

Your Residents' Association working for the local community since 1948

A Celebratory Year!



The MHFGA Committee members at our March 2023 meeting. Unfortunately Laura Bugden, Chris White, Christine Morris and Nigel Clark weren't able to be present

This year sees the 75th anniversary of MHFGA, which has served residents by monitoring planning applications, green spaces and our traffic and transport services, as well as campaigning on a host of other issues over seven and a half decades. It is also the year which celebrates John Hajdu's long service to the Association as he will be resigning at the AGM on 13th May after 25 years on the Committee and 22 years as our Chair.

The AGM will be the focus of the celebrations with a post-AGM party serving food supplied by Wave, alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks and a cake. Muswell Hillbilly Brewers will be producing a special beer available at the event and at a concessionary price in their tap room afterwards until stocks run out.

John Hajdu's book *Muswell Hill and Fortis Green Association, a history of its campaigns and landmark achievements* has been updated and will be made available as a gift to members attending the AGM. There will be an exhibition of photographs of Muswell Hill taken by Zoe Norfolk and Muswell Hill themed mixed media artworks by Agnes Gomori, which will be available for sale by silent auction with proceeds going to Muswell Hill Foodbank. There will also be an exhibition of paintings, again of Muswell Hill, by Alan Lancaster and Hilary Massetti. The paintings will be for sale. In addition to this,

May/June 2023

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MHFGA has invited Years 5 and 6 in local schools in our Wards to enter a competition entitled *Muswell Hill in 75 years' time*. There will be a cash prize for the winning school.

With the help of the Haringey Parks department we intend to make some improvements to the Pocket Park opposite the Village Green pub. We have also requested improvements to the raised beds near COOK and at the instigation of the Association the Parks department has agreed to give the planting a makeover and the Highways department will be replacing the two benches on the pavement adjacent to the raised beds. We are also planning to install plaques to commemorate the upgrade to the Pocket Park and the raised beds for the MHFGA 75th Anniversary.

We very much look forward to sharing this significant date in the Association's history and to welcoming many of you on May 13th at the United Reformed Church, Queens Avenue, N10 3NU.

Copy date for July/August 2023 edition of this Newsletter

If you would like to submit an article, letter, picture or diary date for our next edition, please send your copy to editor@mhfga.org by 1st June 2023.

Members' Meetings

Saturday 13th May 2023

AGM and MHFGA's 75th birthday party

at United Reformed Church, Queens Avenue N10 3NU. The AGM will start promptly at 6pm, followed by the celebration of our anniversary at 7.30pm. Please do try to come along to both events.

AGM Agenda

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of meeting held on 12th May 2022
3. Chairman's Report
4. Treasurer's Report
5. Election of Officers
6. Election of Committee
7. Election of Independent Examiner
8. Any other business, including questions from members
9. Looking Back - John Hajdu's valedictory address

Sunday 11th June 2023 - a walk around Queen's Wood with our member Lucy Roots. **This is a change of date from that previously advertised.**

Muswell Hill Flood Management Proposals

Haringey Council have confirmed that the flood management proposals for the junction of Muswell Hill, Alexandra Palace Way, Priory Road and Park Road are going ahead. The Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) will help

manage surface water in a storm water event. With other nearby drainage improvements which have already been introduced they will help reduce the risk of surface water flooding impacting on nearby businesses and properties.

The works should take about 16-18 weeks from the end of March, weather permitting. Some traffic diversions and part road closures will be necessary. These disruptions will be kept to a minimum. The contractor, Marlborough Highways, will employ 'gatespersons' to assist you with allowing necessary access for deliveries during the working day. If you have any queries please email frontline.consultation@haringey.gov.uk and type 'SuDS' as the email header.



MHFGA Committee

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John Hajdu MBE
chairman@mhfga.org

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planning@mhfga.org

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Graffiti

If you wish to report graffiti or flyposting, please go to the "Report It" section at www.haringey.gov.uk and enter the details there.



www.facebook.com/MHFGA



[@theMHFGA](https://twitter.com/theMHFGA)



[@mhfga](https://www.instagram.com/mhfga)

Visit our website www.mhfga.org for lots of information about the local area including old photos, early films and John Hajdu's history of the Association. If you have a photo or news item why not share it with our members on Twitter [@theMHFGA](https://twitter.com/theMHFGA) or visit www.twitter.com/theMHFGA. We tweet regularly on Association and local news, so please follow and spread the word. And don't forget our Facebook page www.facebook.com/MHFGA!

