

Muswell Hill & Fortis Green Association

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2020

14 May 2020

COMMITTEE REPORTS

MEETINGS

John Hajdu, Chairman

In June last year we had a very enjoyable and interesting walk in Alexandra Park, conducted by Sally Stevens.

In October we were given a talk by Nigel Wilmot, chair of the friends of the Alexandra Palace Theatre, on the history and restoration of the Theatre.

In November Nick Peacey secretary of the Friends of the Highgate Wood Roman Kiln, gave us a talk on the excavations in the Wood and future plans.

The March visit to the Muswell Hillbilly Brewers and the April talk by the “Chewing gum” man, Ben Wilson, was of course cancelled, as is the Kenwood walk we were planning next month.

We hope that our meetings in October and November can take place. We will of course give you further information nearer the time.

NEWSLETTER

Christine Morris, Newsletter Editor

I have continued to produce an 8-page colour newsletter bi-monthly over the past year. I thought it might be interesting for members to know how the process of getting the newsletter to your computer/household happens.

I start preparing the newsletter as soon as the previous one has been distributed. I begin by sourcing the regular articles: a profile of one of our household members, one or two profiles of our corporate members, and finding material from one of our old newsletters for the back page 'From our Archive' article.

The Committee provide me with updates on their areas of interest such as planning, the environment, and news from Alexandra Palace. Then there are local events to cover, such as the Winter Festival, our own members' meetings, and news from local organisations like the Friends of the Parkland Walk. The Local Organisations and Events page is kept as up to date as possible and I hope is useful for our members. I always use some of Zoe Norfolk's lovely photographs as well.

Having collated the material, which comes in over quite a long period of time, I work on the layout, which changes constantly as more copy comes in. I try to get a balance between text and pictures to make the newsletter an interesting read.

My main challenge is finding the corporate profiles which are often promised but sometimes fail to materialise for a variety of reasons but mainly I assume through pressure of work in having a business to run. However, it is a useful way for businesses to raise their profile among residents.

Along the way, I have several phone calls with our Chairman and, when the newsletter is complete, we meet to have an editorial meeting, after which the newsletter is proof-read.

About 10 days before the end of the month I send the copy to the printer, who prints 500 copies which go to Peter Davies, co-ordinator of the distribution to members who get a hard copy. Finally, I set up the Mailchimp email and schedule it to go out a couple of days before the end of the month.

PLANNING

Nick Barr, Vice Chair & Planning

During the period between 20/04/19 and 24/04/20 on behalf of the Association I have reviewed in the region of 285 planning applications that concern the Alexandra, Fortis Green and Muswell Hill Wards and made approximately 9 objections.

This is a decrease in the number of applications on the previous year (326) which itself was decrease on the 2017/2018 year which itself continued the trend from 2016/2017 when I reviewed 620 applications and made 40 objections.

The reasons for these declining numbers will be many and complex, most recently due to the Covid 19 pandemic but also reflect the uncertainties of Brexit and economic uncertainties.

I have and will continue to object to the creation of vehicle crossovers and front garden parking. I work with a number of interested parties in a co-ordinated response to such applications particularly the Crossover Group. Government policy, however, allows front garden parking as Permitted Development subject to certain restrictions, particularly in Conservation Areas. Although consent from the Highways Department is required to create a vehicle crossover, Haringey does not publicise such applications and consequently the Association only becomes aware that an application has been made if it appears in documents supporting a planning matter or by personal vigilance. Member are invited to let me know if they become aware of such matters.

There have been no major applications in the Wards during the relevant period which were not in Conservation Areas and consequently reviewed by my fellow committee member, John Compton.

PUBLICITY

George Danker, Publicity & Events

1. Muswell Flyer - continuing to write articles including a tribute piece about our Chair.
2. Ham&High - acting as MHFGA spokesperson for comments in regular articles about local matters.
3. Emails to members - informing them about (amongst other things) events, police contact points, local transport and environment matters and new housing developments.
4. MailChimp - keeping the mailing list up to date and supporting the proposed move to MemberMojo.
5. Newsletter Survey - I created and distributed an online survey to see what our members think about the Newsletter. The results were very positive.

