

Chislehurst

REPORT

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INSIDE THIS EDITION OF CHISLEHURST REPORT

- *The Second Chislehurst Festival*
- *Chislehurst High Street traffic (again)*
- *Chislehurst Road Bridge*
- *Litter in Chislehurst - a new campaign*
- *Chislehurst Community Map*
- *Planning - a cautionary tale*
- *High Street Christmas Lights*
- *Prickend Pond*
- *Road Stewards' update*
- *Members' events in 2012*



The Second Chislehurst Festival

We hope that you enjoyed this year's Chislehurst Festival, the second to be arranged by the Chislehurst Society. Highlights included the very first *Chislehurst Rocks*, an all day music event organised by the Friends of the Rec, and the Country Fair on Chislehurst Common, with a petting farm, wild bird display and dog show.

We were particularly privileged that the Methodist Church had arranged to host the Methodist Art Collection to coincide with the opening of the Festival.

Thank you to everyone who participated, and especially to our Festival sponsors. We are now in the course of considering how we can make the 2013 Festival even better, and would welcome members' comments.

Photographs from the Festival (by Robert Piwko) can be found on the Festival website, www.chislehurstfestival.org.uk

Chislehurst High Street

Be Bold! The message left in most people's minds after Ben Hamilton-Baillie addressed a public meeting at The Bull's Head Hotel on 19 September.



Ben, who has advised on traffic schemes in a number of small towns in the UK and Europe, asked what the function of a high street was today. With out-of-town shopping centres such as Bluewater within easy reach, and with internet access for online shopping and communications, the original rationale for town centres must be re-examined. Increasingly it is becoming clear that if town centres are not made more attractive as desirable places for pedestrians, shoppers and families, they will continue to decline. A key element in making high streets more attractive is making them more civilised.

For the last 50 years, policy in the UK has been to treat all streets as highways, where drivers have priority, and where pedestrians are separated from the traffic. While this is wholly appropriate on trunk roads and motorways, it has also been the norm in town centres, where it is not always appropriate. As a result, a whole industry supporting traffic lights, barriers, and so forth, has grown up to keep people and vehicles apart. This has led to an increasing sense of alienation and hostility between vehicles and pedestrians at places where they inevitably meet – in the town centre. This creates even more of an undesirable aspect in our high streets: traffic queues, pedestrians waiting for increasingly long times to cross the road, fumes, noise, and, ironically, a less

safe environment. And what is worse, traffic engineers who put in these very expensive systems usually pay no respect to the particular environments into which the systems are installed.

There is now a large body of evidence to show that in town centres and other areas where pedestrians and traffic do need to co-exist, fewer controls lead to a more civilised interaction between them. Streets can be designed to enable better traffic flows, less waiting, if any at all, for pedestrians, and for an environment better integrated into the character of the town itself. And, importantly, studies show that some traffic controls actually increase the risk of accidents, by giving a false sense of safety. Taking them away actually makes it safer for all of us

As a result, increasing numbers of local authorities in the UK, including London and other larger towns and cities, are now dismantling traffic signals, barriers and regulated pedestrian crossing schemes. They are taking away many unsightly road markings, and designing streets that meet the needs of the particular communities.

Is this what we want in Chislehurst?

The Chislehurst Society will be working with Bromley Council to follow up a number of the ideas set out by Ben Hamilton-Baillie. We will advise members of the outcome of these discussions.

In the meantime, you can access a number of short videos showing some of the ideas that Ben raised with us at his website, www.hamilton-baillie.co.uk

Chislehurst Road Railway Bridge

Most members will be aware that the bridge on Chislehurst Road is now completely closed, and likely to be so for a year. You can find more information about the reasons for the closure, the work that is being carried out, and the likely timescales by looking at our website.



Litter in Chislehurst - a new campaign

A number of families, recently moved to Chislehurst, have written to the Chislehurst Society to express their dismay at the amount of litter being dropped in the area between Royal Parade and Coopers Technology College. It is spoiling their enjoyment of living in what is otherwise a picturesque part of Chislehurst. They have formed a new action group to deal with the problem, and have asked us to include this note in Chislehurst Report. The Society is working with the group to support it and its objectives.

