

The Woodsider

January 2001

It's no use; they never listen! is a familiar expression of teenagers' frustration with their parents and teachers' frustration with their pupils (and vice versa in both cases). How far is it true of the Council? Is complaining to the Council really a waste of time? Or is *they never listen* just an excuse for leaving it to others? Look at some recent examples.

Although the closure of Partingdale Lane was handled badly, and although the Council took the wrong decision, residents were *not* denied a hearing. Councillors were persuaded by the arguments of those who wanted the road closed, supported by the - probably mistaken - belief that closures help to reduce traffic. But they *did* listen to Bill Hampsher's presentation of our case, in full Council. Householders were later balloted and the Association was consulted concerning a - subsequently abandoned - proposal to hold a religious festival in the park. And it was the Council that approached the Association concerning the future of the tennis courts in the park (given substantial support, the Council would have considered spending up to £16,000 on their refurbishment). On day-to-day issues such as potholes and broken paving stones, the recently-created Neighbourhood Management scheme has enabled members to tell the Council what needs doing; and for longer-term problems the Whetstone Forum has been an effective way of making the Council listen to residents' complaints. Forum meetings are open to the public and are usually well attended.. They often result in remedial action. For example, pressure from Southover residents has led the Council to put forward a road safety scheme about which they have been consulting Chanctonbury Way householders. And, despite a shamefully small (4 per cent) response to last year's budget consultation, the Council then responded by altering its spending plans. Admittedly, there has also been a downside. There is often a long interval between hearing a complaint and acting on it. The Council has yet to respond to residents' concerns about dumping at the equestrian centre, and they have been extraordinarily slow in giving legal recognition to a right-of-way about which residents have recently given evidence - and there have been other examples. .

Certainly, they don't listen as well as they should, but that is no excuse for not telling them what we want them to do. And if we each leave it to the others, we shall all lose out. The fewer of us play our part, the less response we can expect. Since the Council *does* often listen - however tardily - supine communities are unlikely to get the best service. Articulate communities get the quickest graffiti removal, for example, and the best-kept pavements and parks.

So let's not make excuses!

We don't want to worry you but:-

We (belatedly) wish our readers a peaceful, healthy, prosperous, unpolluted, nuclear-free, globally-unwarmed, asteroid-free, ozone-friendly, sustainable, genetically-unmodified, organically-nourished, virus-protected, feng shui-consistent, politically-correct, antiseptic, radiation-free, zero-tolerant, anxiety-less, happy New Year!

Replies - on a postcard, please - from any reader who has found something else to worry about.

Overleaf:-

- Council news
- News for rambler
- Health & education news
- Friends of the Park news
- News from the Suburb
- Your letters

What's On at the Woodside Park Club

Sundays & Mondays
Ballroom dancing
01442 217880

Tuesdays
Ladies darts & table tennis
8445 3510

Wednesdays
Line dancing
8440 7340

Thursdays
Bridge
8445 3510

The club welcomes new members

Facilities include tennis, bowls, table tennis, darts and snooker.
call 8445 3510

Council News - a report from Councillor Coleman

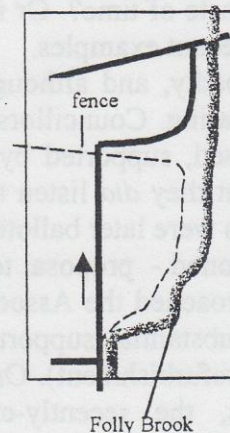
I hope all residents have received a questionnaire from the Council on the level of council tax and the spending priorities for the 2001/2 Budget. I strongly urge residents to return it and make their views known. The rise in council tax will also be affected by the Greater London Assembly precept that is going to show a large rise mainly because of the demands of the Metropolitan Police. While supporting increased police numbers, I am concerned that outer London boroughs (who are going to pay the most) should reap the benefits of extra police on the beat. Barnet Council during December once again debated policing and all parties supported a motion calling for increased numbers.

Residents of Chanctonbury Way/Southover/Northiam have recently been consulted over the proposed traffic calming measures and I understand 81% of those who replied were in favour. The scheme will therefore be implemented. Some of those residents who were opposed wanted more severe measures with a few requesting humps. My suggestion to residents is to accept what is proposed and if the situation does not improve then we can move on. I remain totally opposed to humps not least because the emergency services object to them - and have you tried being a bus passenger going over humps? The installation of a traffic island should make it easier for children to walk to Woodridge School.

From January, Barnet Council has a new Chief Executive: Mr. Leo Boland from the London Borough of Newham (via a spell in Hackney). No doubt he will stamp his personality on the workings of the Council, like his predecessor Mr Max Caller.

News for ramblers

While not conceding any right of way, the proprietor of the London Equestrian Centre is now content for residents to cross his field at the end of Chanctonbury Way along the route indicated by the arrow. He has altered the fence so that it is now possible to cross into the next field without scrambling over barbed wire. Please do not wander away from the path or damage the fences



Friends of the Park News

After much nagging by your Association the children's playground has been re-opened, after repairs to the railings. This considerable expense would not have been necessary if the leaves had been cleared, leaving the floodwater to pass through.

Much more nagging has been necessary to get any progress on the general improvements to Riverside Walk promised after our survey. We are now told that work to resurface paths will commence on 5th February and take three weeks after a summer and autumn when Barnet says that due to contractual difficulties (!!) it was unable to arrange any resurfacing.

Your Chairman attended a "Greenspaces Summit" where senior Council officers invited views to inform their new strategy for parks and open spaces. There was much demand for park keepers and locking of parks. Council officers were told that these "savings" were a false economy in view of vandalism costs and feelings of insecurity in parks.

From Rita Pollock

After an extremely happy 33 years in Chanctonbury Way, we have decided to move from Woodside Park to pastures new, and would like to take this opportunity to thank committee members past and present for all their countless efforts on our behalf in keeping "our area" such a pleasant and friendly place to live in. We will miss many of the nice events you organise, particularly the Christmas tree and carol singing and the cheese and wine evening. Many thanks to you all

Health and Education News

We do not receive many calls from residents on these issues, though we note that Frith Manor school is now so oversubscribed that not all Woodside Park children may gain admission. New capacity will need to be built. We will keep an eye on this issue.

