRA's role or activities, although there were individual suggestions that we should put more pressure on Council planners, make more planning objections and press for better roads and repairs. There were a good number of supportive comments and also praise for the Newsletter.

Only 16% said they attended our events. The same percentage (not necessarily the same individuals) said they would attend more events if we held them. 24% would like more information/discussion events. Only 4% would like more social events, whilst 12% would like to see both types. More people would like us to hold more events than would expect to attend them!

So – various pointers for the Committee – "membership" needs attention (we have started work!), 6 or 7 key local issues on which we might concentrate our efforts (resources permitting), and generally we are doing OK in terms of our role and activities, but members generally don't want more events.

DT

## COMMITTEE NEWS

### COMMITTEE NEWS

**New Committee members** - As members will be aware, we want to strengthen the FBWRA Committee, so we are pleased to be able to tell you that during the summer Kate Salinger re-joined us and former Councillor Sachin Rajput accepted our invitation to become a member. Sachin brings with him the benefit of his recent Council experience and also strengthens the Committee representation for the northern, Whetstone, part of FBWRA's area. Both Kate and Sachin were appointed under the co-option provisions of FBWRA's constitution.

Although he has not joined the Committee, member David Gutmann has kindly agreed to write an occasional column for the Newsletter (his first article starts below) and also to review and advise us on our website content – Thank you, David.

**In Friary Park** - In November FBWRA Committee members were busy working on the FBWRA Shrubbery, planting ground cover plants. Our picture shows Carolyn Killen hard at work. Since FBWRA

took over the maintenance of this bed some years ago, it has has been revived, extreme weather and pests notably box caterpillar notwithstanding. FBWRA fund its planting and maintenance. We would be delighted to welcome new volunteers to help out from time to time. Please take a look at the shrub bed next time you are in the Park

DT



### THE VIEWS OF A LONG-TERM LOCAL RESIDENT

#### Out and About

I have always lived in Finchley and since the age of two and a half have lived in North Finchley. That's the first thing. The second is that when I was younger I wanted to be a journalist but became a teacher instead, following my inner vocation. However, when I was at teacher training college (Trent Park) I started writing articles such as book and restaurant reviews

#### Part 1 Traffic– is it still moving?

Have you noticed traffic in Friern Barnet and Finchley is slowly moving towards total log jam. The North Circular is already gridlocked during the afternoon peak, making a journey from East Finchley to Wood Green seem like an epic! A few years ago, the authorities tried to 'improve' traffic flow between Bounds Green and Palmers Green but the result has made matters worse rather than better! Making a trip from Friern Barnet to Muswell Hill is also becoming a pain, especially during school

for the college magazine, then ended up being subeditor and (for a couple of issues) editor – as well as helping flog it around the campus!

So the chance to revive my (lack of) skill, perhaps imbuing the writing with a touch of humour, is an opportune one! As long as I can stay motivated and feel in the mood! Every article will range around local issues such as traffic. Shops. Crime, and anything else that you might suggest! So here goes! And do tell the editor or other FBWRA officers if you are bored by the article – I'm not proud!

coming-out times. The situation locally is not helped by the proliferation of measures designed to slow traffic such as a LTN (Low Traffic Neighbourhood) and cycle lanes. Finchley has its ill-planned cycle lanes which stop and start abruptly in what could be dangerous places, and the lanes are not used frequently, certainly not enough to justify the increase in traffic congestion that has occurred especially during peak hours. The increased air pollution in the congested spots is not doing cyclists much good is it?



..... continued from page 3

A few years ago, Torrington Park residents asked the Council for traffic calming, to make rat-running less attractive. Several cats had been run over and there was a serious collision between two cars. This was a kind of early LTN, but after being installed at great cost it proved ineffective and was removed, apart from one valuable width restriction next to Friary Park – this works.