Member Profile

Christine Morris

Although not a resident of Muswell Hill, I became a member of the MHFGA when I was invited by John Hajdu to take on the role of Newsletter Editor in 2016. I have always liked the area with its variety of independent shops, its Edwardian architecture, the fascinating Parkland Walk, its green spaces and woodlands and the superb view of the City from the top of Muswell Hill itself which I always find spectacular. As Editor I have become better acquainted with the area and its history, especially through researching articles from the archives for printing in the Newsletter.

I was born and brought up in Watford, went to teacher training college in Chichester for a year before deciding to become a computer programmer on the advice of a careers officer. I was trained in the Civil Service where I worked for 6 years before taking up appointments in various companies and in local government. I then worked for Barnet Library Service for two years.

I had the luxury of taking 9 years off work in order to bring up my two children, during which time I studied for an Open University degree. I graduated in 1999 having completed courses in literature, history and religion.

My next career change was into office administration. I taught myself to touch type and began working for the Barnet Healthy Schools Programme as their Office Administrator. After fourteen years in this role, which I thoroughly enjoyed, it became apparent that the government was going to withdraw funding from the Healthy Schools programmes. I heard that the position of Members' Secretary at the Highgate Literary & Scientific Institution (HLSI) was becoming available. I applied successfully for the post and spent a very happy five years there before retiring in 2015.

In spite of people advising a period of reflection after retiring, I knew that I wanted to keep busy, so I immediately took up voluntary work at the Homeless Action in Barnet day centre where I worked for five years, and the Friern Barnet Community Library. I was invited to become a member of the Highgate Film Society committee and also volunteered with the RVS for five years, selecting and delivering library books to housebound readers.

I am an active member of the Finchley & Hornsey group of the Ramblers and regularly lead walks for them. I also lead walks for a group of friends once a month. I'm an enthusiastic bridge player and an avid reader. I volunteer in the HLSI library and also in the Harington charity shop in Hornsey. It's such a pleasure to spend my spare time doing things I enjoy. With a 3-year-old grandson and a new-born granddaughter, I try to help out with childcare where I can. I also have caring responsibilities for another family member, so all in all I have a busy life which I hope will keep me younger for longer!

Working with the MHFGA Committee over the last seven years has been a great pleasure – they are a lovely bunch of dedicated people. In passing over my role into Duncan Neill's capable hands, I wish him a very enjoyable experience. It's hard work but very rewarding. I shall of course remain a member of MHFGA and support the Committee whenever I can.



An Update on Plans for the Play Area in Muswell Hill Playing Fields



Following a meeting with John Hajdu (representing MHFGA) and Linda Alliston of the Friends of Coldfall Wood, Haringey Council have announced further plans for the improvement of the play area. The safety of the equipment was discussed and taken into account.

The plans include carrying out repairs to the Monkey Bars, reinstating the zip wire, replacing the surface

of the over 8s play area with rubber safety surface, replacing the basket swing missing in the under 8s play area and tidying up the plant/weed egress under play equipment.



Photos by Linda Alliston

Charles Rook: The forgotten builder of Muswell Hill

Caroline Jones has been researching the story of this fascinating 19th century builder

The rows of Edwardian houses that make Muswell Hill's architecture so distinctive sprang up in a relatively short period between 1896 and 1914. But while much has been written about the builder James Edmondson – responsible for the royal avenues such as King's and Queen's and the Broadway shopping parades - and of William Jeffries Collins who developed the Rookfield Estate and Grand Avenue - when I tried to find out more about Charles Rook, another prolific local builder of the same period, I drew a blank.

This is despite the fact that, according to his youngest daughter Doris (who wrote a letter about him in the Hornsey Historical Society Journal in 1998 when she was nearly 90 herself!) he built "over 300 houses" in Muswell Hill, dating from his arrival in the area in 1897 until his untimely death in 1909.

