

MUSWELL HILL & FORTIS GREEN ASSOCIATION



FEBRUARY 2013

Focussed and fighting fit

Firmly on the front page, we keep campaigning against cuts

OUR CONSTANT CHAMPIONING of local causes to keep our area clean, green and safe, is attracting media attention. While last year our Association featured in the local press a record 16 times, we have not yet made the front page this early in the year before.

The proposed closure of Muswell Hill Police Station, featured on the front page of the Broadway Ham and High on 17 January, has caused outrage to members. Our Chairman, John Hajdu, (pictured) is ensuring that our collective voice is heard by the decision makers. 'It is short-sighted and not in the community's interests,' he is quoted as saying, as he makes our case against the closure.

Sold to developers

One concern is that our three local Safer Neighbourhoods teams' work will be compromised as in disparate locations the information sharing that they rely on will be more difficult. Members have also expressed their dismay that the historic station will be sold to developers.

An earlier edition of the newspaper ran details of our fight to keep our area looking green and 'cared about' starting with the Broadway's flower troughs. As a result, new sponsors have now come forward. (See more on this in Snippets on page 4)



👉 Meetings to come 👈

Thursday 14 February, 8pm, Garden Room, North Bank

Our Palace and the Coronation

Television historian, John Thompson, will be talking about the rise in popularity of television at the time of the coronation in 1953 and the development of BBC broadcasting at Alexandra Palace. See Snippets on page 4 for more.

Wednesday 13 March, 8pm, the church, North Bank

This will be our first-ever **Association concert!** North London Brass will give us a varied programme of light classics and evergreen hits. North Bank, 28 Pages Lane, is opposite Pages Hill. Buses 234 134, 43, 102 and 299 stop nearby. Parking is available.



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Saima's Membership Column

Dear Member

What a start to the year...it's been cold, snowy and, at times, wet and the holidays are just a memory now! As we had no January Newsletter issue this year, I'll take this opportunity to wish you a happy and productive year ahead and much enjoyment in being part of our Association community.

I also wanted to say thanks to the many members who have made donations. These and your annual subscriptions are our only source of income and allow us to arrange many activities over the year. If you have any ideas on future projects, then get hold of a pen and write in - or email if you prefer!

New members

Our warmest welcome to our new members: **Sheila Beeston** of Muswell Hill Place; **Simon Mindham** and **Alison Bennet** of Kings Avenue; **Harry** and **Jan Marsh** of Etheldene Avenue; **Peter** and **Claire Roughton** of Southern Road; **Deborah** and **Lawrence Cohen** of Leaside Mansions; **Justin** and **Donna Michaelson** of Ringwood Avenue and a bumper crop from Dukes Avenue: **Laura Butterfield**, **Tanith Withers**, **Martin Stone** and **Robert Deba**.

Thank you for your support and please get your neighbours to sign up as well.

Member of the month

This month we shine the spotlight on Janet Shapiro, a very active member of our community who strives to improve both herself and her surroundings. She trained as a mathematics teacher, obtained a mathematics degree and a lectureship at the (then) Polytechnic of North London and, later, a doctorate.

Janet has been active in many campaigns including Radical Statistics, the Hornsey Pensioners' Action Group and the National Pensioners' Convention Women's Working Party. She is a great NHS fan and works tirelessly to improve it.

When Janet has a moment to spare, she enjoys portraiture and landscape painting, relishes her walks across leafy Muswell Hill and Queen's Wood and joins in the folk-dance sessions at Cecil Sharp House. Janet, you are a true inspiration. Please keep up the excellent work!

Members' topic

Recently, a number of members requested standing order forms to help set up bank payments for membership subscriptions and I thought it might be useful to include a link here in case others were thinking of doing the same:

<http://www.mhfga.1to1.org/standord.html>

Members who need to update their standing orders to the current rate of £8 can also use the same form. Please take the completed form to your bank or send it to me if you wish.