Events

- Alexandra Park guided walk, 9th June - led by Sally Stevens. We sold 11 tickets and made a donation of £100 to Alexandra Palace.
- History of the Alexandra Palace Theatre talk, 10th October - Nigel Willmott and Patricia Brearey are experts on Alexandra Palace, having just written a book about its history. They gave us a fascinating account.
- Highgate Wood Roman Kiln talk, 7th November - speaker Nick Peacey treated us to the story of how a Roman Kiln was discovered in Highgate Wood and the experiments that have been done since then. He also updated us on exciting plans for the near future.
- It's a Wonderful Muswell, 7th December - we decided to run a 'Name the Teddy Bear' competition instead of a tombola, this year. Planet Organic and Everyman vouchers were also attached as prizes. Proceeds from the event were donated to the Harington Scheme, a local charity which helps teenagers with learning difficulties and disabilities. They were very grateful for our help.
- Crime in the Community discussion, 12th March - We were contacted by Fortismere School about a community discussion on local crime. We publicised this via an email to all members.
- Muswell Hillbillies Brewery Tour, 19th March - cancelled due to COVID-19. We hope to reschedule.
- Chewing Gum Man, 16th April - cancelled due to COVID-19. We hope to reschedule.
- 2020 AGM, 14th May - cancelled due to COVID-19

Other

1. Queens Avenue rubbish/fly-tipping situation - working with Councillors and Council officers to determine who is responsible for the inappropriate waste presentation on Queens Avenue and coming up with action plans to improve the situation.
2. Boundary Commission proposals - the new Haringey ward boundaries have been published by the Boundary Commission. Members have been informed of the details. The proposed changes will now go through Parliament and, if approved, are likely to come into force at the time of the next local elections in May 2022.
3. Library improvement plans - after years of campaigning, Haringey Council has finally drawn up plans for the installation of a lift and accessible toilets at the library. However, the plans are not yet fully funded.

ALEXANDRA PALACE AND PARK

Duncan Neil, Statutory Advisory Committee, Alexandra Palace

Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, Alexandra Palace and Park was having a very successful year. The number and quality of events - including theatre performances, music concerts, daytime exhibitions and sporting contests – had continued to build on the momentum of the last few years.

However, the closure of the Palace buildings on the 17th of March, and therefore the loss of all trading income from this point until re-opening, will have a massive impact on the financial position of the Palace and Park in the 2020-21 fiscal year at least. Government support schemes will provide some mitigation but our members are encouraged to make donations to the Palace to support this vital local institution through this incredible period.

Despite the buildings and playground being closed, the Park itself remains open and is being used by local residents for their daily exercise and dog walking.

We hope to see the Palace and Park return to its fully operational state as soon as the government guidance supports it.

CONSERVATION

John Crompton, Honorary Secretary, CAAC and Conservation

A review of the borough's ward boundaries was carried out by the Boundary Commission. There are some relatively minor adjustments to the boundaries in our area and the Alexandra ward will be renamed as Alexandra Park. It was good to see that following a tidying up of the rather baffling boundaries in the town centre it will all be in a single ward – Muswell Hill. This will assist with things like the arrangements for the effective provision of community policing. The new ward arrangements are due to come into effect in May 2022.

Conservation Area Advisory Committee

I continue to be the Association representative on the local CAAC. The CAAC is keen to recruit new (and hopefully younger) members so if anyone is interested please contact me. Most of the business of the Committee is conducted by email so there is very little commitment in terms of evening meetings.

Shops and town centre generally

During the past year we have again seen a number of closings and new arrivals amongst the shops and restaurants. Overall though the occupancy rate has been remarkably high and Muswell Hill remained an extremely attractive venue for shopping. We are of course now entering a period of considerable uncertainty in this regard (like so much besides), but we must hope that a way can be found for local businesses to prosper so they can continue to serve the local community.

