

CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

Welcome to the Summer 2015 edition of Knoll News. The meeting with local Councillors I mentioned in the last Newsletter has had to be postponed until the 13 July because of a late clash of dates with a Council meeting. We will be discussing with the Councillors the effect on the Knoll area of the cuts in Bromley Council's budget and other local issues, including the likely closure and sale of The Priory (see separate article in this edition for more details). If you have any issues that you would like to us to raise on your behalf with the Councillors, please let me know (e-mail details are on the back page).

As part of the slimming down of Council services, Bromley Council are keen to promote local volunteering. You can become a Snow Friend, Tree Friend, Friend of Parks or a Street Friend to help with snow clearing in your area, looking after local trees, helping keep parks clean and tidy and looking out for issues on local streets respectively. Details are on Bromley Council's website. The Council also has a website for reporting local problems with street and pavement cleaning, overhanging trees, potholes and problems with pavements, which also has a map which shows you problems reported nearby. The website can be found via the "Transport and Streets" page on Bromley Council's website.

Bromley Council has also announced that from 29 June waste paper collections will become fortnightly rather than every week. This is due to the declining amounts of paper waste as people get news on-line rather than through printed media. More details can be found on the back page of this newsletter.

Meanwhile, Kings College NHS Foundation Trust has obviously found digesting the PRUH a bigger challenge than anticipated and has come under criticism from the NHS for waiting times for appointments and procedures. While it seems that some of the problems at the PRUH have been resolved, and Orpington Hospital is now a thriving orthopaedic centre, other issues are proving more difficult to resolve. A shortage of nurses at the PRUH has also led to an overreliance on agency staff, which has in part contributed to a massive deficit of over £42m and the recent resignation of King's Chief Executive.

On a more positive note, Orpington Bid, who effectively now run Orpington High Street, and others are holding a "Big O" festival in Priory Gardens on 4 July between noon and 8pm. The festival is a vintage themed celebration of arts and culture, with shows, stalls and refreshments. The Odeon cinema is also expected to open late this Autumn, which hopefully will help invigorate the High Street. We also have an article about previous cinemas in Orpington later in this Newsletter.

CAN YOU HELP US?

We need your help. A longstanding member of the Committee has recently resigned and a further member will be standing down at the AGM. We urgently need at least two new Committee members. If any member would like to consider joining the Committee, please let me know – contact details are on the back page. Duties are not too onerous – we meet about eight times a year and the various roles are shared out between Committee members.

We also need a replacement Road Warden, or two, for Wiltshire, Devonshire and Somerset Roads and also one for White Hart Road. In addition, the longstanding Road Warden for Broxbourne Road will be retiring soon and we would like to recruit one or two new Road Wardens for that area. I would like to thank all the retiring Road Wardens, and Committee members, and indeed all Road Wardens, for their efforts over the years – without them KRA would not exist. So please, think about volunteering as a Road Warden – the duties are not excessive (delivering Knoll News three times a year and collecting subscriptions) - or as a Committee member.

ASRC

In the last edition, we outlined a proposal to petition Bromley Council to make the Knoll area an Area of Special Residential Character, which would help preserve the area from out of scale and character developments.

At the time of writing, we have not yet received all the subscription and petition forms from our Road Wardens, although based on initial returns it seems that it will be a close call as to whether or not we will have sufficient support to go ahead and petition the Council.

If you would like to support the petition (full details are available in the Spring edition of Knoll News, which is now available on our website www.kra.org.uk or simply "google" "Knoll Residents Association"), please let me have your completed forms or come round where I have some spare forms to complete. You can find me at 81, Lynwood Grove.

The Movie Man of Stanley Road

As our new 7 screen Odeon cinema is well on its way to completion, it is timely to look back at a Knoll resident, Mr Albert Spencer-May, and the two picture houses he owned and ran in Orpington.

Albert was born in Bermondsey in 1880 and after local schooling trained as builder. By 1911 he had moved to Orpington where he acquired the White Hart pub where he was the licensee. He rebuilt the pub, setting it nearer to the High Street. In 1912 he acquired the Palace roller skating rink opposite Priory ponds. This was built in 1902 as a working man's club and operated until 1908. He converted this into a cinema called the "Picture Palace", Orpington's "cosy house of entertainment" showing B&W films with sub titles. His daughter Christina was both projectionist and pianist.