My details

Please keep your comments and feedback coming in. My contact details are: MHFGA, PO Box 56960, London N10 9BA or email: saimawilliams@live.co.uk

Don't forget our Facebook group. Leave a post at: <http://www.facebook.com/?ref=home#!/group.php?gid+56250985945>

Bulletin board

 UNFORTUNATELY, our noticeboard in Muswell Hill near the Odeon roundabout was vandalised recently. Jack Whitehead and Bill Jago, who look after the board and who, additionally, serve as our graffiti clean-up team, are working hard to replace the cover as soon as possible. They deserve our most hearty thanks.

 DID YOU FIND the gritting box near you empty? Do you think your road should have been gritted? Please let Chairman John Hajdu know and he will pass your comments on to the Neighbourhood Action team at the Haringey Borough Council.

John's contact details are on the back page.

 THE WARMEST OF WELCOMES goes to Nicla di Palma who has stepped forward to take up the role of Association social networker. Facebook and Twitter can look forward to hosting some lively local exchanges now!

 WE ARE SEEKING members who currently have paper copies of their Newsletters delivered, to volunteer for a trial period during which they would receive their Newsletters by email. We would like their feedback to share with other members to persuade more take-up of this environmentally friendly way of getting the Association news.

 SPARE COPIES of this Newsletter are available to members who may wish to pass them on to neighbours or local friends for recruitment purposes. Please contact John Hajdu; his details are on the back page.

 DO YOU HAVE any news items of interest to our members that you would like the Newsletter to publish? If so, the deadline for contributions to the March/April Newsletter is Sunday, 24 February.

VACANCIES

Planning Officer

This is an interesting and rewarding role that involves liaising with the local Conservation Area Advisory Committee as well as various council officials, checking planning information and attending six Committee meetings a year with a planning report. No previous experience is needed.

Remuneration: a warm inner glow following freely-given expressions of gratitude and praise.

Shop front photographer

The job involves taking photographs of new shops for the Association album. This is an ongoing record of historical significance showing the changing nature of shops and façades in our area.

This role would suit an enthusiastic person who enjoys wielding a camera. No previous experience is necessary.

Remuneration: a lovely feeling of satisfaction for a much-needed job well done plus our thanks.

To apply for these posts, contact John Hajdu (details on back page).

Alexandra Palace news and views

from Denis Heathcote



PALACE RENOVATIONS will be continued if a Hermitage Lottery Fund (HLF) bid is successful. The decision will be made in April but construction will not be completed until late in 2016. Meanwhile, a separate bid for £80,000 is being submitted to HLF for staffing costs to promote and carry out educational activities. If this is agreed, visiting school parties will benefit from a range of activities in the Transmitter Hall, after it has been given a facelift.

Summer at the Park

Alexandra Park has been voted by the public into fourth place overall and second position in London in the People's Choice Award. First place went to Victoria Park, which has been much improved by a large HLF grant.

A soap box derby will take place at the eastern end of the grounds over the weekend of 13/14 July, organised by Red Bull. About 50 teams will race unpowered vehicles down the road from the east of the Palace towards the rear of the railway station, while up to 15,000 spectators watch the event from the grassland around and to the south of the Rose Garden, overlooking the road. The race track would be formed by hay bales and pedestrian barriers.

Diversion of buses and restricted public access will be confined to those days, while access to the Park will be possible from the west and from The Avenue and Alexandra Park Road. The volume of the public address system will be monitored.

After consultation and discussion, the event was approved by the Trust Board, subject to assurances sought by the Friends of Alexandra Park. It appears that most concerns have been met and that the extent of impact on parkland will be much less than feared.

Birthday party

The grounds of Alexandra Palace were first opened to the public on 23/24 July 1863, and it is planned to mark the 150th anniversary by a number of events and activities over the year. The highlight will be a 'Big Birthday Party' late in July 2013. Plans are still being drawn up but activities may include archery, cricket, guided walks, tethered balloon rides, Segway rides, funfair and nature activities, mostly in partnership with local organisations. The anniversary will also be marked by

refurbishment of the shrubberies and fountain in the Rose Garden.

If you have visited the Park recently, you may have noticed the tree pruning that took place in

January to the hollies and large cypress trees growing just below the Terrace. This was carried out to open up the vista across London that had become somewhat obstructed.