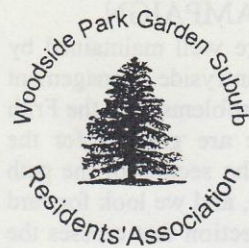
Residents ought to be aware that changes to the NHS are afoot in Barnet. Among the changes are the Government's intended merger of Barnet Health Authority with that of Enfield and Haringey. It is also intended to abolish Community Health Councils and deal with patients' representation in other ways.

Those interested in the many changes which flow from this restructuring can get information from Barnet Community Health Council at 159 Ballards Lane 020 8349 4364 - but hurry before it's abolished! In the meantime NHS Direct is now available at 0845 4647 and www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk for immediate advice from nurses and which may save a visit to your GP.

Your letters

From "A Woodsider" (name & address supplied)

In response to the question in your November newsletter, the Council's block cleansing team certainly deserve congratulation. They were friendly and helpful, and they provided a very welcome service. We look forward to their return in February or March



The Woodsider

March 2001

Countryside Issue

We devote the second side of this issue to countryside matters. Much of it will be familiar to some older residents, but we think that many of you will be surprised at the extent of open country that lies almost at our doorsteps and at the range of wildlife that it contains. With your support we are determined to preserve its rural character and our rights of access to it.

Sadly, we shall have to keep out until the foot-and-mouth epidemic is over.

An elected Mayor for Barnet?

Barnet must soon choose:

1. *An elected Mayor and a small cabinet of Councillors,*
2. *A Council Leader plus a small cabinet of Councillors, or*
3. *An elected Mayor and a Town Manager appointed by Councillors.*

Consultation meetings are now being held. We urge you to attend and make your view known. Whichever option you prefer we strongly urge you to press for a *Scrutiny and Overview function* which is aided by independent paid expert staff with access to all papers. The recent Audit Commission report on Barnet Cleansing shows what can be achieved by independent inspection.

Council News – a report from Councillor Coleman

The minds of Councillors have been fixed on the Council budget for 2001/2002. Following the budget consultation, the Council decided on a 3.5% rise as supported by a majority of those who responded. 47% also wanted a Neighbourhood Garden service so this will be introduced and will add a further 1%. The total rise is 7.3% due to the Greater London Authority precept (which includes the Police). The teachers' pay award will this year be fully funded by the Council. Contentious elements in the budget include issues around recycling, CCTV, North Finchley Arts Centre and graffiti. The full Council Budget which runs to 580 pages makes interesting reading for anybody having difficulty sleeping!

The Council has decided to sell the freehold of Burtonhole Farm (along with many other assets). Councillors will have to be careful that any future development plans are resisted on this vital Green Belt site.

On March 27th a policy paper comes to the Environment Committee concerning the replacement of pavements. I have received many representations from residents over the current practice of putting black asphalt (or bitumac) in place of paving slabs and leaving roads looking a complete mess. Conservation areas are spared this. I maintain that whether you live in a conservation area or not you pay the same level of Council Tax and are therefore entitled to the same quality of environment. Residents may wish to drop me and/or the Chair of the Committee (Cllr Allan Turner) a line before the meeting.

News from the suburb

Riverside Walk and Graffiti

The Chairman, the Secretary and the Treasurer met Anne Lippitt and senior staff from Parks and Environment. We were promised that *leaves* would be collected, better supervision of *grass cutting* and use of other *vehicles*, swifter responses to messages, repairs to *benches*, *gates to be closed signs*. But no additional funds will be provided for *graffiti* removal and we will get neither a *Park Keeper* nor a *District Warden*.

Police Resources

Borough Commander John Yates invited the Chairman and the Secretary to discuss Barnet's poor showing in the Channel 4 league table, following our referring this to the forthcoming Consultative Group. We urged him to press for a bigger share of the Met's resources for Barnet.

inter@ctive.cop

Would you like to spend some time working alongside police officers to find out what they do? If so call Colindale police station on 8733 4103.

Sir Sydney Chapman MP.

Our local MP came to Woodside Park to discuss with the Chairman and the Secretary the issues of Police Resources, Local Government Act 2000, LBB inefficiency, footpaths and graffiti. He promised his active support.

Road Scheme

The Chairman and John Robinson visited the Highways Dept to discuss the Southover scheme. There is a good cost-benefit analysis and we see no cause to oppose this scheme.

Woodside Park reunion

The reunion announced in our November issue is to go ahead on June 9th. If you were born between 1930 and 1942 and are interested, please contact Sheila Jelley on 01494 725124 or sjelley@waitrose.com.

BARNET'S COUNTRYSIDE

The countryside is probably more accessible to us than it is to most country dwellers. Within ten minutes by car we can visit:

- Scratchwood - *a remnant of an ancient forest,*
- Moat Mount - *with its pond and exotic trees,*
- Arrandene - *with its woods and old hay meadows,*
- Barnet Gate Wood - *with its nature trail,* and
- Monken Hadley Common, Hampstead Heath, Kenwood and the Highgate Ponds, and many others.

Or we can leave the car at home and walk the Totteridge Valley (see below).

(maps and guides are available from the Secretary)