Records from the time show that Rook planned and built much of what was then called: 'The Alexandra Park Estate'. The area he developed was comprised of Roseberry, Curzon, Cecil and Cranbourne Roads, the adjoining sections of Duke's Avenue and some of Alexandra Park Road, including the parade of shops that today includes local cafés Owen's and Korto.

But perhaps the most intriguing house Charles built was the one he lived in with his wife Emily Jane Rook and their ten children - number 33 Cecil Road, which he named rather grandly 'Charleville'. Still proudly standing today, number 33 is an impressive double-fronted property at the end of the road, notably larger and more ornate in detail than any of its neighbours, with twirled wrought iron balustrades and intricately carved window frames.

Indeed, according to details in the Evening Standard when the house was advertised for sale after Rook's death in 1909, Charleville then boasted some seven bedrooms, a full electric bell system for every room, a billiard room, stabling for two horses – stables still visible if setback under an arch from Cecil Road and these days converted into two houses - plus a garage, landscaped garden and even a tennis court. It's hard to believe it could have been purchased then for just £600! Charles certainly knew how to build a stylish home with all the mod-cons of the time.



Look closely at number 33 and you can still see the faces of Charles and his wife carved into one of the window frames. Bolder still, just under the wooden porch that protects the front door is mounted a life-sized sculpture of Charles's head – complete with his distinctive drooping moustache. It seems ironic that despite all these attempts to literally imprint his legacy into the Charleville, Rook has been almost forgotten today.

A self-made man, Rook was born 1861 in Biggleswade in Bedfordshire where his father made a living as a 'hawker' - selling household goods door-to-door on horseback. With higher ambitions, Charles left for London aged 17 and trained as a plasterer, gradually working his way up through the building trade to become a master builder and developer.

By the time Rook arrived in Muswell Hill he'd achieved respectable success and become a wealthy gentleman of note, frequently mentioned in the local London North Mercury and Crouch End Observer for donating money to children's homes and other charities, as well as campaigning for the introduction of street lamps after a series of muggings on Alexandra Park Road.

So, it came as something of a shock when I realised that just eight years after building his dream family home in 1901, Rook died aged 48, in rather cloudy circumstances. According to the *Muswell Record's* report of his death in 1909, this "assiduous and conscientious man of business" had been "suffering more or less from a nervous break-down during the past five months," and was buried in Islington and St Pancras cemetery with a "large and sympathetic gathering" including his widow and children.

On the hunt for further details, I obtained a copy of Rook’s death certificate and it revealed a tragic story, with the cause of death listed as GPI – an old-fashioned term short for ‘general paralysis of the insane’ which in those days was shorthand for end-stage syphilis. Medical records from the time reveal that people would often catch this sexually transmitted infection during their late teens or early twenties but with no cure available until the advent of antibiotics in the 1940s, had then to live with symptoms until, as often happened, they subsided and seemed to disappear.

However, for some unfortunate people the disease was simply lying dormant in the body, only to resurface often 20 or so years later – often in middle age - where it would slowly attack the brain, eventually resulting in severe dementia, seizures and ending with total paralysis and death. Details show Charles died on 14th December 1909 at 31 Hilldrop Crescent in Tufnell Park – by coincidence the street which just four years earlier was the scene of the infamous Dr Crippin murder. Rook was probably looked after in his final days at Hilldrop by a private nurse, avoiding the distress and scandal of keeping him in the family home at Cecil Road. He at least avoided ending his days in an institution for the insane such as the Colney Hatch Asylum, as many less affluent syphilis sufferers did.



Perhaps this sad and secretive death, which would have been seen as a huge embarrassment for a family of his social standing at the time, may be part of the reason Charles Rook’s name has slipped out of the local history books. His eldest son Charles Rook Junior certainly felt traumatised by events. Aged 28 at the time of his father’s death and a well-known singer who regularly performed in London’s music halls, Charles Junior left on a boat for Australia the day after his dad’s funeral - never to return to the UK again.