Outdoor events

The first draft of a strategy for future outdoor events in the park which will inform and help determine decisions on park events has now been drawn up by the Palace management. Income from such events needs to be doubled, thanks to the current budget. 40% of the park's annual costs of £500,000 must be made from this source. This could mean one additional large-scale event, or several smaller events, each year. This was considered to be an achievable target.



Members, although broadly supportive, made much of the fact that Alexandra Park is unlike most public open spaces in which outdoor events are staged, in that it includes relatively little flat land, supports a wide range of habitats and is extensively used by the public for a range of leisure and sporting activities.

A revised draft of the strategy will be considered by the Trust Board in February and then the guidelines will be produced. They will be used both by potential applicants and Park and Palace management in evaluating such proposals. A future joint meeting before the Board will agree a definitive version of the strategy.

Park Friends plan an exciting 2013

THE FRIENDS of Alexandra Park (FAP) are treating nature lovers to a programme of events this year that is sure to cater for all tastes. If you find fungi fascinating, moths magnificent or bats beautiful, FAP's walks and talks should do it for you.

On Saturday 16 March there is a tree walk and then a bird talk by The Urban Birder, David Lindo, on Tuesday, 19 March. In April, a bat walk will take place on Thursday the 18th and a bird walk on Sunday the 28th. April or May

will see a fungi foray depending on the weather, while on Sunday 19 May, a tree walk for beginners will be held and then, on 26 June, a moth talk and identification evening.

Butterflies

The FAP group has just completed a successful 2012, increasing its membership to 136 families and running work parties in the Park to keep the butterfly meadow in good condition. In addition to several walks

and talks, it also produced its first-ever Alexandra Park calendar.

Thanks to FAP, the Park Information Centre in The Grove, now in new premises, is opening more often and it is soon to be equipped with interesting objects, information and things to do. You can already pick up FAP Park maps and printed guided walks from the centre.

See the FAP website on www.friendsofalexandrapark.org for more information.

Snippets corner

* Haringey Council is surveying the trees in Queen's Avenue following our Association's complaint, on behalf of our members, that overgrown branches were obscuring light from streetlamps and posing safety and security risks (November/December Newsletter). Pollarding on all the trees will begin in early March, subject to agreement with the Highways Department, so that all lamp heads are cleared. The trees will not be reduced further than normal as this would involve removing big branches which, in turn, would leave large wounds open to decay.

Other roads including Prince's Avenue, King's Avenue, Tetherdown and Coppetts Road will get the same treatment.

* Can you think of a local green space in our area that could do with a tidy up? Contact John Hajdu if you can as our Association may be able to access a Mayor of London Capital Clean-up grant to help us make a difference. Capital Clean-up Kits including information and equipment are also available. John's contact details are on the back page.

* The Muswell Hill Sustainability Group has volunteered plants for two flower troughs at the roundabout following our Association's call for sponsors to restore the containers to their former floral glory.

* The Hornsey Historical Society tells us that there are a number of publications available for sale from the Old Schoolhouse in Tottenham Lane. They include several works by our esteemed long-standing member, Ken Gay: 'History of Muswell Hill'; 'Muswell Hill Walk'; 'Muswell Hill: History and Guide'; 'Muswell Hill Revisited' and 'Highgate and Muswell Hill' by Ken and Joan Schwitzer. You may also be interested in 'The Clays of Muswell Hill' by Malcolm Drummond and 'Alexandra Palace: A Hidden History' by Janet Harris.

* We are happy to correct our statement, made in the previous Newsletter, about the Broadway Ham & High. It has, in fact, returned in print form and is also available as an e-edition. If viewing the paper electronically, you can access an archive with earlier editions.

There are two reporters covering our area, one of whom, Flora Drury, is a dedicated reporter for the Broadway. The news editor, Stephen Moore, oversees only the Broadway and the Wood & Vale editions. The main Ham & High will no longer carry stories about Muswell Hill/Crouch End/Hornsey unless they are of wider interest and written by Broadway staff. Our area is now served by the Broadway alone.

