

ELTHAM PARK RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

No. 219 December 2017

EDITORIAL

Welcome to the last newsletter of the year! The dark evenings are now brightened up by twinkling lights, colourful decorations and seasonal music. Hundreds of people watched Eltham High Street come alive in November with the traditional lantern procession, festive street lights and fireworks. I hope you enjoyed the Eltham Lights Up as much as I did!

The future of Avery Hill Winter Garden remains uncertain and the concern of us all. We hope that the University of Greenwich, Greenwich Council and the campaigners together find a way forward, securing the site for us all to continue to enjoy. Did you know that as many as 9 out of 10 people visiting their GP have no physical illness at all? The Live Well Greenwich campaign is stepping in to help local residents sort out non-medical issues affecting their well-being. We will be sorry to see Debenhams close and wonder who will replace them. Why not join the Shooters Hill Woodlands Working Group and the new Friends of Oxleas Wood to help safeguard this precious woodland?

Thank you for your continuing support. We wish you all a Happy Christmas and a healthy and prosperous New Year!

The Editor

SAVE AVERY HILL WINTER GARDEN

Residents will be aware that the future of the popular Winter Garden is under threat in the wake of the University of Greenwich's decision to leave the site in December 2018. The university has yet to sell the site, although it seems that schools and property developers have expressed interest in acquiring the land. But it is a hybrid site, ranging from listed buildings to modern buildings, open land and brownfield areas. It could be that the Winter Garden is left vulnerable, if no likely purchaser is prepared to take on the commitment of maintaining and restoring it.

A local campaign has been launched to press for the much valued conservatory's survival and restoration. At the Council meeting on *18 October 2017*, a petition which has attracted over 5,000 signatures was presented to councillors; two public questions were asked by campaign supporters on the subjects of the continued opening of the Picture Gallery and the invocation of the existing covenant to ensure the upkeep and maintenance of the Winter Garden; and a motion about the future of the Winter Garden was discussed in open session by councillors. As a result of the discussion, the following mo-

tion was passed unanimously:

“Council notes public concern over the future of Avery Hill Winter Garden and Mansion following the decision of the University of Greenwich to vacate the site in 2018. Council believes this unique and listed heritage asset must be protected and restored, with a revival of the bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund forming part of any redevelopment, and proper involvement of the local community in the future of the site.

Council has long recognised the existence of three education covenants on the site and expects that an education tenant would be part of any redevelopment. Moreover, Council notes that the Leader of the Council is requesting a meeting with the University, the Winter Garden lead, and others, to push the case to relaunch a new Heritage Lottery Fund bid aimed at ensuring that the future of this hidden gem is assured.”

The motion was received by the campaign as an encouraging and firm declaration of the Council's support for the safeguarding and renovation of the conservatory. The proposed meeting with the university is due to take place in the near future, and hopefully will lead to an acceleration of the efforts to secure a guaranteed future for the Winter Garden.

EPRA is taking an active part in the campaign, because it recognises how much the Winter Garden means as a local treasure to generations of local residents. Its attractions, and those of the Mansion, have been extolled by a historian at the time of its foundation in these terms: “Colonel North's palace is at once the grandest and most comfortable residence it has been my fortune to see...The beauty of the spacious marble Picture Gallery and Ball Room, the elegance of the Crystal Palace of a Winter Garden...cannot be described in mere words.”

LIVE WELL GREENWICH

EPRA officers attended a launch of the Live Well Greenwich initiative on *2 November 2017*. The scheme is intended to bring together efforts across local organisations to keep the population healthier and more independent for longer. It provides a gateway for local residents to information and support across a whole range of issues affecting their lives, offering help on such matters as: eating well; exercising more; stopping smoking; support with housing needs; money, debt and benefit advice; employment and training; drinking less; NHS health checks; and social and community activities.

You can make contact with the services available in three ways: by ringing **0800 4704831** - a free helpline to find health, social care and community information; visiting www.greenwichcommunitydirectory.org.uk; and by calling **0800 4704831** to arrange a face-to-face session with a Live Well coach for advice and support to live independently.

WILL YOU BE A FRIEND OF OXLEAS WOODS?

Every day hundreds of us make use of the Shooters Hill Woodlands. We use it as an area for exercise, for walking our dogs, for educating or entertaining our children. We visit the castle and the café. We picnic or we wander through the woods watching the wildlife.

But the problem is that many of us take the woods for granted. In the 1920s and 1930s, when the woodlands were purchased from the Crown, they were acclaimed as a vital new resource for the public - an area where everyone could enjoy fresh air and green space, and could escape the pollution and overcrowding of the city.

But, if the woodlands are to continue as such, they need care and protection. In the 1980s the government was all set to drive a motorway through them, despite their status as areas of Ancient Woodland and Sites of Special Scientific Interest. A brilliant campaign by local people defeated that scheme. But threats still remain.

We face the probable loss of the EU Habitat Directives and a lack of legislative protection for woodland; weakening of regulations (especially with regard to planning); increased demand for land for housing; natural pests, diseases and invasive species; lack of resources to manage the woodland; inappropriate public usage, air pollution and, of course, climate change.

To ensure the future of our woodlands, we are setting up a Friends organisation to work alongside the Council's Parks Department and the Shooters Hill Woodlands Working Party. If you would like to join or want to find out more, go online at www.oxleaswoodlands.uk or email us at oxleas.friends@virginmedia.com.

Alan Hildrew

GET WALKING

The Borough is offering opportunities for free walks that will help residents to increase their level of physical activity. Guided by trained volunteer leaders, the walks take place in a variety of settings in Greenwich - in parks and along the riverside, for example. The most local venue is Eltham Park South, where a group meets every Monday at 9.45 am by the café for an hour's walk. If you want to learn more about these opportunities, either ring **07972 668657** or email ollie.golding@cact.org.uk.

ELTHAM HIGH STREET CLOSURES

Debenhams have announced that it is shutting its Eltham store in January 2018. It is claimed that the group's profits have fallen by 44% across the UK. In October, the retailer revealed its plans to close its stores

in Eltham and Farnborough - what it calls its 'low profit' stores - as part of a national recovery programme.

Another closure will affect Eltham Police Station, which will shut down in December as part of a programme of budget cuts. A well supported petition did not lead to a change of mind. Eltham was one of only two stations that had remained open after successive rounds of cuts. Plumstead will now be the only one left open to the public to report crime. The Mayor of London maintains that £170 million can be raised by selling off police stations. In future, it is suggested that the public should report criminal incidents by phone and online.

THE HISTORY OF ELTHAM PARK

St Mary's Glenure Road 3

In 1900, Archibald Cameron Corbett, Liberal MP and property developer and the first Lord Rowallan, bought Eltham Park House and its estate. He developed Eltham Park Estate on a grid-iron system, with its roads named after places in Scotland. The dene hole Thomas Jackson had found in 1878 was sealed off and built over in 1907. In 1901, Eltham Park House was bought by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Southwark and became St Joseph's School for boys in Glenure Road. In 1910, it was sold to the congregation of St Clothilde, a French teaching order, as a girls' school, and then in 1939 to the Sisters of Mercy. Requisitioned by the War Office, and damaged by incendiary bombs, it was returned to them in 1950, serving as an approved school for delinquent girls, Ave Maria School, until the early 1980s. After a period as a convent it became St Mary's School in 1984.

Sarah Newman

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

29 December 2017 - 21 January 2018: the Bob Hope Theatre presents its Christmas pantomime, 'Cinderella', a traditional pantomime for all the family. Tickets, from £8 - £10, can be obtained from **020 8850 3702** or online at www.bobhopetheatre.co.uk.