By 1914 he was living in Lancaster Lodge in the High Street (near Peacocks). During WW1 he was appointed as honorary electrical engineer at the Ontario hospital Orpington and was also responsible for entertaining the wounded soldiers. Films were shown twice a week at the hospital and also at his cinema, where, if foreign troops were being entertained, language boards were made up by a local woman who was fluent in French.

After the war, he moved to Braeside, No 10 Stanley Road in 1924. During the 1920s, he was also a prominent member of the Orpington council. The great Houdini appeared in person at the Palace; locked in chains by Fred Tremain, the local blacksmith, he was submersed in a tank of water freeing himself after eight minutes.

In 1933 Albert built a state of the art new cinema called the "Commodore Theatre". It seated 1000 in both circle and stalls and boasted the latest technology, including a Christie wonder organ. It opened on the 4th Dec 1933 showing "Facing the Music" starring Stanley Lupino, who appeared in person. By the late 1930's it was planned to rebuild the Picture Palace as a 1600 seater theatre costing £35000 but the war put paid to these plans.

On the 1st March 1945 a V2 rocket exploded to the rear of the Commodore, the sheer bulk of the cinema saving the High Street from major damage. It was closed for some time for repairs. In July 1951 the Palace closed for refurbishment with new carpets, seats and lighting and was renamed the Carlton, although the locals referred to it as the "bug hutch". The program was changed 3 times a week. It finally closed on the 19-09-1961 and became a garage before a fire caused it to be demolished in 1964.

In 1955 the Commodore was upgraded to cinemascope to show the new wide angle films before being sold to Shipman and King (who owned the Embassy in Petts Wood) in 1968, which later became part of E.M.I. It finally closed on the 8th May 1982 showing Scott Glenn in "The Challenge". It was intended to convert it to a bingo hall but following a fire it was demolished in June 1983 to make way for MacDonald's. When the cinema was being demolished 35mm colour films of local events were found in the projecting room. It would seem that the cinema had a roving film team called "Orpington News". One of the films was the marriage of Albert's daughter Christina to a Mr Tietjan on the 21 Sept 1929 at All Saints church, which caused great local interest. These films have been put on a DVD called "Orpington Remembered" and are available to buy.

Albert moved from Stanley Road around 1960, possibly on the death of his wife Alice Helene (nee Marley), to Eastvue, (later to become 12 A), Lucerne Road (later to become 12a). He died on 26 Sept 1974.

The Christie 3/5 organ with its 500 pipes ranging from 13mm to 5mtrs long and weighing in at over 5 tonnes and which can produce the sound of an orchestra, rhythm of a dance band or the sound of a cathedral organ lives on in private hands in Derbyshire.

Richard Burton

WEA Courses 2015/16

The WEA will be starting a new programme of varied and interesting adult education courses at local venues in the Autumn. Now's the time to start thinking about booking a place.

British History 1815-1914 20 sessions, Mondays am from 14.9.15 at Petts Wood Memorial Hall

The Story of the English Garden 11 sessions, Mondays pm from 14.9.15 at Petts Wood Memorial Hall

Creative Writing A Practical Guide – 11 sessions (fortnightly), Mondays pm from 21.9.15 at St John's URC, Orpington

Art in Britain 1900 to the Present 20 sessions, Tuesdays pm from 15.9.15 at St John's URC, Orpington

The Cross & the Crescent When Worlds Collide 1095-1500 - 11 sessions, Wednesdays pm from 23.9.15 at St John's URC, Orpington

Two Classical Cities Athens & Rome – 20 sessions, Thursdays pm from 17.9.15 at the Poverest Centre, Orpington

England's Warrior Dynasty The Earlier Plantagenets - 20 sessions, Fridays am from 18.9.15 at the Poverest Centre, Orpington

For further details and costs - and to book a place - please contact Penny Stewart on 01689 827420 or Martine Haynes at haynes.martine@googlemail.com.