* 'Our Palace and the Coronation' is the title of our next meeting to be held on Thursday 14 February at 8pm in North Bank's Garden Room (see front page). The talk explores Alexandra Palace's contribution to the televising of the Queen's Coronation in 1953 and is illustrated with photographs of the outside broadcast equipment at Westminster Abbey, the personalities involved and maps of the route. The excitement of the occasion will be recreated by viewing original tele-recordings on period television receivers.

John Thompson, our speaker, is the chairman of the Alexandra Palace Television Group and also of the British Vintage Wireless and Television Museum. After a career in communications he started a business specialising in the restoration of vintage electronic equipment.

Calling all local gardeners

BBC RADIO 4's Gardeners' Question Time is to be hosted on Tuesday 5 March by the Muswell Hill and District Horticultural Society (MHDHS) as a late addition to its centenary celebrations. The event will be in Alexandra Palace's Londesborough Room starting at 7.20pm with doors open at 6.30pm. The £2.50 tickets will include a hot drink.

If you would like to join the group, send the following to Kit Greveson, GQT, 190A+B Stapleton Hall Road, London, N4 4QL:

- your name and email/ 'phone number;
- a cheque made out to MHDHS for £2.50 x the number of tickets you would like;
- a stamped self-addressed envelope.

Tickets will be allocated to MHDHS members and their guests first and then to other local gardeners. Should demand exceed supply, a ballot will be

Threat looms over Rookfields CA

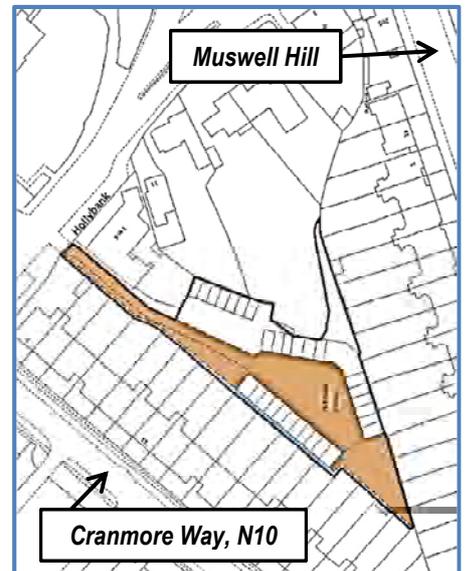
OUR ASSOCIATION is supporting our new members in the Rookfields Conservation Area in their campaign to save the Hollybank site (pictured) from development. The plan the Hollybank Action Group is opposing would see houses built on what is now the site of garages, a cottage and a copse. There is also a large 'public' WW2 air raid shelter there and the remains of an underground petrol tank with petrol pump now gone.

Most of the garages are wide enough for cars and the campaigners claim a latent demand for car parking there already exists. Nine businesses also use the garages, for example, for storage or as premises from which to operate.

The Hollybank Action Group is concerned about development being allowed to take place within a Conservation Area, especially one that is subject to an Article 4 directive, and the precedent this sets for development in other conservation areas.

If you would like to be alerted when the planning application is submitted or to join the Hollybank Action Group's protest, email Helen Finch at:

helen.finch@btconnect.com



held and tickets allocated accordingly. In this case to be fair, applicants who have asked for a large number of tickets, then will not get their total requirement and will be sent a refund. Should applicants be unlucky, their cheque will be returned. Tickets will be sent out week beginning 25 February.

For further information, contact Kit on n10gardeners@googlemail.com or telephone 020 8340 0557 (mobile 07507 138582).

What is the value of our community land?

Our Association Legal Eagle, Peter Thompson, discusses the relevance of the Localism Act 2011 to land in our area.

Under the heading ASSETS OF COMMUNITY VALUE the Localism Act 2011 provides a system for listing land 'of community value' in order to prevent its being sold off without the community having a chance to bid for it. It applies to land but not, apparently, to other community assets like the Langton Clock, the Queen's Avenue horse-trough and the Transmitter in Alexandra Park. This is clear from the requirement that the listing must include 'a description of *the nominated land* including its proposed boundaries'

Social wellbeing

So, does the Act empower conservationists to list the whole of Muswell Hill and protect it from falling into the hands of developers (people like Edmondson and Collins who created Muswell Hill in the first place)?