'Dear Chislehurst Society members,

There is a huge problem of litter in and around Royal Parade. The problem has been on-going for many years in this part of Chislehurst. The worst affected areas are Hawkwood Lane, Crown Lane, School Road and most notably Church Row, Royal Parade and the common land adjacent to these roads.

Some residents have just learnt to live with the problem, perhaps in the belief that nothing can be done. Others are unaware of the extent of the problem because a large group of volunteers work tirelessly to keep on top of it - some of them going out more than once a day, and still finding plenty to collect.

The litter is being dropped before, during, and after school hours, on weekdays and during term time. It is almost exclusively packaging from junk food (sweets, crisps, fizzy drinks, etc.) and it lines the route that students walk from the College on Hawkwood Lane to the shops on Royal Parade. The majority of litter comes from snacks bought at the newsagents and delicatessen on Royal Parade. The litter is most evident in the immediate vicinity of these two shops.

While most of the litter is dropped by Coopers' students, it is only a minority of students at fault. Nor is it only Coopers' students, since students from other schools congregate on Royal Parade where school buses come and go.

Over the years residents have repeatedly complained to Coopers Technology College, to the Council and to the shopkeepers. The Principal at Coopers, Mrs Puxty, has already taken steps to address the problem and has expressed her continued commitment to reducing the amount of litter being dropped, and to work with the community to ensure she can act upon the views expressed by residents. The Council insists that there is nothing more it can do. It has issued the maximum number of bins in the area and they are being emptied three times a week, even daily, on the worst affected roads. The problem is that rubbish is being discarded on the ground, not in the bins. Bromley Council is not responsible

for the upkeep of the Commons and one of the biggest frustrations is that the Trustees of the Commons are wasting their limited resources on litter collection.

Despite the extraordinary efforts of the Trustees and volunteer litter-pickers, the sheer volume of litter in this area means that they are fighting a losing battle. During term-time, it is physically impossible to keep the streets and the commons litter-free.



An unsightly mess

We feel strongly that residents should not have to put up with the litter, nor should it be their responsibility to clear it up. We have therefore teamed up with some of Chislehurst's long-standing anti-litter campaigners to form a new action group with a view to changing the focus from clearing the litter, to preventing it from being dropped in the first place.

The group will be looking at ways of working with Coopers (and other schools where relevant) to support staff and parents in changing the behaviour of the minority of students who cause the problem. Details of the new strategy will be publicised following consultation with Coopers, with other local schools, and with the Police.

The success of the initiative is dependent on the backing of the community as a whole, and we appeal to members of the Chislehurst Society to support us. To register your support for this new drive against litter, please email your details and any comments to: g_lardner@yahoo.co.uk. If you prefer to register your support by telephone, please call 020 8467 0900.

Thank you for your interest.

Chislehurst Litter Action Group'

Chislehurst Community Map

The Society has commissioned a community map for Chislehurst, to which anyone can add information about events or organisations in Chislehurst, or about local places or people of historical or current interest. The Society will moderate additions, as well as adding its own information. You can access the map from the front page of the Society's website.

Happy Mapping!

Planning - a cautionary tale from an anonymous member

'Can you save your neighbours and others £4,000? Well, yes, it appears so.

The other day I was made aware that there were tree surgeons about to start work on a neighbour's tree. I was not aware that any planning request had been notified to the Society, so, as a good neighbour (well I try), I went round and spoke to the tree surgeon.

I asked him if he was aware of planning consent to do the work he was about to undertake. 'No, it's OK; we're only cutting a couple of branches,' he said. I then told him it was up to him, 'but as we are in a conservation area, you need permission, even for just a couple of branches.' To make matters worse, I was sure that the tree in question had a tree preservation order on it, and advised that if he were to proceed, he would likely be tracked down and fined £2,000, and on top of that, the owner would also be fined another £2,000 by Bromley Council, plus, of course, any legal costs.

I put it to him that it was up to him, but I was just doing him a favour, and he thanked me. I'm sure both my legs are still intact! I did him a favour, and the owner has since been in contact with Coral Gibson at Bromley council.

I have since spoken to Coral over this matter, and she commented that if more of us did this it would reduce her work load, and she confirmed that I had done the right thing. The bonus here is that we are less likely to lose our precious trees, or even the character of them, without good cause, plus of course the owner and the surgeon are £4,000 better off, between them.'