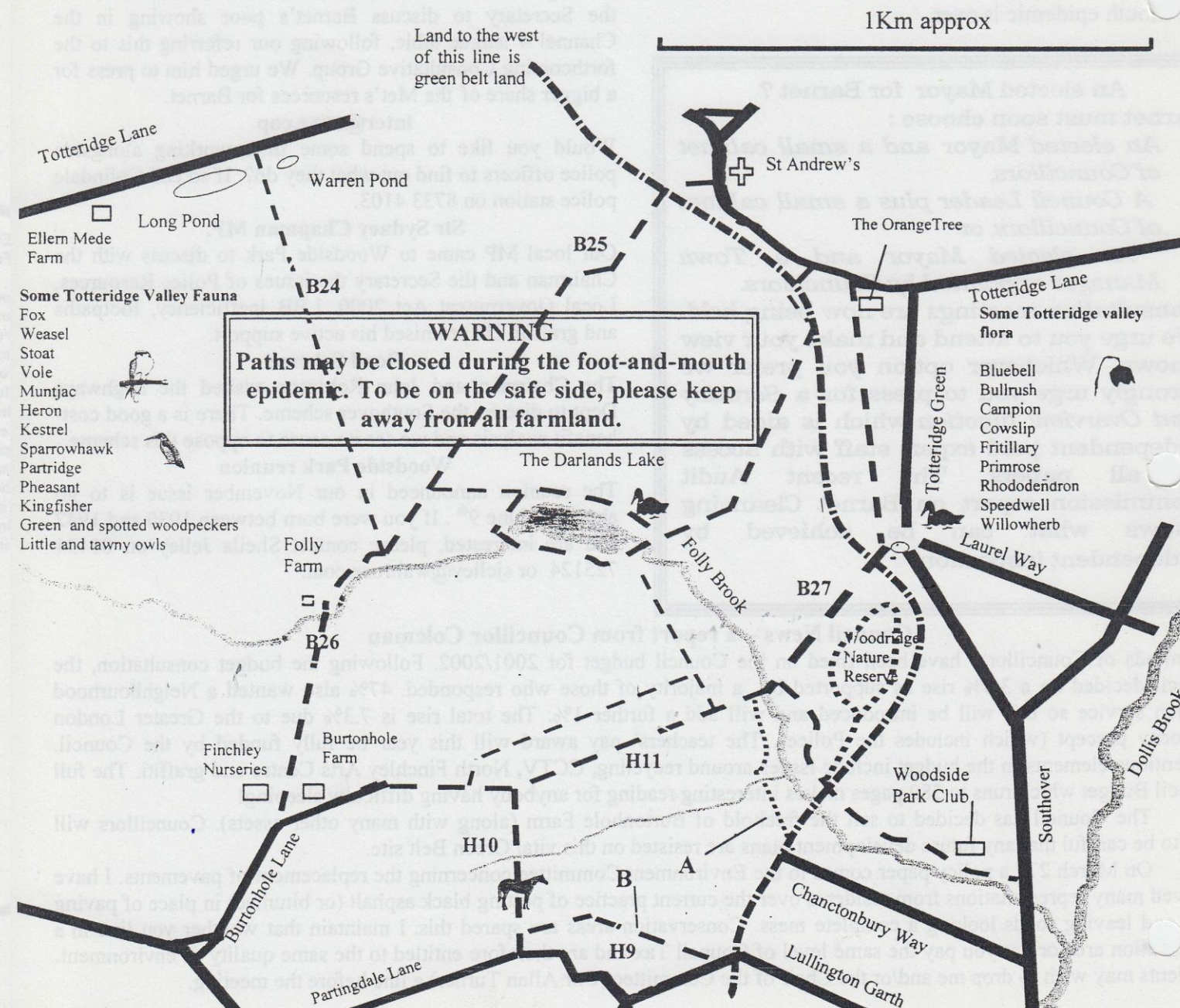
FOOTPATHS - OUR CAMPAIGN

With few exceptions, our footpaths are well maintained by local landlords and the Council's Countryside Management Service. We are trying to resolve the problems with the Frith Manor footpath (B on the map), we are grateful for the improvements made by Mr Segen to the section of the path crossing the London Equestrian Centre, and we look forward to the re-opening before long of the section that crosses the Frith Manor Livery Stables. As noted, in our January newsletter, the path leading into Totteridge Valley from Chanctonbury Way (A on the map) is now unobstructed (although very muddy at the Chanctonbury Way end.)

Please let us know if you find a footpath to be obstructed.

THE EASTERN TOTTERIDGE VALLEY

The soil of the valley is not suitable for agriculture, except for the grazing of cattle and horses, but it supports a wide variety of wildlife. Most of it is classified as green belt land and as a Grade 1 Site of Borough Importance. It contains a network of footpaths, some of which are Public Rights of Way (those marked on the map as H9 to H11 and B24 to B27). The Darlands Nature Reserve was once classified as a Site of Special Scientific Interest on account of the rare snakes-head fritillaries that grow alongside one of its paths, but it was subsequently declassified on the suspicion that the fritillaries had been planted! The lake itself should be approached with caution because it contains a great depth of silt. A comprehensive account of the ecology of the valley is available in the London Ecology Unit's *Ecology Handbook 28*.





The Woodsider

May 2001

Congestion - what next?

Getting the car out of the drive is becoming increasingly tedious, especially for those of us who live in Lullington Garth, Sussex Ring or Chanctonbury Way; and longer and longer delays await any of us who venture into Frith Lane or into the approaches to the High Road. With rising housing density and car ownership, what will it be like here in ten years' time?

Unless something is done to restrain its growth, the country's urban road traffic is expected to rise by over 15 per cent in the next ten years, but the Council aims to reduce Barnet's road traffic by 10 per cent over that period. Employers are to be asked to adopt *Green Travel Plans* to encourage non-car travel, and developers are to submit *Travel Impact Assessments* with analyses of accessibility by non-car modes of transport. Measures to improve the flow of traffic are, on the other hand, to be resisted on the grounds that they would encourage car travel. Road improvements and the provision of off-street parking are among factors considered to increase traffic, and road closures have even been cited as means of discouraging traffic. Instead of having to provide for a *minimum* amount of off-street parking, developers will in future have to restrict their parking provisions to the *maximum* levels stipulated by the Council (such as one space per practitioner for dental practices).

Even if the Council were to achieve its target for the borough as a whole, it is questionable whether we Woodsiders would benefit. There are plans for the construction of over 700 dwellings a year in Barnet, and with a policy of avoiding greenfield sites, we can expect a continuing increase in housing density in our neighbourhood. There are already plans for more housing in Frith Lane (fortunately, the golf course is green belt), and more of the old houses on the other side of the brook will probably be replaced by multi-storey flats. If road pricing is introduced in central London, more people will want to leave their cars at Woodside Park station. Parking conditions can in any case be expected to get worse as the number of public parking spaces is reduced in the course of the North Finchley Arts Centre development.