No, there are various restrictions. Only 'a voluntary or community body' with a local connection may make an application for listing. Happily, our Association falls within the definition. But we cannot nominate any old land. Dwelling-houses are excluded and the land has to have community value, which means that its use 'furthers the social wellbeing or social interests of the local community'.

A modest park

That is a tricky one. Probably the library and police station come within this category and would be eligible for listing. But we need to bear in mind that the endgame is the purchase of the asset by a 'community interest group' within a short timetable; and a few million pounds would be needed for assets of this size.

So let us focus on something more modest like the little 'park' by the John Baird public house. That, some may think, is a nice little community refuge where you can sit and talk and further your social wellbeing. It looks like a suitable candidate for listing.

The first step is to identify its boundaries and owners by a search of the Land Registry and then persuade MHFGA or some other sizeable voluntary community body with a local connection to apply to the Council for this little parcel of land to be listed.

Once that is successfully done, members can sleep at night knowing that the owner cannot sell off the land without a community interest group being given six weeks to ask to be considered as a bidder for the land and six months in which to buy it. Be warned: the bidding may well be in competition with commercial operators who have deep pockets and who want to acquire the land for development.

Successful bidding

The six months timetable is tight and raising the money to support a realistic bid may be daunting. There is another complication: MHFGA does not fall within the definition of a 'community interest group' since it is a group of individual members, not a corporate organisation.

Maybe a corporate body like **en10ergy limited** would be willing to bid for the land. Otherwise it may be necessary to form a bespoke company called, perhaps, the Community Land in Muswell Hill Company Limited, (CLIMCO), that can buy the land and register its ownership. Then the job is done.

It may sound very difficult to bring off but, remarkably, we have had two local examples of communities bidding successfully for community land even before the Localism Act came into force.

A done deal

One was the land owned by Thames Water on which the Fortis Green Allotments stand. In 2009 Thames was planning on selling it on the open market, so the allotment members formed a company limited by guarantee, called Fortis Green Community Allotments Trust, and made a bid with money provided by the members. The deal was done and the allotments now belong to the allotment community.

Then there was the curious affair of the private roads on the Rookfield Estate, including the shrubberies and trees along the verges. On the sale of the houses, a hundred years ago, the roads and mountain greenery were retained by the freeholders and maintained by them out of resident service charges.

Green arbours

But in 2010 the freeholders decided to sell off all their interest in the estate. The residents therefore formed a company, **Rookfield Management Limited**, and invested in it by buying 200 £1 shares each. The upshot is that the roads and little green arbours are now owned, maintained and managed by members of the Rookfield Community. Hurray!

(One of the investors who helped to bring off this coup was our former editor, the sadly missed Gerry Saunders, who included the emancipation of the Rookfield community's roads amongst his last good deeds.)

Ally Pally talk brings in the crowds

OUR NOVEMBER MEETING with guest speaker, Duncan Wilson, Chief Executive of Alexandra Park, proved a great success with the large number of members who attended. Particularly impressive, many declared, was the new spirit of openness and consultation that was in clear evidence.

Among the many Pally matters mentioned was its 150th birthday this year with the big celebration on Sunday 21 July. However, there is not much money around to fund this.

Local organisations represented on the Palace committees have been asked to send details of any contacts who would be interested in being part of a community show to Duncan at duncan.wilson@appct.org. Local groups, such as Alexandra Residents' Association (ARA), are hoping that, with community effort, it could become a day to remember.



Duncan Wilson explains his vision for the Palace with the help of the strategic spatial masterplan

MEMBERS' LETTERS

SPECIAL



The November issue of our Newsletter carried a controversial letter from one of our members, questioning the role of our Association in today's Muswell Hill. Here we publish the responses it provoked along with a 'right to reply' from the original writer.

No 'smug aloofness' here!

What a SAD letter (*November issue*) from 'name supplied' of Dukes Avenue. I have lived in Muswell Hill since 1966 and have always been a campaigner. I went on the first Aldermaston March. I supported the ANC donating all my pottery seconds to their annual bazaar for many years. Even as a child, I visited the elderly in Edgware where I lived, enjoying their stories about life in Victorian times

Campaigns

As a teenager, with my schoolfriend and singing partner, I entertained at the local 'Evergreen Club' though I have to admit THEIR rendition of music hall songs was much more feisty than our tame folk songs!