The High Street Christmas Lights

It seems to come as a surprise to people that the High Street Christmas decorations are not provided by Bromley Council. Bromley have been fairly good over the past six years with some grants towards the costs and have provided the CTCMG with the services of an excellent Town Centre Manager, Lorraine McQuillan, but they don't provide the lights.

Other than the grants the lights are entirely funded by donations from some of the High Street traders and, occasionally, a few residents, but the kitty has been shrinking year on year. This year we are into an 'austerity budget', so it has been decided to blow the whole lot in one go, rather than have two years of half-hearted efforts.

So that's it. Unless the traders get some serious fund raising organised during

2012 and Chislehurst residents get behind them to support their endeavours, it will just be whatever tree lights still work next year and not much else. This year's lights were turned on at the end of an extended November Farmers Market on the 20 November.

Prickend Pond - is this the end?

Prickend Pond – the one by the High Street – has been a cause for concern to the Chislehurst Town Centre Management Group (CTCMG) for a number years, and probably for the Trustees of the Commons since the last war. Initially, it was the shrinking island and the dying back of the willow trees that drew the attention of CTCMG to the plight of the pond, but as they investigated further and liaised with the Trustees and others, the more it was discovered that the pond's continued existence as we know it is in jeopardy and the pond may well be in irreversibly terminal decline.

So bad is the situation that a well-qualified and experienced landscape architect, with a good history of pond reclamation, refused to take on the commission of preparing a reclamation scheme. Her informal advice was to give up trying to save the pond, fill it in and grass over most of it and just leave a small 'duck pond' sized strip to the Green Lane edge where it serves a purpose.

All, however, may not yet be lost. Helen Brown, the landscape architect noted above, persevered, and has persuaded Greenwich University to adopt the pond rejuvenation as a major student project for their would-be landscape architects. The Society, together with the CTCMG and the Trustees of the Commons, will be supporting this endeavour.

So if you see some bemused students wandering around the Commons or staring blankly at Prickend Pond early next year, treat them kindly, since they may be the saviours of the pond as we have known it.



A photograph of Prickend Pond in better days, c.1960

Road Stewards update

Since the Autumn issue of the Chislehurst Report two Road Stewards have retired:

Mrs J Cole (Berens Way) and Mrs D Songhurst (Victoria Way).

The executive committee extends the Society's sincere thanks for all the help and support these members have given. We wish them well for the future.

We extend a warm welcome to our Road Steward Network, two New Volunteers:

Mrs Andrea Ritchie (Marlow Close) and Mrs Ann Scobie (Crown Lane).

There are several roads with current members and vacancies for stewards:

Berens Way, Marlings Park Avenue (Even Nos 38-70), Holmdale Road and Victoria Road.

If you would like to assist with one of these roads or seek further information, please contact Keith Heselden, Membership Secretary on 0208 467 5503.

Members' events

Last year the society held three afternoon meetings, with speakers, in our meeting room at Chislehurst Methodist Church. They were well received and the general consensus was that we should hold more on a regular basis.

The first of four talks in 2012 will be on 1 March, at 2.30 p.m., when the speaker will be Dr Vanessa Jenkins, talking about Napoleon III in Chislehurst. All members are welcome to attend, free of charge, but it is helpful to know how many cups of tea and biscuits are needed, so please call us nearer the dates of the meetings if you plan to come.

Three other dates have been proposed, 3 May, 5 July, and 6 September, all of them Thursdays, and all at 2.30 p.m. Speakers and subjects for these talks will be announced nearer the time.

We are always pleased to hear of anyone willing to come and talk to us on interesting subjects of relevance to Chislehurst or its residents, so do please let us know if you know of someone who could present at one of our meetings.

Two **guided walks**, part of the Chislehurst Festival, were very popular. We are now planning a number of guided themed walks in and around Chislehurst, to take place on a regular basis. The first will be in the Spring - Napoleonic Chislehurst - to coincide with the Emperor's 204th birthday. Details will follow.

You can contact the Chislehurst Society

by phone: 020 8467 0900 or email: membership@chislehurst-society.org.uk