But my pet hate are the temporary traffic lights that have recently sprung up like mushrooms. They

always seem to be at red! My gripe is that there are indications of roads being dug up by the lights but no sign of any workers! This has gone on for weeks, and only results in more frustration for drivers.

Do the highway authorities have a hidden agenda? To make us so fed up driving that we get rid of our cars? They have already made driving a diesel vehicle prohibitive – twenty years ago diesel was all the rage!

## Part 2 Parking

That eternal chestnut that aggrieves many Friern Barnet residents! Since the current oppressive parking regime was set up (after the creation of the Borough of Barnet in 1965) Barnet residents who drive have been tormented by teams of parking attendants/traffic wardens who apply the rules over-strictly and who have contributed to the decline and possible closure of several small shops to which customers could not pop into for a few minutes to buy a paper or a pint of milk. Residents in side roads have found their cars parked outside their own houses sporting penalty tickets when the resident may have forgotten to display a parking voucher, placed it upside down, scratched the wrong box or parked with a wheel an inch outside the white line.



The original purpose of parking restrictions we were told was to deal with traffic obstructions but in truth it has been used as a cash cow by

Barnet Council, which then squanders a high proportion of the parking revenue on teams of wardens – more so in North Finchley than any other part of the borough for some reason.

Could someone make a freedom of information (FOI) request to ascertain the total revenue received from parking and the costs of running the scheme, CPZs etc. The two main questions to answer are: are

restrictions necessary at all? And are they fair and equitable? The first question can be answered by saying not on the whole. There are some areas where parking on double yellow lines would cause obstructions but these comprise a small proportion of road space. Why do residents have to suffer parking bays outside their houses in quiet side roads?

This leads to the second question's answer – no, the restrictions are not fair and equitable. Why are some resident bays timed from 9-5 Monday-Saturday, and in other roads 2-3 pm Monday to Friday? These timed restrictions are to protect residents from commuters taking the train. But because of the restrictions neither commuters nor residents benefit from the restrictions and road space remains empty.

If you live in one road with the lengthier restrictions you can't have visitors (including workpeople) between 9 and 5 whereas everyone else can. (If you lived in Haringey you could probably park before 11 or after 12).

It would be a good idea if the newly elected Barnet Council took a long hard look at the parking provisions and whether they are fair or fit for purpose. Taking parking back from costly outsourcing into council control would also save money and be more effective. At the moment it is not reasonable to expect staff in the Coventry office to know the intricacies of a dropped kerb in New Southgate. I have asked Barry Rawlings the Council leader to discuss the matter of parking on several occasions in the last two or three years.

Maybe we should publish a list of ways local residents have managed to appeal unfair PCNs!

DG

## LOCAL RESIDENTS WELCOME IN NEW POND IN FRIERN BARNET

### November weather brings added joy to the local scene

Residents of Beaconsfield Road in Friern Barnet woke up on the morning of Thursday 3rd November to a most delightful sight. The dip in the road by Bethune Park had been transformed overnight into a most welcome pond. The first new pond in the area for many decades.

The many environmentalists living the area were also well pleased with this addition to the landscape, for it meant that traffic, and thereby resulting pollution, were excluded from this green part of Beaconsfield Road.



*Unfortunately, the driver of this small car was not able to reach the other side of the pond in Beaconsfield Road, on November 3rd 2022*

Occasionally motorists tried to avoid the pond by driving up the grass banks but the greenery quickly became churned up and too slippery to traverse. Other motorists tried to drive through the pond but only in the middle did they realise that the pond was deep and gave up.

The residents of Chaville Court, higher up Beaconsfield Road, also had a new pond outside their front doors, but they are used to their pond refreshed when there is a bit of rain. So, now this is the luckiest road, as it has two ponds and restricted traffic.



*Lovely reflection of the trees outside Chaville Court on the morning of November 3rd 2022*

Some outsiders have asked why the residents of Chaville Court have to pay the water company to dispose of the waste water when they could simply throw the waste out of the window or out of their front door.



