



# NNA NEWS

SPRING 2011



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## Green light for high school revamp after NNA comments largely taken on board



REVISED PLANS for redeveloping South Hampstead High School, incorporating a number of NNA-initiated points and suggestions, were finally given council approval in January this year. The rebuilding is expected to begin during the school's summer holidays.

Previous plans having been turned down in 2008 on the grounds that the design was 'bulky, monolithic, out of keeping with others around it and not suitable for a conservation area', a revised scheme was presented to a 'Development Control Forum' held at the school last September. This was attended by representatives of Hopkins, the architects, Camden's planning department, the NNA, Redfrog, the Heath & Hampstead Society and other local residents, pupils, parents and staff.

The scheme was then 'tweaked' to take account of many of the comments from the meeting and shown to the NNA once more before submission to Camden's planning committee meeting in January.

### Symmetry and coherence

The plans shown at the Forum had already taken on board points raised two years earlier by using glazed sections to break up what was regarded as too much of a consistent mass on the Maresfield Gardens façade. A new main entrance

### ◀ Architects' image of proposed new glazed section of South Hampstead High

will be situated in the central glazed building, affording views through to the playground at the back. By recladding the existing Waterlow building to one side of the new central glazed building and replacing no 3 Maresfield on the other side with two matching buildings linked by a glazed stairway, the plans would achieve a symmetry and coherence mirroring many of the houses in the conservation area and yet produce "a school for the 21st century rather than a Victorian house", Andy Barnett, main Hopkins spokesman, told the meeting.

However, the recladding was specified to be in terracotta panelling about which the NNA expressed concerns, and the architects subsequently agreed to substitute high quality handmade bricks. In addition it was agreed to replace the proposed metal louvres with timber. They also addressed the issue of the western (Trinity Walk) end of the building and its relationship to the southerly view down Maresfield by introducing windows at the corner.

Independent architect Stephen Williams, who co-ordinated the NNA

response and acted as main liaison person with Hopkins, commented: "In my opinion it will be a fine building which will enhance Maresfield Gardens."

Nevertheless, he remains concerned about builders' vehicles in Maresfield during the construction phase, even though the intention is said to be to direct most of them via College Crescent. Also he and other residents are unhappy about the fact that Maresfield Gardens will continue to be used as a coach drop off and pick up point for the school.

### Accident waiting to happen

In a letter to Camden's head of planning, he wrote that coaches drive down the road at high speeds with little clearance for parked cars "and this is an accident waiting to happen."

Moreover, because of the direction of traffic, pupils are forced to get on and off coaches in the middle of the road or, at best, if the coach is able to find a place to stop opposite the school, they have to cross over the road behind it.

Also Williams expressed NNA concerns about heavy parking in the area if the school is used for events in the evenings, weekends and school holidays.

## NNA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

### Monday 4th April 2011, 12 Maresfield Gardens

7.00pm **RECEPTION** (wine, soft drinks and plenty of food)

7.45pm **GUEST SPEAKER: Simon Majaro, 'From Odessa to Jerusalem'**

Best known for his work with the Cavatina Chamber Music Trust, on this occasion Simon will be talking about the book he translated, based on his father's fateful journey after World War 1, and his own recent visit to his father's birthplace.

8.20pm **AGM** (overview of 2010, election of officials and time for questions or any other business that people wish to raise)

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**NNA NEWS**<sup>©</sup> welcomes news stories, announcements of events and ideas for articles. We will also accept a small amount of paid advertising. Please contact Susanne Lawrence, 47b Netherhall Gardens NW3 5RJ. Telephone: 020 7435 4140 [susannelawrence@gmail.com](mailto:susannelawrence@gmail.com)

# Noticeboard unveiled

Report by Patricia Whitehouse and Linda Williams

AFTER TWO years of hard work by NNA neighbourhood watch representative Hugh Isaacs, and despite the last-minute pulling out of local MP Glenda Jackson for a family emergency, a new noticeboard for the NNA was officially 'opened' in Trinity Walk on 20 September 2010.

Wielding a pair of scissors to cut the ribbon himself, Hugh gallantly delivered a hastily composed speech. As well as thanking the police and the Hampstead Forum for contributing half the cost of the board, he paid particular tribute to Fran Langley, Head Teacher of Holy Trinity Primary School, on whose wall the board is sited, and Sergeant Philip Hewetson, who leads the local Safer Neighbourhoods team (SNT), for their help in getting the board erected.