Latterly, I campaigned against the imposition of a CPZ in Muswell Hill, against the closure of our local post office, supported the campaign to save the Accident and Emergency at Whittington Hospital, as well as pursuing my own voluntary works.

I take little credit. I only do what I WANT to do. My passion gives me energy. It is in my nature to respond in this way. I am ashamed to admit I even gave a hand with the flower beds! Oh mea culpa!

Young residents

However, I have little recall of any 'Community Spirit' in Muswell Hill in the 70's. Perhaps 'Name Supplied' can jog my memory?

Maybe I was surrounded by public spirited residents galore through the 70's, but I was young, and had to knuckle down to work, as many of the young 'incomers' do now.

Despite the difficulties faced by young families nowadays, through my involvement with the National Gardens Scheme Charity, as Assistant County Organiser, I have come across some wonderful young Muswell Hill residents, who, as well as running a large home and raising a family, give time, energy and financial support to many local causes, organising school fêtes, fundraisers, holding Macmillan

coffee mornings, as well as opening their gardens for charity for visitors to enjoy. Their friends support them baking cakes, making jams, manning the gate and donating plants.

Environment

I have friends in their 80's who help to organise exercise classes for the over 60's, run pensioner groups, serve on committees to support the 'at risk', visit people in care homes and hospital, host visitors on French exchanges.

A blind friend in her 60's stands outside shops in all weathers collecting for charities. She sings in her church choir and still works, for Dial-a-Ride.

I am involved with children at local schools who are learning the art of horticulture, growing and eating their produce, exhibiting at flower shows, and learning to respect and nurture the environment for future generations.

Volunteers

I have barely skimmed the surface. I feel SO blessed to know and care for so many wonderful local people, many of whom through their support for OUR voluntary work, have become involved themselves. I feel I belong to a loving and giving expanding family.

You pass them by every day...they don't shout about what they do.

Since I have lived in Muswell Hill I have, of course, seen changes, many, to my mind, for the worse: traffic lights, traffic control measures, humps that have cost me dear in car repairs, road closures...thank goodness the residents of Dukes Avenue, encouraged by the Grosvenor Road debacle, FAILED in their attempt to close THEIR road!

Life enhancing

Maybe, if 'Name Supplied' of Dukes Avenue, were to throw himself or herself into life enhancing activities locally, like giving a helping hand at the soup kitchen at the Baptist Church at the end of their road, they would see an entirely different and more positive picture of Muswell Hill.

Perhaps they already do in which case we share the same cup: mine half full, theirs half empty.

Susan Bennett
St Regis Close

A holistic look at things

Our member in Dukes Avenue raises some interesting points in the letter in the last edition.

The Association is not complacent about social ills, but our main remit is geared more towards the physical environment and this is true of similar organisations throughout the country which all try to do their best for the local area.

I personally feel that looking at things holistically the provision of amenities such as flower beds which the member mentions do make a contribution to how people feel both about themselves as well as where they live. Surely it is better to have a flower bed in good use than have it left empty and prone to vandalism?

Associations such as MHFGA also serve a useful purpose in providing a means (Newsletter and a website) by which members can learn about local issues and campaigns which are being run by other groups. This is an increasingly important function given the disinclination of the few remaining local newspapers to cover such things unless there is a celebrity involved.

John Crompton
Committee member
Donovan Avenue

Right to reply

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to respond to the letters you have received, written with reference to my earlier letter, in the same Newsletter in which they are to be published.

One of your correspondents speaks of herself and her friends as though they were representative of the entirety of Muswell Hill life but clearly this is not so. On the contrary, people here tend to bestir themselves only to tackle matters of direct relevance to their lifestyle choices. The unpleasantness that saw neighbour pitted against neighbour in the Dukes Avenue traffic reorganisation fracas referred to in her letter is a case in point. Even then, many residents were simply too apathetic to get involved.

Continued on page 7

WANTED!