*Missing for a few years, this delightful pond in Crescent Road was captured on camera on November 6th 2022*



## “ONCE MORE UNTO THE BREACH...”

### Revisiting the controversial junction of Ashurst Rd and Buxted Rd Friern Barnet N12

#### Part 1 – the roundabout and the road markings

On 17 November 2016 16 year old Alfie O’Keeffe Hedges was the victim of traffic accident when he and his moped were hit by a car by the roundabout at the junction of Ashurst Road and Buxted Road in Friern Barnet. Sadly, Alfie died from his injuries and the driver of the car was subsequently sentenced to a term in prison for causing death by careless driving and other offences. Shortly after the accident occurred the Council repainted the road markings at the roundabout. A Barnet Council Officer’s report, presented to a meeting of the Council’s Finchley & Golders Green Area Committee on 16 February 2017 stated “Following the 17 November incident a meeting was held on site with the Police Traffic Management Officer for the area. The meeting identified that : The roundabout road markings were faded...” and “it was agreed that the roundabout marking and SLOW markings on the approach could be remarked (subject to checking that the Police investigators had completed their



work), which has been completed.” The Council must have considered that the road markings needed repainting and without delay.

Our first picture shows the roundabout markings in 2016 either before or immediately after the accident. The picture is from Google Street View and was used to illustrate a report on the London Evening Standard website dated 18 November 2016 – the day after the accident. It will be seen that the markings are badly faded.



Our second picture shows the roundabout markings on 4 December 2022. Again, the markings are badly faded. If the situation in November 2016 was serious enough to warrant unscheduled repainting why have the markings been allowed to deteriorate to their current state? – particularly when Council officers are currently looking at safety issues affecting the two roads – see below.

#### Part 2- a new traffic scheme?

In October FBWRA and members living nearby noted “traffic counter” cables and installations in Ashurst and Buxted Roads. We suspected that Council Officers were considering trying to re-introduce proposals similar to the controversial and unpopular Barnet Cycleway plan for this locality that were dropped early in 2020 following FBWRA “lobbying” of Councillors. Our analysis at that time was that Council officers had been trying to introduce anti-rat-running plans under the guise of a cycling scheme and without democratic authority to do so.

A FBWRA member sent in a Freedom of Information Act request to the Council, who responded “The counters have been placed on Ashurst Road and the junction with Buxted Road.... They have been placed here following resident concerns related to speeding vehicles, the



information will be used to identify whether measures are required.....Feasibility study to identify if traffic calming and new pedestrian facilities are required in the area.”

FBWRA then sent in its own request, seeking more detail. We asked how many “speeding concerns” had been raised by individuals, organisations and Councillors respectively, and for details of the specific concerns raised, the numbers of people / names of the organisations raising each of them and also whether any of the concerns referenced actual incidents involving personal injury, death, damage to parked vehicles, collisions between vehicles or collisions between vehicles and cyclists and, if so, for details of the relevant incidents. The Council refused to provide this information on the ground that “This information is intended for future publication”. This is a permitted reason if it outweighs the public interest in disclosure. The Council justified this by citing “the public interest in permitting public authorities to publish information in a manner and form and at a time of their own choosing. It is a part of the effective conduct of public affairs that the general publication of information is a conveniently planned and managed activity within the reasonable control of public authorities.” They refused to tell us how

many “concerns” had been raised on the basis this was “personal data” – even though we had just asked for numbers of people, not their names or addresses.

We have formally requested the Council to reconsider its stance on disclosure. We wrote “By its decision the Council is withholding for its own administrative convenience information relating to highway safety. The consequence is that the information is not available to members of the public. FBWRA’s purpose in requesting the information is that if appropriate we can communicate issues to members and others. If there is an issue such as speeding traffic or for pedestrians crossing roads then it is desirable that this information is available to the public without delay- so that , for example, parents can instruct their children to take a different route to school. Can it really be the case that the Council’s own administrative convenience outweighs the safety of our children?” We then reminded the Council of the 2016 fatal accident at the roundabout “so safety issues are very relevant.”

