



St Stephen's Residents' Association Newsletter: Autumn 2018

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All those who came to our second Annual Open Garden Day, held on a warm summer Sunday in June, will agree that it was a very enjoyable occasion. We were able to visit a huge variety of beautiful gardens, several of them belonging to the most historic houses in our community and all of them wonderful in their own way. Many other temptations were on offer including plant sales, teas, children's games and even glasses of wine! More importantly, the event offered another fantastic opportunity to talk to our neighbours and get to know people whom we might not have met before. Many thanks to everyone who opened their gardens or contributed in other ways such as baking cakes or offering tastings of homemade wine for this very successful day which raised £675.50 that has been divided between the Hospice, the League of Friends of Kent and Canterbury Hospital and the Samaritans. Many thanks to Richard at the newsagents' and Krishna at Porter's for selling the tickets for us. They are both always very willing to support us in all our endeavours.

AGM in November

All St Stephen's Residents' Association members are invited to attend this year's **Annual General Meeting** at **7.30pm on Tuesday 13th November 2018** when the committee will report on its work and present financial accounts for the year. We will also have a short talk from the new president of the University of Kent Students' Union who will update us about student voluntary work in Canterbury and will be asking how they might be able to help us in our community in the future.

What does SSRA do?

You might have noticed the following short paragraph on the SSRA website summarising what the Association aims to achieve:

Our role is to act as the voice for people in the St Stephen's district with regard to matters that concern our community. We aim to improve the local environment through liaison with district and county councillors, promote community cohesion and represent our community via work in partnership with other residents' associations and organisations in the Canterbury district to address joint issues.

The AGM is a good time to raise concerns about local issues and for members to ask questions of councillors who represent the St Stephen's district, but the SSRA committee sometimes expresses views on matters that affect Canterbury as a whole. We are affiliated

to the Alliance of Canterbury Residents' Associations (ACRA) and belong to the North Canterbury Forum of Residents' Associations where we work in partnership to address some of the following joint issues. We hope that we are representing you properly in these matters and would like to know what you think:

Canterbury Riverside

Sue Langdown has set up a stakeholder group that meets with Linkcity, the developer of the proposed **Canterbury Riverside** scheme that has just been approved by the Canterbury City Council planning committee for the old Serco site on Kingsmead Road. Through this group we have voiced our concerns about the design and function of the proposed buildings and implications for traffic in the area of the development. We will continue to meet with the developers to express our views as the building work progresses.

Traffic Congestion and air quality

We are concerned that the **Canterbury Riverside** scheme and the many other new developments in the city will increase traffic and congestion and add to the associated problem of poor air quality. SSRA submitted an objection to the Canterbury Riverside planning application on the grounds that the St Stephen's/Broad Oak Road roundabout, immediately to the North of the site, is already close to saturation point and so will not be able to accommodate future traffic growth created by the development. We have also contributed several comments to the consultation on the draft Air Quality Action plan being developed by the Council, suggesting ways to improve the quality of bus services serving the city and safe places for pedestrians to cross roads. Along with other residents' groups, we have raised concerns about the proposal for a multi-storey car park in Station Road West and are pressing for the Council to create a transport hub in this location to encourage 'modal shift'. That means making it easier and more attractive for people to use public transport, or to walk or cycle instead of using their cars, which is being promoted as an effective way to tackle congestion in the Canterbury Transport Strategy produced by the district and county councils.

New Student Accommodation blocks

Canterbury residents will be aware of the increasing numbers of planning applications for purpose built student accommodation blocks (PBSAs) being submitted. It is felt that these could contribute towards an imbalance between student accommodation and family housing in the city and might also risk being left empty because of over-supply. With these concerns in mind we asked for a condition that all student accommodation being built as part of the **Canterbury Riverside** scheme should be capable of being converted to residential

accommodation in the future, but this was not agreed. We will continue to express the view that student accommodation should be on campus or as close to it as possible.

The Impact of the Universities

A member of our committee attends the Higher and Further Education Community Group, a multi-agency group that considers the impact of higher and further education across the Canterbury district. We are looking at the provision of community information for student residents to help them integrate effectively into the areas where they live.

We are contributing to the consultations around development of the **University of Kent Masterplan** and have raised concerns about student and staff parking in roads that are part of the SSRA district. We have indicated throughout the process of consultation that we would like the green setting of the southern slopes or 'parkland' to be preserved. We are very disappointed to see as part of the latest and final stage of the emerging Masterplan framework that a proposal for a 150 bed 'conferencing hotel' is mentioned once again as a short or medium term capital project for this site. This would be located in the wooded area at the top of the western field, near Chaucer College and across the road from the Innovation Centre. We will continue to put forward our objections to this proposal and hope that members have managed to visit one of the consultation events held in October to see the latest Masterplan proposals for themselves.

Litter and graffiti

SSRA is represented on a Litter Roundtable that has been set up to achieve better partnership between residents' groups and the council to tackle problems of litter, graffiti and fly tipping. We plan joint campaigns via this group and update others about the litter clearing being undertaken by residents in our district.

With residents' associations from other districts we are working towards a greener, cleaner Canterbury and hope that this is what you would want us to do. Please let us know if you feel unhappy with the position we have taken on any of these things or if you have any ideas about how we could improve what we do.