What should the Association do about it? We had no success in opposing planning applications on housing density grounds, and there seems little point in reverting to that practice. We can press for improved public transport. We can try to influence the Environment Sub-Committee's forthcoming discussion of proposals for traffic and parking at North Finchley. And we can join with other residents' associations in opposing any further loss of car park space. What else should we do? Should we press for road pricing in Barnet? We are open to suggestions.

Congestion conjugation:

I plan my journeys to avoid the traffic. You cut through the back streets. They create rat-runs.

Membership Subscriptions – still only £1!

If it hasn't already happened, a committee member will shortly be calling to collect your subscription and listen to your suggestions

Your Member of
Parliament,
your GLA Councillor,
your Ward Councillors,
Frith Manor School's
Headmaster,
the Inspector in charge of
Barnet North Police
and the Council's
Neighbourhood
Management Officer
will be on hand to answer
your questions
at the

Woodside Park Forum and Annual General Meeting

Tuesday June 12th
7.30 pm
Frith Manor School

bring your
questions!

Overleaf:

- Council news
- Crime prevention notes
- Notes on
 - health facilities
 - the Dollis Valley greenwalk
 - travellers
 - better benches
 - dog mess
 - the London cycle network
 - obituary: Leonard Rumens
- Nominations to the committee

Has your mobile phone been property-marked?

- if not, why not bring it
along to the Woodside Park
Forum on June 12th and
have it done by the
Metropolitan Police
Service?

Council News – a report from Councillor Brian Coleman

The Council is going through a busy period at the moment. Three issues will be of particular interest to residents. Firstly the good news. The Council has changed its policy on the repaving of vehicle crossovers. The practice of laying black tarmac on vehicle crossovers will cease and instead "modular paving" will be laid. This will prevent the appalling mess that faced residents of Greenway N20. However I understand tarmac will still be used for ad hoc repairs. The change in policy is due to overwhelming public (Councillor) pressure. The downside is that the Chief Highways Officer is rewriting his service plan. That will mean that fewer pavements and highways will be renewed this year. Secondly, the Tally Ho Arts Centre. It has been revealed that the capital costs have risen from £12 million last July to £14 million now. The Council has to find £600,000 as its contribution to this increase and has decided to take it from The Edward Harvist Charity, a Council-controlled charity which exists for the benefit of the people of Finchley, and usually gives grants to such areas as youth projects and the Homeless Centre in Woodhouse Road. Your Ward Councillors are taking the lead in questioning the legality of this. Thirdly - and most significantly for local government in our borough - the Council is restructuring following the passing of the new Local Government Act. Barnet has decided to adopt a *Leader and Cabinet* system to replace the traditional committee system. There are some concerns that this will lead to yet more decisions taken by individual Cabinet Members with no public scrutiny. Time will tell.

Nominations please

Nominations are invited for the posts of chairman, vice-chairman, secretary and treasurer, and for other members of the committee. Nominations (two per nominee, together with the nominee's acceptance) should reach the Secretary by June 5th.

Good Health

There is a *Walk-in Health Centre* at Edgware Hospital (020 8723 6459) open 7am-10pm but 24 hours for urgent cases. The *Minor Injuries Unit* at Finchley Memorial Hospital (020 8349 3121) is open 9am-7pm. Barnet General's *Accident and Emergency Dept.* Wellhouse Lane is open 24 hours. *NHS Direct* can be contacted 24 hours at 0845 4647 with any medical problem. Call 999 for an ambulance only in cases of serious emergency.

Dollis Valley Greenwalk

In our last edition we dealt with Totteridge Valley walks, but don't forget about this walk which runs from Moat Mount Open Space on the A1, through our Riverside Walk, to Hampstead Heath - 10 miles in all. A short walk from Fursby Avenue through the allotments brings you to the splendid 13-arch 1860s viaduct, now carrying the Northern Line to Mill Hill East. Leaflets covering the entire route, are available from libraries.

Travellers

Barnet is spending £150,000 blocking entrances to parks and other land used by Travellers.

Obituary

Leonard Rumens of 11A Linkside, a former member of the Association's committee, died at the age of 99. Our condolences go to Mrs Rumens.

Better Benches

Having resurfaced the paths in Riverside Walk, the Council is now promising the repair or replacement and cleaning of our benches.

Dog Mess

£25 Fine Tickets (like parking tickets) are now in the hands of Neighbourhood Management Officers, Park Keepers and Neighbourhood Wardens. Failure to provide a name and address or to pay can lead to Police arrest and a Magistrates Court Fine of £1,000. Signs will soon be erected and leaflets made available.

London Cycle Network

Our patch is crossed by Route 85 (High Barnet to Hanger Lane) along Holden Rd, Westbury Rd, Gordon Rd. and Route 88 (Arnos Grove to Mill Hill) along Holden Rd, Lullington Garth and Partingdale Lane. Full London map from libraries.

Crime Prevention - notes from Inspector Tony Scott Contacting the Police

If a crime is being committed, or if anyone is in danger, *please call 999* - the police do want to hear from you. They will aim to get to you within 12 minutes. Otherwise, if you need to speak to a police officer urgently, please call the local police station. The Whetstone police station on 8733 5235 is normally open between 6am and 10pm, and a 24-hour service is maintained at the Colindale station on 8200 1212. The police will then aim to get to you within an hour. The Totteridge Ward Beat Officer is based at the Whetstone station.

Mobile Phone thefts

Mobile phone theft is a problem in and around the Tally-ho area. The victims are usually of senior school age and the prime time for the thefts is between 3pm and 8pm. Ironically, parents who give mobile phones to their children may be making them potential victims!

Vehicle thefts

Thieves have been putting bamboo poles through letterboxes to get keys from hallways, in order to steal residents' cars. If they get the house keys, they use them for burglary. Be warned!

Editor's postscript

Barnet is to recruit more Neighbourhood Wardens. This time there will be mobile wardens (two in a van) who can make spot evening patrols in areas like Woodside Park where crime rates are too low to justify permanent wardens. They will have a direct line to the Police

Barnet may benefit from a promised review of the formula for allocating police officers to London boroughs (for which your committee had been pressing). Under Mayor Livingstone's plan, there should in any case be a substantial increase in April 2002.