New residential developments

Permission has been granted to redevelop the single storey shops in Fortis Green Road next to the cinema and to build six flats above despite a large number of objections having been received. An objection was submitted to the recent application to build 6 new flats on the roof of Whitehall Lodge in Pages Lane. Otherwise the past year was much quieter than recent ones in terms of the number of new applications for major residential developments.. This was probably in part due to the uncertainty regarding Brexit. There is of course now further general uncertainty about the speed at which schemes which have been granted permission will proceed.

Planning policy

The Mayor of London is completing the final stages of the new London Plan . The next part of the process is for the boroughs to prepare their own new draft local plan. Haringey has already said that our local plan will follow the London Plan very closely This means that the focus will be on permitting and increase in the density of residential developments to help provide the additional housing units which the Council is required to approve. There is one piece of important and encouraging news in this regard: the first draft of the new plan would have required Haringey to ensure the provision of an additional 2000 housing units each year for 10 years. Following representations from the Council this figure has been reduced by 400 pa. The Association's officers will be examining the detail in the new draft local plan to assess its impact on the existing residents and appearance of Muswell Hill and Fortis Green and will make representations to the Council where necessary.

Conservation Area Character Appraisals. The Council is yet to publish the new character appraisal for our local Conservation Areas.

TRANSPORT

Tony Wells, Transport

There has only been one issue in which the Association has to have been involved and that concerned the lighting on the Zebra Crossing on Fortis Green close to the western junction of Twyford Ave. Members expressed concern about the inadequate level of lighting and the inability of drivers to clearly see pedestrians waiting to cross. Representations were made to Haringey Council, but having examined the accident statistics they felt unable to install Lit Poles, as there were other priorities.

This issue may raise itself again as there has been an uptick in high speed dangerous driving along Fortis Green during the Covid-19 lockdown, as evidenced by numerous complaints on the Nextdoor Website and to the Police.

There have been two issues outside our boundaries which have impacted upon Muswell Hill:

- The two-week Liveable Crouch End Traffic experiment involving road closures and diversions in October caused huge delays to traffic with disruption to bus services and difficulties for the emergency services. Pollution was high from stationary traffic. This had a significant knock on effect in Muswell Hill and Alexandra Palace. Traffic was backed up to the Roundabout at the top of Muswell Hill and our bus services were seriously affected.
The Consultation showed that there was widespread criticism of the Scheme which was financed by TFL at a cost £4.8m! The Council have accepted that a lot of work needs to be done before it is acceptable. However, it is highly unlikely that it will proceed in the post Covid - 19 world as finance for such projects will be extremely limited.
- The Wells Terrace Entrance/Exit at Finsbury Park Station was closed with one week's notice in July 2016 ahead of the £220m Development at the site. The closure has caused a lot of inconvenience for those living on the other side of the Station to the Main Entrance. After much delay it was scheduled to reopen this Spring. There will now be further delay.

STREET SCENE

We are monitoring the street scene, as far as we can, for broken electric car charging units, abandoned roadworks signs and derelict communication cabinets, and reporting them to Haringey Council or the relevant Telecoms Companies.

Our Environment Officer is also active in dealing with pavement damage, garbage, green spaces and graffiti.

PHOTOGRAPHY

The Shop Front Survey Archive has been put on hold for the time being. We shall continue at the end of the lockdown to record all the latest additions and changes to our High Streets.