Hugh's wife, Doreen, got a mention for her patience, as the noticeboard had "nearly driven her mad" over the past

two years, and finally NNA chair Stuart Houghton stepped in to thank Hugh for his perseverance.

The noticeboard contains news and information about the NNA, the SNT and crime prevention in general and the activities of the school.

◀ **NNA Chair Stuart Houghton reflected in new noticeboard in Trinity Walk at last September's launch ceremony**



## CRIME AND NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

THE Police Safer Neighbourhoods team (SNT) for Frognal and Fitzjohns remains as active as ever, although its size has been reduced. Presently, it consists of Sergeant Phil Hewetson, known to most members, plus two police officers and a like number of PCSOs. It seems that the Met has stopped recruiting, so it is unlikely that the team will be enlarged.

However the sight of the team patrolling in our area is more evident than four years ago, when it was inaugurated. In the run up to Christmas, special constables patrolled with the team, and also plain clothed officers.

A man was recently arrested for about 30 burglaries in the NW3 and NW6 areas. The offences occurred over the last 10 to 12 months and were mainly in houses under renovation and building sites. Offences in our ward included

Oakhill Avenue; Heath Drive; Redington Road and Prince Albert Road. Also two men were arrested recently for robbery in Nutley Terrace. Most vehicle crime is on vans carrying building tools in the north of the ward. Arrests continue for stealing BMW parts off vehicles.

Many incidents occur around the Finchley Road area, including a recent stabbing in broad daylight.

Gates of domestic properties left open, as well as patio doors unsecured, have not helped the statistics.

However crime is low on the ward compared with other wards: 152 burglaries reported in the year to 1 October 2010, 31 robberies, 347 cases of theft and handling, as well as 80 acts of violence against the person, making 662 cases in all. Camden Town with Primrose Hill's total was 4536.

The police attribute our relatively low levels, in part, to active neighbourhood watches and resident associations. But there is still the difficulty of enlisting people prepared to help. And vigilance remains essential at all times.

At the last SNT meeting, held on 12th January, it was agreed that burglary and vehicle crime should continue to be police priorities locally. Also at the meeting I mentioned the obstruction of the junction of Nutley Terrace and Maresfield Gardens by parked coaches. The police agreed to take the necessary action.

Carmen Jones, Camden's senior community safety officer, agreed to insert local authority details on our new noticeboard.

**Hugh Isaacs**





# A prickly subject

*Stephen and Linda Williams open their garden to the public for charity each June,\* but intruders are another story Here Stephen offers some tips for warding off the unwelcome*

THE MODERN garden is a place for relaxation within the protection of a wall or fence. The word 'paradise' originates from the old Iranian language Avestan, in which *pairidaēza* was 'a wall enclosing a garden or orchard', *pairi* meaning 'around' and *daēza* 'wall'.

However, as was always the case, our gardens are vulnerable to intruders, who abuse them or use them to slip quietly and unnoticed into our homes.

When we created our garden seven years ago, we had considerable trouble with thieves coming into the front garden late in the evening and stealing our often quite rare and expensive newly planted shrubs. On top of the fact that the cost was not inconsiderable, the most disturbing thing was the many sleepless nights we had wondering what these people would get up to next. Removing plants to the back garden and concreting the front cannot be the answer, if you take pleasure in enhancing the street scene where you live.

To some of the most expensive plants we installed rootball anchors (systems of straps and cables for securing 'rootballed' and containerised trees and shrubs). Other plants were bought oversize so they would need several men and much huffing and puffing to dig up.

The problem went away with sensor lighting and security cameras, but there are many other less expensive options. Easy on the eye and lower down the technology chain, gravel is noisy to walk on and can be a good deterrent. We also make sure our shed is locked with tools inside and any ladders securely chained.

## Open to prosecution

Thorny (or 'defensive') shrubbery offers an attractive additional security solution and avoids unsightly barbed wire, embedded glass or carpet gripper along the tops of walls, which I would strongly advise against as thieves might be tempted to prosecute you if they were hurt. They cannot prosecute you for having thorny plants, which tend to be much more effective, often stubbornly clinging to the person trying to get away from their prickly embrace.