The Woodsider

July 2001

Road safety - what is to be done?

Residents often tell us of their worries about the danger from speeding traffic. Parents of primary school children are particularly concerned, and some elderly residents are fearful of crossing the road.

There do seem to be grounds for concern. Speeding is the biggest cause of road accidents; two thirds of the resulting injuries occur where there is a 30mph speed limit; and 70% of drivers break that speed limit. Most of the accidents within the suburb have been in Lullington Garth or Sussex Ring. There were no injuries to pedestrians here over the past three years, but 9 drivers and 6 passengers were slightly injured and one driver was seriously injured (see overleaf). Speeding contributed to nearly half of those accidents. The figures do not tell the whole story, of course: speeding is commonplace, the dangers are only too visible and many of us can tell of lucky escapes. The safety of our children has been bought at a price in terms of restrictions and supervision that would have been unthinkable twenty years ago (although driving children to school is unlikely to have contributed to their safety: they would have been safer walking!).

What should be done? The options include *traffic calming*, *20mph speed limits*, *home zones* and *speed cameras*. But before looking at those options, it is worth considering how far the remedy lies in our own hands. In a trial done here a few years ago, most of the culprits were our own residents. We might be asking the Council to spend our money trying to deter us from behaviour that we could easily abandon of our own accord! Journeys would not take much longer if we reduced speed from, say, 35 to 30 miles an hour - but that would halve the probability of a fatal accident. A valuable contribution could also be made by anyone willing to do paid "lollipop" duties outside Frith Manor School (see overleaf).

Speed-reducing schemes often have drawbacks. The more effective are *traffic calming* schemes, the more they impede the emergency services, and their most effective forms are unlikely to be acceptable on through routes such as Lullington Garth. *20-mile-an-hour speed limits* have proved hard to enforce, but they are being tried in 3 areas of the borough and 12 other areas are being considered. The limits on the selected roads might, however, make matters worse in neighbouring areas. That difficulty could also arise for the otherwise attractive option of *home zone* street layouts. (A *home zone* is an area in which the road layout is so designed that the space can be shared between cars and other road users, with pedestrians and cyclists coming first, and with a speed limit of around 10 mph so that children should be able to play in the street. Trial schemes are in operation in Ealing and Lambeth, and Barnet is bidding for its share of the £30 million of taxpayers' money that has been made available for their introduction elsewhere).

It might be impracticable to include Lullington Garth in a home zone. For such roads *speed cameras* appear attractive, and their costs can nowadays be recovered by the Council from revenues from fines. The effectiveness of isolated cameras is limited, however, by motorists' awareness of their locations. To be fully effective, they would need to be installed every few hundred metres - a prospect about which there are political misgivings (there is a perception among politicians that votes can be lost by antagonising motorists!).

Please let your committee know *in writing* if you want Council action on this. They may well respond to solid evidence of local demand.

Julian Cohen - a tribute

Julian died at the Royal Free Hospital on June 12th, after suffering from a series of serious illnesses. He had been an active member of the Association's committee since 1991, and he was its Chairman from 1992 to 2000. His charm and good humour will be sorely missed. Our condolences go to his family.

Overleaf:

- council news
- road accidents
- Woodside Park Forum
- crime prevention
- lollipop person needed
- grass verges
- odds and ends
- calling 999

A DATE FOR YOUR DIARY
your annual

Cheese and Wine Evening



will be on

Thursday 20th September

watch this space for further details

Council News - a report from Councillor Brian Coleman

A democratic revolution has taken place in the last few weeks in Barnet, although I would forgive residents for not noticing - and I am not referring to the General Election! Barnet now has its very own "Cabinet" system of Government and councillors are getting used to different ways of working. Those of us with some reservations about the system have not been encouraged by three recent issues. Firstly, the Council set up an inquiry into matters at St John's School, Friar Barnet but the Cabinet decided that calls by parents, governors and some councillors (led by your Ward members) for an independent Chair were rejected and the inquiry goes ahead under the chairmanship of the Deputy Chief Executive (and acting Director of Education). Secondly the Council is to have another management restructure of senior officers, apparently to reflect the new Cabinet structure. The system introduced two years ago of 25 Heads of Service and 5 "Strategic Directors" is to be scrapped and there will be a reduction in the number of senior officers. Thirdly the fate of Hertford Lodge on the Avenue House site is in the balance following the refusal of the Council to make any cash contribution to a charity called Resources for Autism whose plans for the listed building were well advanced. Your councillors feel that £250,000 for autistic children is better use of resources than the several million pumped into the Tallyho development. There is a rumour that this building will join the list of assets being sold by the Council, I am told several developers are interested in conversion to luxury flats. The Council has just sold the freehold of Finchley Golf Course to the club, let us hope that to finance the deal the club do not have to sell bits off for development.

Road accident injuries March 1998 to February 2001

date	injured	factor
Lullington Garth		
23/9/00	driver	speed
13/10/99	driver	speed
23/1/01	m/cyclist	speed
23/6/88	driver	speed
10/11/00	driver serious	
Sussex Ring		
8/11/98	child passenger	
3/1/00	passenger	alcohol
20/5/00	driver	
29/8/00	m/cyclist	
15/9/00	driver & child passenger	
Walmington Fold		
17/5/00	driver	
11/11/00	driver & passenger	
Chanctonbury Way		
22/3/98	child passenger	speed
24/6/99	passenger	speed

The Woodside Park Forum June 12th 2001

The Forum Panel comprised Sir Sydney Chapman, Cllrs Coleman, Lyon and Edson; Mike Rees (Head Teacher, Frith Manor School); Inspector Tony Scott (Metropolitan Police); Mr Gilbert Moss (Neighbourhood Management Officer, LBB); and Mr Neil Todd (representing The Woodside Park Club).

Among the answers to their questions, residents learned that:

- although opposition councillors are to be excluded from decision-making in the new council *cabinets*, council meetings will still be open to the public;
- police response times have not been meeting targets but an improvement is in prospect as recruitment improves;
- the policy of giving preference to siblings will continue to limit the school's local catchment area for some years to come;
- action is to be taken to landscape the field opposite the school, and soil samples are to be checked for contamination.