Your Editor wants your letters for this page. Post, email or phone them through and make your voice heard! Newsletter office contact details are on the back page.

Letters - continued from page 6.

Your other correspondent mentions an MHFGA environmental remit in response to my remark about the complacency latent in your preoccupation with cosmetic matters (flowerbeds, plaques, clocks and suchlike). Yet the campaigning zeal of the 70s I referred to, described in your own Association history book, saw the borough council's undemocratic style and disregard for residents' quality of life forcefully challenged. The proposed felling of all Haringey's roadside trees at the time is just one example. What does MHFGA do now to combat such anti-resident initiatives as the inappropriate Pinkham Way development? It appears simply to report them.

Materialism

Perhaps Muswell Hill's status driven obsession with the material (loft extensions, front garden car parking and the narrow range of expensive shops now flourishing in the Broadway) is fed by the failure of organisations like yours to engage younger residents in important campaigns like this one. Admittedly, this is less easy than establishing flowerbeds, but it is this that might, at last, bring about change.

Arrogance

It would, at least, curb the constant, disgraceful flouting of public opinion by an arrogant, incestuous borough council and the numerous failures by various authorities that have resulted in the transformation of a pleasant residential area into a polluted daytime arena of traffic chaos, petty crime and overcrowding, and a night time descent into noisy loutishness.

Your Association will surely become increasingly irrelevant and moribund, as I warned earlier, unless you begin to tackle the larger issues.

Name supplied
Dukes Avenue



council. Mediocrity seems to be the new way of life in Haringey. Even the local councillors seem to have this strange air of resignation that nothing will change around them.

Moving to the dirty streets, I have found myself picking up wrappers, cans, coffee cups in my street on a very regular basis and my husband does the same. Are they cleaning the streets in Haringey or are we starting to save on that as well? The overflowing bins are now a typical sight in every street. The house next to mine (divided into 9 studios) has seven bins, which are spilling out by the end of the first week.

Finally, what is with plastic windows, estate agents boards everywhere, poor conversions, badly kept front gardens, the proposed waste plant, nightclubs and takeaways everywhere? Is this the end of Muswell Hill as a desirable place to live?

The MHFGA has done and is doing an outstanding job in trying to solve some of these issues. However, it needs more active members in order to be a force for good; otherwise, it will sink into oblivion.

Nicla di Palma
Church Crescent

Disappointing Muswell Hill

Nicla di Palma, pictured, is responsible for our Association Facebook entries and announcements. (See Bulletin board on page 2). Her letter, below, describes some of her impressions of our area after moving here in March 2012.

I love the parks, the high street (or some of it) and Alexandra Palace; I try to shop locally and I only use local tradesmen, who have been good, precise, flexible and friendly.

On the other hand, I have experienced many negatives. I found people's disengagement with local issues, the resignation with council departments, the dirt, the general sense of decline I witness in the area very disappointing.

I have tried to advertise the work of the Muswell Hill and Fortis Green

Association to the people I am getting to know in the area. I have no intention to force people to join, but I thought some people would be interested. I received a couple of half-hearted 'yes, interesting' responses and then nothing else. In spite of being time-poor, I thought people would generally have an interest in improving the local area or at least being aware of local issues. I clearly was mistaken.

Ineptitude

I had the misfortune of having to deal with several departments in Haringey council. I was warned in advance about them being 'useless', but I persisted. Unfortunately, the people who warned me were right. Apart from one or two exceptions, the council is full of people who really don't care about making residents' lives better. I read many, many posts in online forums about the ineptitude of the council. Speaking to several local residents, I found a sense of fatigue and resignation towards the

Bowling club gets a leg-up

SEVERAL ASSOCIATION MEMBERS attended Muswell Hill Bowling Club's AGM on 25 November. The main topic on the agenda was the club's survival and Association members Lucy Roots, and Laura Butterfield offered to organise a coffee morning in the New Year in order to raise further awareness of the club and hopefully attract a few more members, playing, and social. Volunteers who would be willing to help with the upkeep of the grounds surrounding the green, the pavilion and other smaller duties, are sought as well.

One resident of Kings Avenue volunteered to take over the role of membership secretary and treasurer, alongside the

existing directors, and one existing playing member also put himself forward to help organise next season's fixtures.