It’s sad that neither Charles nor his family really got to enjoy the success of all those years of hard work as one of Muswell Hill’s most talented builders. Sadder still that he remains so forgotten. Rook’s neglected grave can be found today in the cemetery behind Coldfall Woods. When I visited it I had to pull off several layers of ivy to read an inscription from his wife, Emily, who died 30 years after her beloved husband. Emily never remarried and insisted on being buried there with Charles and one of their sons, Cyril, who died at four. The faded carving on the headstone reads: “To live in the hearts of those we love is not to die”. As a proud owner of one Charles Rook’s ‘Alexandra Palace Estate’ homes, it’s a sentiment I very much agree with.

Membership

To renew your membership please visit <https://membermojo.co.uk/mhfga/renew> where we encourage you to set up a direct debit, or alternatively to pay via PayPal. The cost to renew as a Household is £10, and as a Business or Organisation, £25. If you’re having trouble renewing, please don’t hesitate to get in touch via membership@mhfga.org.

New Members

Welcome to our new members: Graham Rawlings, Anne Benjamin, Gallalock, Magmay Books, Sounds & Shapes Ltd, Suzy Catliff.

The following local businesses and organisations support the Association. You can find the links to their websites on our Corporate page at www.mhfga.org and click **Useful Links**.

| | | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Ambitious About Autism | Hollickwood Primary School | North London Symphony Orchestra | The Mossy Well |
| Angela Rose | JHK Estate Agents | Panoptica - MH Optical Ltd | The People’s Pantry |
| Baby Sensory | Lambert Welch Kitchens | Picture Framing Muswell Hill | The Real Greek |
| Broadway Pet Stores | Magmay Books | Planet Organic | The Robin Kiashek Osteopathic Clinics |
| Broadway Pharmacy | Men at 107 | Robert Linsky Optometrist | Total Boxer |
| Capital Gardens | Misk Boutique | Roni’s Bagel Bakery | W Martyn |
| Children’s Bookshop | Muswell Flyer | Rowan Antiques | Walter Purkis & Sons |
| Claire Avant Yoga | Muswell Hill Club | Sally Bourne Interiors | WAVE Café |
| Clissold Arms | Muswell Hill Bowling Club | Snappy Snaps | Woodland Tree Surgery |
| Cosi Homewares | Muswell Hill Creatives | Sounds & Shapes Ltd | Yogamatters |
| Dunn’s Artisan Bakers Ltd | Muswell Hill Karate Academy | St Andrew’s Church, Alexandra Park | |
| East Finchley Open Artists | Muswell Hill Methodist Church | St James’s Muswell Hill | |
| Fanshaw Books Ltd | Muswell Hill Methodist Tennis Club | Studio Moe Ltd | |
| Fornaro Ltd | Muswell Hill Pharmacy | Tatlers Estate Agents | |
| Freehold Community Association | Muswell Hill Pilates | The Cut barbershop | |
| Gallalock | Muswell Hill United Reformed Church | The Good Rooms | |
| Gibfit 30 | Muswell Hillbilly Brewers | The Harington Scheme | |
| Green & Blossoms | North London Chorus | | |

Corporate Profile

Magmay Books and Pink Patsy

Margaret is 83 years old and Wendy is her daughter. Margaret started going to art lessons in her 70s and has developed a talent for it. She's an inspiration to us all. It's worth noting that Margaret attended the Guideposts charity art lessons, where she received help and support from Lin and Jane to develop her skills.

The lockdown has been tough for everyone, but for Margaret and Wendy, it turned out to be an opportunity to create something special. Margaret, an artist, painted an image of a pink hare looking at the moon. This image was the seed that grew into a series of illustrated storybooks featuring the character Pink Patsy.

The mother-daughter duo wrote the stories together, and Wendy, who works at the local shop, Gallalock, cutting keys, displayed the books in the shop window. The response was overwhelmingly positive, and the two decided to take Pink Patsy on the road, so to speak.

They began visiting primary schools in the local area and reading their Pink Patsy stories to the children. Afterwards, they would entertain the kids with stone painting, and the children would write their own stories about Pink Patsy, coming up with some great ideas in the process.