Odds and ends

Summers Lane dump (sorry! recycling centre!) is to re-open in October.

The block cleansing teams are to return to Chanctonbury Way on 24th October and to the rest of the suburb on 15th November.

Pavements in Saddlescombe Way and parts of Chanctonbury Way are due for repair in this financial year, and those of Cissbury Ring South and Walmington Fold have been identified as needing repair in future years.

A proposal to install a 10-metre telecommunications mast in Sussex Ring, which was opposed by the Association, has been rejected by the Council.

Crime prevention

- a residents' patrol?

The survey which was done while collecting subscriptions this year puts crime at the top of members' concerns, so your committee is to review the options for tackling that problem. A possibility to be considered if there is sufficient support is a *Passive Residents' Patrol*, the sole function of which would be to warn the police by mobile phone of apparently criminal activity such as vandalism and the creation of graffiti. No details have as yet been decided, except that patrol members should not approach suspects, but should always remain in the safety of their cars.

If you think that you might be willing to take part, please contact Nick Gardner on 8922 0847 (with no commitment at this stage).

Lollipop Person Needed

Frith Manor School still needs a 'lollipop' person. The Council is willing to provide training and to pay £5.25 an hour (plus a retainer during holidays).

If you are available on weekdays for about an hour in the morning (8-9am) and an hour in the afternoon (3-4pm) and are interested, please call the Accident Prevention Unit on 8906 8028. If necessary, the work could be shared with one other person.

Protecting grass verges

The Council will soon be asking residents of parts of Chanctonbury Way, Singleton Scarp and Saddlescombe Way whether they agree to the placing of short wooden posts to prevent parking on grass verges. Please say yes.

Calling 999

In the evening peak hours the 999 call centre can get congested and put you in a queue. If you want the police urgently, it can be much quicker to ring 8200 1212 and ask the police switchboard for Colindale (local 999 calls are passed on to Colindale). For routine matters between 6.0am and 10pm Barnet police station is on 8447 1212 and our Beat Officer, PC Gavin Philip, can be reached on 8733 5062. If you experience any delay in the response to 999 or 8200 1212 calls please let us know.

DO NOT SERVE MY OWN SPEED LIMITS - YOU DRIVE TOO FAST - THEY THINK THEY ARE AT BRAND'S HATCH!

The Woodsider

September 2001

Local democracy – who needs it?

Should the Council persist with its practice of consulting us and allowing us to speak at council meetings? This may have seemed a good idea at the time, but it has not been well received. There is no getting away from the fact that council questionnaires and meetings are unpopular. Ninety-six per cent of us ignored the last questionnaire about changing the level of council tax. The questionnaire about the Southover/Northiam road safety scheme was ignored by 69 per cent of those who were asked. And 52 per cent of those who were asked whether to allow a festival in the park did not reply. Fewer than one per cent of us attend meetings called to discuss policy options, and it is seldom that any of us attend council meetings. Most of us prefer to have the Council take decisions on our behalf, without involving us in the process.

Apart from their unpopularity, these council practices are not without their dangers. With most of us abstaining, it is easy for a small group of busybodies to rig the results of a questionnaire, or for their spokesman to sway the decision of a council committee. (This is not a fantasy: only recently a group of Greenway householders engineered a policy change requiring the use of more expensive pavement materials, as a result of which there is now less money to spend on repairing potholes. And there is other evidence to suggest that council decisions can be swayed by vociferous demonstrations of local support). In fact, the present system amounts to an invitation to activists to get their way at the expense of the rest of us.

Would it not be better to return to the traditional practice under which we let them set the council tax at whatever level they see fit, and provide us in return with whatever they consider to be good for us – without forever asking us what we want?

I AM TOO BUSY. YOU CAN'T BE BOTHERED.
THEY ARE SPINELESS!

Need Help ?

from the Council ?

Ring Customer Care on 8359 4600
(ask for the item number, so you can chase your complaint).

Or, for out-of-hours emergencies, 8359 2000.

from the Police ?

If it is urgent, ring 999 or 8200 1212 and ask for Colindale.

If it is not urgent, ring 8447 1212 (10 am-6pm)
or our Beat Officer PC Gavin Philp 8733 5062.

If you do not get a good response to any of these, let us know.

edited on behalf of the committee by Nick Gardner 15 Chanctonbury Way N12 7JB telephone no: 8922 0847 email: nickgchanc@msn.com

Meet the neighbours! at your annual CHEESE AND WINE EVENING

at
**Frith Manor
School**
on
**Thursday 20th
September**
starting at
7.30 pm
ADMISSION (members only) £3
(including cheese and wine!)

Footpath Vandalism

We announced in our January issue that the proprietor of the London Equestrian Centre (Mr Michael Segen) had given permission to cross his field at the end of Chanctonbury Way, and we asked residents to avoid damaging his fences. Following the recent destruction of a fence, with the consequent danger of the escape of his horses, that permission has been withdrawn. We are in discussion with Mr Segen on the matter, and in the meantime we would ask residents to report any signs of further vandalism to the secretary and to the police. Our application to have the path across the field recognised as a right of way is under consideration by the Council.

Council News – a report from Councillor Brian Coleman

Residents will not be surprised to know that much time of your Councillors' time has been taken up dealing with Three Valleys Water and the totally unsatisfactory manner in which they have undertaken the water main replacement work. The lack of information to residents and the poor quality of workmanship are among the issues we have raised with them. The traffic congestion in Totteridge Lane would have been reduced had Partingdale Lane still been open!

Victory has been achieved in the latest skirmish in the "pavement wars", with the Council agreeing to replace the black tarmac in Twineham Green with modular paving.

Residents may have read in the local paper problems affecting Barnet Racial Equality Council. This is the organisation funded jointly by the borough and the Commission for Racial Equality that monitors community relations in the borough. Councillors are working to ensure that questions of accounting for public money and general management disorganisation are resolved.

The Borough currently has out to consultation proposed new guidelines on house extensions and following pressure this consultation period has been extended into September.