Our own Committee member, Jacqueline Servat, will look into website improvements for the club as well as marketing. She says, 'It would be a welcome start if Association members got the ball rolling (pun intended) by word of mouth! Thanks to some fresh input, there is now hope that the club will keep going. We need to help this facility raise its profile despite its secluded location behind Tetherdown, Queen's and King's Avenues. Watch this space and spread the word.'

If you wish to volunteer, please contact Paul Chapman of the Muswell Hill Bowling Club on 020 8442 1875. He is also a member of our Association.

MUSWELL HILL & FORTIS GREEN ASSOCIATION

(affiliated to the Haringey Federation of Residents' Associations)

OTHER PEOPLE'S EVENTS

ALEXANDRA PALACE ORGAN CONCERTS: David Houlder of Leeds Minster is giving a concert on TUESDAY 19 FEBRUARY at 7.30pm in the Great Hall. The programme is varied and includes music by Rawsthorne, Dyson and Vierne. Admission is by programme at the door. Visit www.allypallyorgan.org.uk for more information.

Become a Friend of the Alexandra Palace Organ Appeal for £15 pa and receive regular mailings. Write to The Treasurer, 41 Vanderbilt Road, London, SW18 3BG with your contact details and cheque or PO.

FRIENDS OF QUEEN'S WOOD: on SATURDAY 16 FEBRUARY there is a Winter Walk, with tree identification. Meet at The Lodge at 2pm. On 24 FEBRUARY a working group will meet from 10.30am to 12 noon. Tools are provided but bring protective gloves and, if possible, a mobile phone to keep in touch with the working party leader. Meet at The Lodge. Ring Lucy Roots on 8883 8875 for more information or visit the Friends' website. The address is www.fqw.org.uk/events/

HIGHGATE CHORAL SOCIETY: on SATURDAY 9 MARCH a concert will be held featuring works by Beethoven, Berlioz and Brahms at All Hallows' Church, Savernake Road, NW3 2LA. Tickets may be bought at www.hcschoir.com or Les Aldrich Music Centre in Muswell Hill. See the website, above, for the time when it becomes available.

MUSWELL HILL FRIENDS OF THE EARTH: the group meets at 7.30pm on the second Tuesday of every month at the Friends Meeting House, Church Crescent, N10 3NE. For more details contact Tim Root on tim@timroot.net or call him on 8340 7764 or 07726 793265.

MUSWELL & HIGHGATE PENSIONERS' ACTION GROUP: Members of the group meet regularly at Hilldene Court, 11 Alexandra Park Road, in the lounge on the first floor. A lift is available. Phone Janet Shapiro on 8883 9571 or email her at janet.rmshapiro@btopenworld.com for more details.

NORTH BANK: weekly exercise classes for the over 60s take place in the Garden Room on FRIDAYS. The Fitness Plus class is from 10.30-11.15am and the General Fitness class is at 11.45-12.30pm. Sessions are £2. For more information phone David Restarick on 8365 2466 or email community@mhmc.org.uk

NORTH LONDON CHORUS: JS Bach's Mass in B Minor will be performed on SATURDAY 20 APRIL at 7.30pm in St James' Church. Tickets are £18, £13, £10 with £2 reduction for concessions. Tickets are available from Ticketline 020 3468 1213 or St James' Church bookshop and Les Aldrich music shop.

MET POLICE DROP-IN SURGERIES: our local Safer Neighbourhood Team's next street briefing is on FRIDAY 22 FEBRUARY from 4.30-4.45pm on Muswell Hill Road at the junction with Grand Avenue. The next drop-in surgery is on MONDAY 4 MARCH from 6-6.30pm at Muswell Hill Library.

PARKINSON'S COMMUNITY COFFEE CLUB: this is a new drop-in coffee club for people in the community who have been affected by Parkinson's disease. It meets at Alexandra Park Library at 10.30am every Friday for one hour to chat, drink coffee and relax. There is on-site parking, as well as disabled access and facilities. Local buses are the 102, 299 and 184. If you would like more information, contact the library, or just turn up.