This is what Margaret and Wendy want to do more of - inspire children to use their creative minds and let their imaginations run wild. And it's not just schools they visit - they also attend local events, such as the Alley Pally Market on its 150th anniversary and the Easter Egg Hunt at The Cherry Tree Cafe. This year's Easter Egg Hunt was a big hit, and Margaret and Wendy hope it can become an annual event.

But that's not all - Margaret and Wendy have come up with a brilliant idea to engage even more children in the Pink Patsy world. They are planning to create Pink Patsy teddy and rucksacks with a diary. Each child in a class can take a Pink Patsy teddy home for a sleepover and write about their adventures together. The next day, they can tell their classmates all about it. This is a great way to get schools involved and promote literacy and creativity.

If you want to learn more about Pink Patsy and Magmay Books, you can visit their website at www.magmaybooks.com, their Instagram page [@magmaybooks](https://www.instagram.com/magmaybooks) or [@followpinkpatsy](https://www.instagram.com/followpinkpatsy), or find them on Facebook. Magmay Books and Pink Patsy are a true local success story. Margaret and Wendy's dedication to inspiring children to read, write, and create is admirable, and their commitment to the local community is commendable. We look forward to seeing what they come up with next!

Wendy Gallagher



Planning Policy

At the start of the year the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities consulted on the new national planning framework – this has been in the pipeline for some time. The overall aim has moved away from the much criticised compulsory target led approach which envisaged providing new homes on green sites and open land at the edge of towns. The stress is now more on brownfield sites being used to provide new homes.

One of the points I made to the Department is that the Association would not wish to see a widening of the definition of a brownfield site to include back gardens. This is because to build new houses at such locations often involves the loss of trees and invariably means a permanent reduction in the quality of life for those who live in the immediate vicinity.



Department for Levelling Up,
Housing & Communities

John Crompton

Local Organisations

HORNSEY PENSIONERS ACTION GROUP
Contact Ann Anderson (020 8340 8335) or
www.hornseypensionersactiongroup.org.uk

HORNSEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
www.hornseyhistorical.org.uk
Local History Surgery. Phone 020 8348 8429 or email
hornseyhistoricalsurgery@gmail.com with a brief outline
of the problem.

MUSWELL HILL & DISTRICT HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY
Contact: Jenny Kruss on 020 8442 0031 or
bloomingn10@outlook.com.

MUSWELL HILL BOWLING CLUB
King's Avenue N10 1PB (next to No. 36).
www.muswellhillbowlingclub.co.uk – or call Richard
Johnstone on 07986 873312 or e-mail
richardjohnstone@gmail.com.

THE FREEHOLD COMMUNITY CENTRE
9 Alexandra Road, N10 2EY. Please check at
[www.familiesonline.co.uk/local/barnet/listing/freehold-
community-centre-195857](http://www.familiesonline.co.uk/local/barnet/listing/freehold-community-centre-195857) or
freehold2003@gmail.com or ring 07935 324578.

MUSWELL HILL PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY
We meet on **Wednesday evenings** at Jackson's Lane
Community Centre, and would warmly welcome new
members
www.muswellhillphoto.org.uk or email
contact@muswellhillphoto.org.uk.

MUSWELL HILL WELCOMES
An inter-faith project supporting refugees and asylum
seekers, bringing together volunteers offering skills such
as cooking, English speaking and more.
Details at www.muswellhillwelcomes.org

HARINGTON SCHEME
www.harington.org.uk

MUSWELL HILL CHILD CONTACT CENTRE
The Contact Centre which is attached to the Methodist
Church in Pages Lane, provides a friendly and supportive
place where the children of separated parents can meet
their non resident parent in a neutral and safe space on
Saturday mornings. Further information can be obtained
from our website <https://mhmc-contactcentre.org.uk> or by
email at contact.centre@mhmc.org.uk. Apart from a £20
referral fee the service is free.