150 Years On (!)

(From the Woodsider Summer 2150 ?)

"EU researchers have made an exciting find. As late as the end of the twentieth century a few survivors of an oppressed minority were believed to exist in Woodside Park north London. The clue comes from 150 year old copies of the Woodsider recently found in a loft. That this sect existed so late is very puzzling – ie just before the Police finally ceased to be effective and were disbanded, public transport fell into total disrepair and disuse, voting fell to 10%, local government was recognised as a farce and the State wound it up and introduced martial law. They were quite distinctive – they paid their taxes, observed the law, took responsibility for their children and made a positive contribution to society. They must have been very conspicuous and yet they received no support from the State, at a time when almost all minorities – most of the population, were extensively protected and it was an offence even to comment adversely on minorities. One theory for their disappearance is that this tiny group claimed to be descended from the majority. This claim is discounted by most researchers since it would suggest that at one time most citizens behaved responsibly to each other. EU researchers will continue their hunt for the truth – though all UK Government records were destroyed when the Grand European Government was created. (To bring us back up to date, readers are reminded that the curfew is now extended to 24 hours except for 11.00am to 2.00pm for food voucher exchange.)"

Meetings

Members of your committee have attended two site meetings over the stables footpaths, and others with the new police Borough Commander, with the co-ordinator of Neighbourhood Management Service, with Neighbourhood Watch, a meeting concerning Neighbourhood Wardens, Whetstone Forum, the Area Environment Committee, the LA21 Pollution Committee and the Safety in Parks meeting.

Membership Survey

This year, our committee attempted – concurrently with the collection of subscriptions – its first systematic survey of members' concerns. Over five hundred householders were asked to say what issues they wanted the association to take up on their behalf. There were positive replies from about ten per cent of those asked. The issues most frequently mentioned were crime (including graffiti and vandalism) and traffic (including speeding and congestion) – accounting between them for about forty per cent of the replies. Other issues, accounting each for ten per cent or more of the replies, were litter, potholes, parking, pavement repairs and the closure of Partingdale Lane. We plan to repeat the survey next year, widening its coverage and taking account of the lessons we have learned. For example, we now realise that many of those asked might have been more ready to respond had they been given more explicit warning (the footnote inviting suggestions in May Woodsider could easily have been overlooked or forgotten). We will give the matter more prominence in next year's March issue.

Subscriptions

Our committee members collected subscriptions from 648 households – amounting to about 75% of the houses in the suburb (the remaining 25% comprised empty houses: 4%; non-subscribers 4%; and uncontacted households 17%). Thanks!

If you have not yet paid your subscription (£1 pa per household) please put a £1 coin in an envelope marked with your name and address and put it through the letterbox of 15 Chanctonbury Way.

Friends of the Park

After nearly 18 months of hard labour and harassing, the Riverside Walk path has been relaid, and the benches have been cleaned, re-slatted, and stained, due to no small effort by our Chairman and the Friends of the Park Group.

Graffiti

Graffiti is at its all time low here, due – in our opinion – to prompt action by committee members to erase it as soon as it appears. Managers of shops on the ring are invited to take note.

Police Resources

We have at long last had a response from the Metropolitan Police Authority to our enquiries about police resources for Barnet (we are grateful to Sir Sydney Chapman and to Cllr Brian Coleman for their support in this.) The Authority tells us that a new formula will come out in 2002. This is the formula which shares out the resources available to the Metropolitan Police between the boroughs. In the meantime we have had five recent cases of residents calling 999 because of youth disturbances or damage. In three of those cases the resident followed the youths in his car but there was no police response in time. We have taken up each case with the police at Colindale and they are being investigated.

Readers' views

(messages received are abridged or summarised – with the sender's permission – in order to save space)

Mr Edwin Shuker of Cissbury Ring South wrote complaining that our July leader "closely reflects the Council's anti-motorist policy rather than the feeling of the majority of residents". He claimed that some of the traffic calming obstacles, such as those in place at Nether Street/Argyle Road, actually cause serious injuries. He also ridiculed the idea of a home zone in Lullington Garth.

A resident (name and address supplied) called to say that we were wrong to refer to children playing in the street in our July issue without also referring to the annoyance this causes to their neighbours.

Another resident (name and address supplied) wrote that "We don't really need the road safety schemes listed in the July Woodsider. What we need is a change of attitude. Speed limits are an expression of an implicit agreement not to put other road users at risk. The schemes would be superfluous if breaking that agreement were considered to be as contemptible as cheating at cards."

What do you think? Write or email the editor in good time for our October issue.



The Woodsider

Crime - why a whole page on this ?

The recent arrival of autumn rainy Friday nights has brought some temporary respite from carousing vandals but our survey of your concerns shows that you have law and order as top of your list.

The bad news

We have a log of unanswered 999 calls for youth disturbances and vandalism which shows that unless there is a very serious crime indeed you are unlikely to get a response - even after being held in a 999 queue! Why is it? Too few resources. For years the Home Office has presided over the run down of the police force and allowed it to be vilified over racism issues. In the meantime crime has steadily risen, police morale has declined and unsurprisingly, there has been no rush to join the police force. Though we agree that at the moment some of our officers must be diverted to central London anti-terrorism duties, we consider it disgraceful that our Borough was stripped of officers to police the Notting Hill Carnival. Even when neither of these is happening we can still only manage 15 cars to respond to all of Barnet's 999 calls. What is more a large number of experienced officers are soon due to retire. The Borough stubbornly refuses to close parks at night even though the police and residents press them to do so.

We are repeatedly told that in Woodside Park we are lucky since it is worse elsewhere. This is a totally unacceptable argument, even though it appears to be true. We attended a Barnet Community & Police Consultative Group meeting in October. It was a depressing event. In the last five months street crime has risen over 40% in Barnet compared with the previous year. Individual members of the public spoke of weeks of successive 999 calls being ignored and one spoke of a six hour response when a burglar was in his home.

What is your committee doing about this ?