Other news:

- Twenty children accompanied by their parents enjoyed an exciting **river dipping event** on the Kingsmead Field on a beautifully sunny Saturday in September. Guided by 'Our Stour' Officer Lauren Baker, who gave a very interesting presentation about the river at the SSRA AGM last year, the children used nets to fish out a variety of river-bed creatures such as shrimps, snails and water boatmen that they examined

and identified before returning them to their habitat. The event was so successful that there are plans to repeat it around spring time next year.

- Three minor **amendments** are proposed to the **SSRA Constitution** which says that proposed constitutional changes must be circulated to all members at least 14 days before the AGM. The proposed changes are as follows:
 1. The current Constitution says that 'Expenditure above £20 will be authorised by the Committee' with regard to Finance, which the Committee feels is out of date and would like to change the wording to ' Expenditure above £50 must be authorised by the Committee'
 2. The Committee would like to add an additional sentence to the second point listed under 'Committee'. The Constitution currently says that 'The Committee shall consist of a Chair, Vice-Chair, NW coordinator, Treasurer, Secretary and up to ten members.' to which will be added, 'One of the members will be nominated as the Data Protection Officer.'
 3. The Committee would like to add an additional sentence to the third point listed under 'Annual General Meeting'. The Constitution currently says that 'Nominations to the Committee may be made by any two paid-up members and may be given to the Secretary up to 14 days before the AGM. Nominations may also be proposed and seconded by members at the AGM' to which will be added, 'Members may also nominate themselves.'

With all good wishes - **Jennifer Holland**

SSRA Gardening Interest Group

Set up by Dr Jenny Robson in 2017, the Garden Interest Group was conceived to provide a forum for residents to come together informally to discuss all things garden-related, to swap expertise, encourage beginners and enable neighbours to get to know each other a little better. We now have a Facebook page, (St Stephen's Garden Interest Group) which is there for anyone to post photos, ideas or gardening queries.

This year one of our meetings involved discussing growing vegetables in pots and we gave away seeds to get people started. This was followed up by a 'Harvest Lunch' on Saturday 22nd September where we shared food made from seasonal vegetables. The hot, dry summer, we all agreed, while delightful, has been a disaster for most of us trying to grow vegetables. However, there was plenty of delicious food and it was a very sociable event, despite the pouring rain. The highlight was an excellent cookery demonstration by Jennifer

Holland who worked so hard and entertainingly to give us some ideas for cooking with seasonal produce. Her efforts were rewarded by the instant disappearance of the dishes she made and the delight of the consumers.

Other events this year have included plant swaps, chatting about problem areas we all have in our gardens and discussions on the need to change the types of plants we grow in future in response to the changing climate.

A highlight was a 'Garden Crawl' inspired by Pauline's Open Gardens. Residents in the district have some very challenging gardens to deal with including steep slopes, difficult soil, orientation and protected trees affecting design. Being able to see and discuss how other people cope with these challenges and what thrives and what doesn't is a great opportunity to learn. On the Garden Crawl, we visited six local gardens which were all fascinating and very different and then went to the pub to discuss them. It was such a pleasant way to spend a hot summer evening that we are all inspired to repeat it next year.

Special thanks go to Pauline, Val and Alan in The Crescent, Louisa in Moorfield, Grainne and David at St Stephen's Green, Chris and Judith, both in St Stephen's Hill, for opening their gardens to us and for their hospitality. Special thanks also to Jenny Robson for her boundless enthusiasm and hard work organising events.

Plans for next year's events include more plant swaps, more seed sowing and more chatting and cake eating.

Susan Herivel

Neighbourhood Watch Report

We are fortunate to have regular updates from Kent Neighbourhood Watch and Kent Police about current criminal activity so we hope that forewarned is forearmed.

The main problems are phone and internet scams that are so hard to identify that many people become victims. The simple rule is never to click on an offer that seems too good to be true because it probably is, and never buy from someone who comes to your door. No reputable bank or company will EVER ask for your personal details either on the phone or on the net. [Look for the lock icon when paying online.]

We all like to think that we keep our houses secure but do you lock your back door when gardening and lock your car in the drive? Do you keep a chain on your door to check who is ringing the bell?

We live in a very safe city but need to take simple precautions to beat the criminals, seen or unseen.

Tony Whiting

Members' Report

First, thank heavens for email! Whatever we think about technology, at least this part of it has made it possible for well over two hundred St Stephen's households to stay in touch, share concerns, give away unwanted items, borrow wanted ones, hear about local events, help each other in crises and learn all about hedgehogs! All at the touch of a key. Brilliant.

Apart from the above, I have sent out many copies of the Trades List, warned about the myriad scams by the criminal fraternity, found lost pets and advertised coffee mornings and new clubs and societies. We have also distributed our large bin stickers to those on St. Stephen's Road to encourage motorists to switch off their engines and we have groups of litter pickers in most roads who keep our area clean.

On the website, we have news and events, photos, the Lend and Borrow area and Hat Heaven as well as an increasing amount of information about the history of our area. We owe Ian our thanks for setting up and maintaining it. Our Facebook page keeps users up to date with photos and information so, if you are a social media fan, do have a look at it.

Finally, may I remind you about our **Arts and Crafts Fair** on November 24th from 10.30 until 4pm when you can support our local artists and crafters with your admiration, browse for Christmas presents, see wonderful paintings, quilts and other crafts and have coffee and cake or a light, home-made lunch. Best of all, you can meet your neighbours. We can never have enough of that. Entrance is free.

Thank you all for making this possible.

Pauline Walters