FRIENDS OF QUEEN'S WOOD
Friends of Queen's Wood working parties on last Sunday
of the month. Tools provided but bring suitable gloves and
hot drink as cafe is closed.
For all events meet outside The Lodge off Muswell Hill
Road. fqw.org.uk

NORTH LONDON CHORUS
www.northlondonchorus.org

ST ANDREW'S CHURCH
Forthcoming concerts:
020 8444 6898 or office@alexandrapark.org

ALEXANDRA PALACE AND PARK
The Alexandra Park Visitor Centre near the Grove car
park is open **every Sunday** between **2 and 4pm**.

FRIENDS OF MUSWELL HILL LIBRARY
For event details and other updates contact Iain Smith on
friends.muswell@gmail.com.

LONDON EPILEPSY ACTION
Contact Barbara Penney 020 8883 0010 or e-mail
barbarapenney@yahoo.co.uk

Muswell Hill past and present

Following on from the front page article in the March/April Newsletter, here are a couple more of Zoe Norfolk's superimposed pictures of Muswell Hill past and present.



Junction of Muswell Hill Broadway and Queen's Avenue



Top of Muswell Hill

March Members' Meeting

An audience of over forty joined the March Member's meeting to enjoy a fabulous presentation on London's Hidden Rivers delivered by Association member, Alison Watson. Alison focussed on four of the capital's lesser known Thames tributaries; the Tyburn, Walbrook, Peck and Wandle. Alison finished by talking about Muswell Hill's own River Moselle.

Using some insightful maps, Alison started her talk by providing an overview of the 21 tributaries to the Thames's within Greater London – two thirds of which are fully or partially hidden from view. Interestingly, the streets of ancient London followed hedgerows which in turn followed the rivers, and many of today's roads still follow the paths of these now hidden rivers.

Marylebone Lane still follows the course of the Tyburn which flows from Hampstead hills to Swiss Cottage, through Regent's Park and under Buckingham Palace to the Thames at Pimlico, underground almost all the way. Squeezed between the wide Fleet and the substantial Westbourne, it seems at first glance to be a minor watercourse, but it functioned as a boundary and as such shaped much of what we know today as the West End.

Alison then talked about the most elusive, mysterious and comprehensively buried of all London's lost rivers, the Walbrook. Its confluence with the Thames is where the Romans chose to build their city with tanneries, potteries and workshops of all kinds. As the city grew, the river began to disappear and the Walbrook was described as choked with rubbish as early as the first century. Excavations which continue today have uncovered a complete history of the early city dumped in its waters. The shortest of London's rivers, the Walbrook divided the City into two hills, but probably because it has so many tributaries, there are many claims as to its source - claims that Alison highlighted to the audience.

Moving south of the Thames, Alison's talk covered the Peck and the Wandle. The former flows from Honor Park via Peckham Rye and is said to be fed by three springs, the highest at One Tree Hill. Flowing down to marshy land in Peckham and Rotherhithe, the Peck joins the Thames at Surrey Docks.

The fourth river Alison covered was the Wandle. Although the upper reaches are buried under Croydon, most of the eleven mile course is above ground making it the most unculverted of the London's hidden rivers.. The Domesday Book recorded thirteen watermills along the Wandle and there is one remaining working watermill at Merton Abbey Mills.

In conclusion, with reference to Muswell Hill's very own Moselle, Alison talked about the current thinking about saving rivers, cleaning them up rather than covering them



over. Moselle Brook's course can be walked from its source in Queen's Wood to its exit into the River Lea, and some of it can be seen above ground in Lordship Rec and again in Tottenham Cemetery. Excitingly, Thames 21, a Registered Charity which aims to clean up London's rivers, has been working for many years to unculver the Moselle and recently Arup Architects have signed up to a long term 'vision' to co-ordinate the many efforts on this.

Alison's presentation was rounded off by a question and answer session which gave the audience an opportunity to obtain and provide further insights on this fascinating subject.

Nigel Clark

Muswell Hill in Bloom



Following my meeting with the Parks landscaping team leader at the beginning of April, the raised beds at both ends of Fortis Green Road were re-planted in mid-April. The geraniums in the flowerboxes by the roundabout, kindly donated by Sunshine Garden Centre, are scheduled for re-planting shortly.

Brian Livingston