And why not try one of the WEA's Saturday afternoon lectures:

10 October Samuel Palmer & the Ancients

7 November Architects of London

5 December The Saint & the Siren – Edith Cavell & Mata Hari

They take place at St John's URC, Orpington (2-4.30pm) and tickets cost £8 including refreshments. To apply for tickets, contact Yvonne Tapper on 01689 877372 or yvonne_tapper@hotmail.com

Orpington Priory

When the library moved out of The Priory building in 2009 Bromley Council originally planned to refurbish the building (at a cost of over £3 million) and improve the museum and its amenities. A great deal of effort and expense was put into drawing up a business plan and submitting a grant application to the Heritage Lottery Fund. In July 2014 Bromley Council withdrew from the very successful HLF bid because it was not prepared to contribute further funds or to agree to maintain the museum for 25 years.

Bromley Council now wants to move the museum out of The Priory and offer the building for sale on the open market. Because of unexpected local opposition the decision to sell was deferred for 3 months in February. Since then several local community groups have been actively collaborating to work out a feasible business plan to try to keep Orpington Priory in either community or local authority control. Those involved include Friends of The Priory and Gardens; Orpington Community ; Orpington 1st BID company; Orpington Historical Society; Orpington & District Archaeological Society; and Green St Green Village Society.

The Council is to make a decision at the 10 June executive meeting, probably just to agree to move the museum to Bromley Central Library in October. It is hoped that the council will allow the community groups to continue to develop their business plan which will be submitted to the council by end of September. They are looking into the potential of a small heritage centre with revenue generated by room hire and a café, the main priority being to ensure continued public access. More details and a link to the petition to save the Priory can be found on the Orpington Community website. www.orpingtoncommunity.weebly.com

Changes to Bromley Council's Paper Collection Schedule

Bromley Council are delivering letters to residents across the borough notifying them of changes to their paper collection schedule. From Monday 29 June onwards, paper will be collected every other week. The letter is being distributed in a distinctive Bromley Council envelope with revised and new collection calendars, which is also on their website, with additional information too. The letter describes the revised waste service that residents will generally receive along with advice on what materials can be recycled.

Whilst the changes will save £500,000 per year, the changes are driven by the substantially reduced amounts of paper being collected which has been mentioned in the last 2 editions of Environment Matters as we all go 'digital' with less paper to recycle.

To maximise efficiency, as the letter states, as part of the changes, a relatively small proportion of residents will also have a new collection day for all refuse and recycling collections and these residents will receive a separate follow-up letter towards the end of June, sent by Royal Mail post for accuracy. This follow-up letter will detail the transition arrangements in the week of the changeover, with residents living on the country lanes for instance (including Cudham, Downe, Chelsfield and north towards Crockenhill) changing their schedule from 'week 1' to 'week 2', with an additional refuse collection on the changeover week. Anyone else with a day change, with more than one day later to the new collection day, will receive collections on both days on the changeover week to help smooth the transition.

The letter is not being distributed to blocks of flats where recycling is collected in bulk bins, with the collections made by different vehicles and the schedule not so relevant in any case and on an every week basis already.

Bromley Council are making checks on the success of the distribution but if you do come across examples of where there has been a problem with the distribution, please do let them know specific addresses and they will get this resolved.

For more information see Bromley Council's website www.bromley.gov.uk/wasteneews where there is a link to 'household waste and recycling collections' which details what the changes mean and which will be updated over the coming days.

Bromley Council are working hard to make sure that the collection transitions are as smooth as they can be, with careful monitoring planned particularly over the transition period.

CONTACT US

The contact details for specific officers & committee members are:

Chairman Paul Savage 820912 kra.chair@gmail.com

Secretary Miriam Harries kra.secretary@gmail.com

Treasurer & vice-chairman Ian Black kra.treasurer@gmail.com

Planning Sue Smith kra.planning@gmail.com

Tree warden Brian Wilkin kra.treewarden@gmail.com

Road warden secretary Paul Savage 820912

Road warden secretary Richard Burton 810561

Road warden secretary Kay Wilkins 878603

Items for the KRA website to knollnews@gmail.com

If you have any articles or news snippets you would like to share, or details of any forthcoming courses, events or talks that you would like publicised in the Autumn 2015 edition please email to knollnews@gmail.com by Thursday 1st October 2015. Thank you.

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