We press our concerns on the Metropolitan Police Authority (which oversees policing in London), Scotland Yard, Colindale's Borough Commander, district Inspector, Beat Officer, our MP, our GLA member and our Councillors. We get good support from our MP and GLA representative and Councillors but the MPA member supposed to represent Barnet has ignored us throughout, and did not attend either of the meetings mentioned here. Fortunately an MPA deputy chairman has undertaken to look after Barnet's interests and has been most helpful.

November 2001

The (possibly) good news

Belatedly there is a change of tone. Police pay and conditions have been improved, the GLA has raised our taxes to pay for more officers, recruitment has improved and efforts are being made to address the retirement bulge problem. We firmly believe that our local police officers are doing a difficult and sometimes dangerous job to the best of their ability and that they regret as much as we do their inability to support us sufficiently. We are told that Barnet is one of the safest London boroughs, that Woodside Park is one of the safest parts of Barnet and that Neighbourhood Watch areas are safest of all. We recently attended a Community Safety conference where Barnet's Chief Executive and the Borough Commander pledged that police officers and council staff of all types will work closely together to combat crime. An anti graffiti campaign has been launched, the Borough has launched Neighbourhood Wardens who will patrol to deter crime and be in touch with the police. The first of these have now appeared on the streets (up to 10pm only) including at North Finchley (where CCTV cameras will soon appear) and we have a half promise that the mobile patrol will visit Woodside Park. Though we would prefer the funds to be spent on police officers we will judge this scheme by results. There are two further signs of possible improvement. Firstly the Borough Commander has undertaken to change shifts so that more officers are available for evening responses when most calls come in and less in the daytime. Secondly the long awaited MPA review of each borough's share of the available officers is reported to be giving Barnet a bigger share of the cake. This is not yet finalised and we shall monitor it carefully. In the meantime we fear that the only remedy is higher taxes and more police officers.

So, what can individual residents do?

Always ring 999 when seeing a crime committed (we need it logged even if there isn't a response), join your local Neighbourhood Watch, lose no opportunity to tell your Councillor and your MP that you demand more police resources even if it does mean higher taxes.

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Association by Real Estates



Don't forget!
Come to our traditional
**CAROL
SINGING**
on
**Saturday 22nd
December**
at 4-30 pm
Sussex Ring
bring the kids!

Council News - A report from Councillor Brian Coleman

There have been two meetings worth mentioning in recent weeks, the first a "traditional" meeting of the full Council discussed three motions. The first was on the allocation of Royal Garden Party tickets and the second on voting rights at the Local Government Association Assembly, both subjects which residents have never raised with me!

The third motion was on the state of the NHS Trust running Barnet General and Chase Farm Hospitals which achieved no stars in the recent NHS league tables. Councillors of all parties viewed the situation with concern and a joint scrutiny Committee between the Council and the Community Health Council is to be set up to take evidence. Within the next 18 months the Community Health Council is to be abolished and responsibility for NHS scrutiny transferred to the Borough so this enquiry is a "dry run".

At the recent meeting of the Council Policy Conference (which is a basically a Council meeting without the Mayor), there was a motion taking pleasure in the cultural diversity which is the Community in Barnet. Also a "Private Members Bill" was passed making transfer of Council tenancies between unmarried couples, including single sex couples, should one partner die that much easier.

Cheese and Wine Evening

Our annual Cheese and Wine Evening on 20 September was a big success. More than 60 residents attended the event and enjoyed an evening of food, drink and socialising with their neighbours. A raffle held that evening in aid of the North London Hospice raised £168. All prizes for the raffle were generously donated by Sussex Ring merchants: International Supermarket, Blakes, Discount Dressing, Leah's Beauty Clinic, Martins Newsagent, Melanie's and B's Pride and Joy. Thank you to all those who attended or donated prizes. For those who weren't able to attend, we look forward to seeing you next year!

The North Finchley Agenda 21 Partnership

Agenda 21 was a blueprint for sustainable development into the 21st Century. Its basis was agreed during the "Earth Summit" at Rio in 1992, and signed by 179 Heads of State and Government. Barnet's Council has set up nine *Local Agenda 21 Partnerships* and has awarded over £90,000 in grants to projects designed to improve the quality of life in their areas (such as the creation of a village green in Cricklewood). Woodside Park Garden Suburb is within the area covered by the North Finchley LA21 partnership. Within that partnership there is a Green Environment Working Group, a Community Environment Working Group and an Environmental Regeneration Working Party. They have contributed to the Council's deliberations concerning the future of Tally Ho Corner and their work has included the production of a waste recovery and recycling guide, a leaflet encouraging people to green their front gardens, and a contribution to the Council's forthcoming Consultation Charter. The partnership has 3 levels of membership - registered members who keep in touch but are not directly involved; working party members who are involved in projects and the steering committee which is elected at the AGM. Further information can be had from the LBB Link Officer, Karen Fielding on 8359 4662.

Consultation Concerns

The North Finchley Local Agenda 21 Partnership is concerned that the increase in consultation over the last few years has been accompanied by cynicism and disillusionment because of the way in which some consultations have been handled. They are pressing the Council for a review of the effectiveness of past consultations, the adoption of a Consultation Charter setting standards for future consultations and an annual scrutiny report. Their draft charter recommends the involvement of residents' representatives in the planning of, and reporting on Council consultations. Copies are available from the secretary.

Neighbourhood Watch

The Association tries to work in support of Neighbourhood Watch. Watches covering Woodside Park include :- *Walmington Fold and roads off* (Thérèse Jones 8346 4431), *Upper Lullington Garth and roads off* (Tina Bloch 8922 3699 & Anna Stapleton 8446 6693), *Lower Lullington Garth & Singleton Scarp* (Priscilla Halsall 8445 8227) *Cissbury Ring South/Folkington Corner* (Peggy Burgess 8445 2492) *Chanctonbury Way & Sussex Ring* (Alan Hill 8446 1685) *Cissbury Ring North & Pycombe* (Julia Featherston 8445 4958). Residents who are registered members of their local Watch receive discounts from their insurance companies, are kept in touch with police and local authority and receive newsletters and offers. Crime tends to fall in Watch areas. If you are uncertain of your membership or if you would be willing to be a Warden and distribute newsletters please get in touch.