A selection of new images is added to the Website Galleries periodically and selected prints are kept in binders for viewing on street stalls and at the AGM

MEMBERSHIP

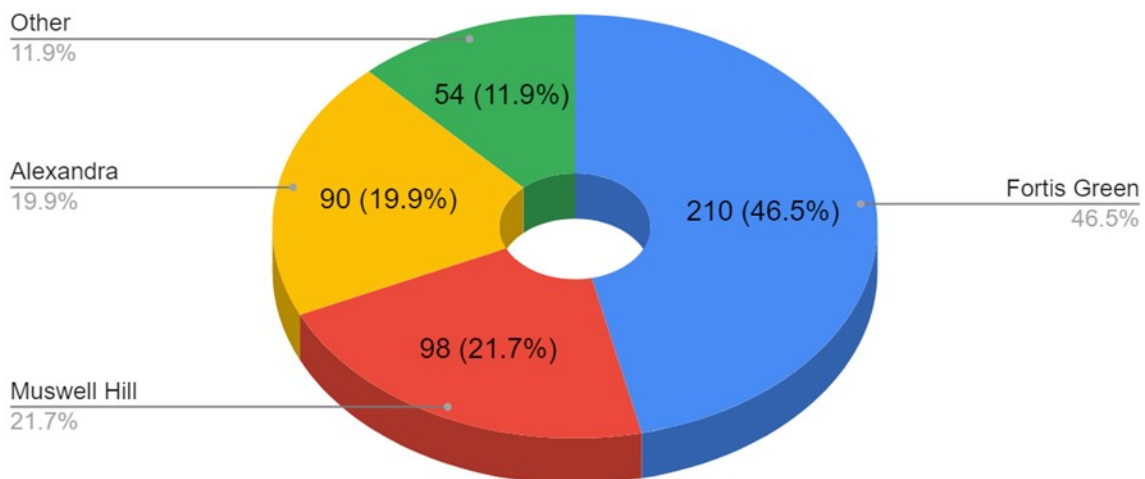
Richard Marmalade, Membership

I joined the committee as membership secretary at the end of 2019 and since then have been engaging with members as the first port of call for contact via the website and email.

This year we welcomed 60 new members comprising 17 corporate accounts and 26 households (*note a household can have several members*).

This brings the total number of members to 778 comprising 82 corporate accounts and 452 households.

Household members by ward



When I joined the committee, work was underway to set up new software to manage memberships and this has now been set live. As a result, the sign-up process is simplified and members are able to manage their own account details at www.mhfga.org/membership.

All new memberships are now paid for by either credit/debit card or direct debit, however existing members who have Standing Orders set up will continued be accommodated. Of these some members have not yet amended their payment to reflect the updated membership fee of £10. As the numbers involved are relatively low and in many cases those members are struggling to make the change we are taking a pragmatic approach to the situation.

Looking forward to the coming year I am keen to continue building on what the association offers its members and ways we can work together to enhance our community.

ENVIRONMENT

Brian Livingstone, Environment and Green Spaces

Flowerboxes around the Broadway

We have continued to organise and maintain the planting to the flowerboxes around the roundabout and we are very grateful to various members of the Association who have made donations towards the cost of the flowers. Brian Livingstone is grateful to all those who have assisted with the flower boxes - Sunshine Gardens for the discount they give us on the cost of the flowers, Tessa Kulik who has helped with the planting, maintenance and watering, and various members of the Association who have helped with dead heading the plants when passing by the Broadway. Unfortunately, the current COVID-19 circumstances have made it impossible for us to re-plant as we normally do in April.

Cattle Trough opposite the Library

Last May our member Pauline Hudson hung up her watering can after 4 years of managing, planting and maintaining the plants in the water trough opposite the library, and we are very grateful to her for all her work. Tessa Kulik has kindly offered to look after the cattle trough alongside her work with the flowerboxes.

Colney Hatch Lane Beds

The beds are well established and we continue to receive positive comments from members of the public passing by. We have a regular team of Association members who continue to give an hour or two of their time every few months to carry out weeding, pruning, etc. Particular thanks to Lucy Haynes who is a stalwart member of this group, and also to Georgia Pairtrie who planted the bulbs and some other plants in the beds last Autumn. Thanks are also due to Mark Falconer and his crew from the Avid Gardener who undertook some major pruning works, and to Haringey Parks Department for cutting the grass and collecting our bags of green waste. If anyone would like to help with the beds please contact Brian Livingstone.