As I write this article there are flowers placed near the accident site.

DT

## WE HAD ASSUMED THERE TO BE A PROBLEM.....

You will remember our AGM decision to make a donation in support, as needed, of local Ukrainian refugee school children.

We wrote to Head Teachers: “We members of your local residents’ association – FBWRA, Friern Barnet and Whetstone Residents’ Association – wish to donate some of our funds to the support of Ukrainian refugee students via their school, since we expect that some will have more than the usual difficulty in paying for required uniforms, study materials, class events and so on, that could be subsidised via the School.”

We were most pleasantly surprised by the responses - which were, in brief, that where assistance with school uniform had been offered this offer had not been taken up, and that concern over the provision of school lunches “has been allayed by the Department of

Education now allowing schools to give free meals to families fleeing persecution”. Good!

At both Junior and Senior level the only suggestion offered was to subsidise the cost of more expensive school visits which are beyond the means of some class members’ families. (One figure given was £500.)

The overall response we found both positive and cheering. However, we felt that to help fund school trips which other class mates could not afford would be divisive – and so came to the conclusion that it is harder to give money away than we had expected!

My own suggestion, then, was what about food-banks? Only to find that there seem to be none actually within Friern Barnet and Whetstone. Any ideas?

YR

## We wish you and your families a very Happy Christmas & New Year



The festive season in Whetstone got under way when the Mayor switched on the lights on the Christmas Tree and on the High Road on 24th November. This was followed by carols from All Saints Primary School. Three local schools take part each year in singing carols at the Tree in what has become a local tradition. Both Queenswell Federation and St John's C of E Primary School also came along to sing carols at the Tree on subsequent Thursdays.

### A DATE FOR YOUR DIARY

Thursday 4th May 2023

#### FRIERN BARNET & WHETSTONE RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION AGM

in St John's Church Hall  
Friern Barnet Road, N11

Time and further details nearer the date.

The above is subject to Covid staying at bay.

The Coronation of His Majesty King Charles III takes place on Saturday 6th May 2023

## PLANNING NEWS

Earlier in the year we successfully objected to two planning applications made by Hutchinson for phone masts and apparatus in a grass verge on Friern Barnet Road, close to St John's Church (Listed Grade 2\*) and Friern Barnet Library (a "locally Listed" building), on the basis that the mast would be harmful to the Church's setting. The Council agreed and refused permission. Sadly we must now report that Hutchinson has successfully appealed against the refusals. The Planning Inspector disagreed with both FBWRA and the Council,

deciding that the proposals would not harm the setting of the Church and that although there would be harm to the setting of the library, this would be "less than substantial", and was outweighed by the benefit (in improving mobile phone coverage in the vicinity) from the proposals. Is this a case where, as the late Lord Jay wrote "the gentleman in Whitehall [or in this instance, the gentleman in Bristol (where the Planning Inspectorate is based)] really does know better what is good for people than the people know themselves"?

### MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL 2023

Next year's membership will again be £5 per household, payable on the 2nd January 2023 (please don't pay early!)

A renewal letter will be sent soon after the 7th January only to members who have not paid by standing order.

It simplifies our administration if you could please pay promptly.

Consider paying electronically, if you can, quoting your membership number and setting the payment up to be an annual one for the 2nd January of each year as each letter we send now costs nearly £1!

#### Friern Barnet & Whetstone Residents' Association.

- We are non-political
- We work for all residents in the area
- We discuss issues with Local Councillors and Council Officials
- We are associated with the following bodies:
  - The Federation of Residents' Associations in Barnet
  - The Finchley Society
  - Friends of Friary Park
  - The Friern Barnet & District Local History Society
  - The London Green Belt Council
  - Love Whetstone
  - Open Spaces Society