Pocket Park (opposite John Baird)

A year ago we planted some new shrubs in the Pocket Park with the assistance of Haringey Parks. Although some of the shrubs have flourished, unfortunately a number of the shrubs were stolen. We have engaged with Veolia to ensure that the park is kept clean every day and that the area behind the bushes is kept clear of rubbish. Tessa Kulik has also been helping with pruning the shrubs to promote the flowering.

Other Green Sites and Flower Beds

We have continued to work with the Haringey Parks Department and Veolia to improve the green spaces and to ensure that they are regularly maintained and kept clean. Following a walk around last October with Lewis Taylor and David Theakston of Haringey Parks they agreed to undertake the following works:

- Re-plant the bed by the traffic lights at the end of Fortis Green Road
- Repair some paving slabs at the Pocket Park
- Weed the bed outside Sainsburys/Cook and plant some new shrubs
- Fix back coping stones at the raised bed, junction of Grand Avenue/Muswell Hill Road
- Plant grass in the new beds on Woodside Avenue by the St James's School pedestrian crossing

- Grove Lodge Gardens path – cut back brambles and weed control in the Spring
- Blaenavon pocket park – repair coping stones
- Athenaeum Place – damaged / dangerous crossing

It was gratifying to be contacted by Haringey Highways to say that they were finally going to completely replace this dangerous crossover – 5 years after our initial discussions! A new table-top crossover, new dropped kerbs and road gullies were installed in February of this year.

Potholes, graffiti removal, blocked road gullies, damaged street furniture, open Virgin Media cabinets, damaged paving, overflowing street bins, fly posting and the like I continue to report any issues to Haringey either by telephone, the Haringey website or the Haringey App. The reporting system works well and confirmation emails are sent out by the Council. However, it can take some time for the work to be undertaken by the Council's contractors.

Bill Jago and Jack Whitehead continue their sterling work, undertaking a weekly inspection and clean-up of graffiti and fly posting around the Broadway. The Council continues to respond well when they have been called in to help with the larger areas of graffiti. Bill and Jack are also speaking to shop owners who have graffiti on their shopfronts and advising them how to seek assistance from the Council to remove it.

Refuse Problems in Queens Avenue

This has been a long running issue going back a number of years but we continue to work with the local councillors and press Haringey and Veolia to improve the situation. The majority of the problems occur at the Homes for Haringey properties and a few private multi-occupancy houses which have a large number of transient residents with a high turnover. At some properties the bin storage area is insufficient which limits the number of bins causing overflow of rubbish onto the pavement. Homes for Haringey has improved some of these bin storage facilities which has helped improve the situation but there is more to do.

St James Square and the Car Park

We have a good working relationship with the car park managing agents and we report any issues that arise such as:

- Dumped rubbish
- Graffiti
- Faulty lights, blocked road gullies etc, locked road gullies

WEBSITE

Alex Vincenti, Webmaster

MHFGA.ORG, the Muswell Hill & Fortis Green Association website, is now seven years old and while the successful appearance has been kept almost unchanged, the contents is regularly updated and expanded. Also, since November 2019, the critical little lock sign has appeared next to the website's name online. It means that communications from our members and other visitors are now safely encrypted and cannot be intercepted.

Over the year, a new News page has been added, with information about Association's events and those of our community. As for the Newsletters, also the news items are now archived and can be searched by date. The website now links to our Facebook and Twitter accounts and we have significantly increased the page reserved to our corporate members, with links to their websites.

Since June 2019, the website has been visited about 3,500 times and about 7,000 pages have been viewed, 87 percent from the UK, 5 percent from the US and 8 percent from the rest of the world.

NOTICEBOARD, FACEBOOK AND TWITTER

The Noticeboard and Facebook are managed by Zoe Norfolk.

- The MHFGA Facebook account has now 1,486 followers.
- I continue to post various stories and photos (much less since lockdown) , including a video on Easter Sunday of the blossom on Cranley Gardens which was very popular
- The engagement continues to grow and is all very positive.

Twitter is managed by Duncan Neil.

- The MHFGA Twitter account has now over 900 followers.