Thorny climbing plants on walls and fences are a perfect combination



▲ "No thorns go as deep as a rose's"  
– Swinburne (Dolores)

of practicality and beauty. A climbing rose arching across the top of a side gate is a very effective way to stop anyone nipping over to the other side. A neighbour's shed built against the fence offers an ideal route to your garden, but a rose planted in a large pot, trailing along the fence and over the shed roof is again an excellent deterrent.

Thieves like to sneak along close to the house so that they cannot be seen from a window. A carefully placed rose on the fence near the house to one side, and a pyracantha to the garden wall on the other side, will make that hard for them.

Pyracanthas are vicious shrubs with horrid spikes; they need to be carefully pruned each year so that they grow along the wall and do not become a nuisance. As well as clusters of white flowers in spring, they have lovely red ('Mohave', 'Watereri'), orange ('Orange Charmer', 'Orange Glow') or yellow ('Golden Dome', 'Soleil d'Or') berries in winter.

There are many climbers and rambler roses to choose from, but ramblers tend to be faster and larger growing. *Rosa kiftsgate* is marvellous for quickly growing through not only fences but also up large trees. Its masses of small white flowers in clusters are quite a sight. Be careful to avoid the varieties that have few or no thorns such as *Rosa banksii*.

As well as protecting boundaries and entries to the garden, bushes and hedges

with thorns or stiff, spiky leaves do not make good hiding places for criminals. A bed of rose bushes is a delightful sight unless you try to walk through it in the dead of night.

Another suitably prickly but garden-worthy plant is berberis. This is usually evergreen with attractive flowers and fruit and often puts on a great autumn show as the leaves turn brilliant shades of red, yellow, and orange. *Berberis x stenophylla* grows to 8ft (2.4m) tall and an impressive 15ft (5m) across, although it can be trimmed to a manageable size after flowering. This hybrid throws out long, arching stems, which are smothered in bright yellow flowers in spring and blue fruit in summer, and works really well as a hedging plant. *B x bristolensis* is a good evergreen, with some vicious spines not only on the stems but also on the leaves. Yellow flowers are produced in May, tiny blue fruits in summer, and the leaves often redden during the winter.

Holly, *Ilex aquifolium*, is well-known for its very spiny, evergreen leaves, but there are some more unusual plants such as the *Mahonia x media* 'Lionel Fortescue', which has beautiful yellow sprays of autumn/winter flowers.

## Vicious needles

My favourite plant in our garden is the *Aralia elata variegata*, otherwise known as the 'Devil's walking stick'. This is a wonderful small tree when mature, making a great feature with its variegated leaves and late blooming sprays of flowers. However, only the devil is able to grab it bare-handed without considerable pain, as it harbours vicious needle thorns along its long stems

Prickly plants can also save wildlife from animals like cats and foxes. The lower growing (4 to 6ft) ground cover *Mahonia aquifolium* (try variety 'Apollo') is a traditional gamekeepers' shrub to protect grouse and pheasants from four-legged predators. And, while its use is unlikely to turn Maresfield, Netherhall and Nutley into huntin', shootin', fishin' territory, it could prove a godsend for local birdlovers. **NNA**

*\*The garden at 16A Maresfield will be open on Sunday 12 June. Free entry for NNA members*

# Journalist and docudramatist

*A champion of refugees, notably women and children, national press foreign correspondent Victoria Brittain explains to Susanne Lawrence how it was 'the job' that radicalised her*

One of the recipients of the many letters Victoria Brittain sent off to newspapers and magazines in search of a job back in the early 1960s was the celebrated *Observer* columnist Katharine Whitehorn, a true pioneer when it came to writing about women's everyday domestic and personal lives. Whether this doyenne of feminist journalism took one look at the signature on the letter and made assumptions on the basis of Brittain's near namesake Vera (in fact no relation), we do not know. Nevertheless she made a great impression on her would-be protégée by replying to the effect that "You don't want to be my assistant; you want to be *me!*"

Actually, many would argue that Brittain has done 'better' than Whitehorn, in that she has earned much of her reputation and success in a predominantly 'man's world' – that of the foreign correspondent.

But, ironically, the legacy of Whitehorn and indeed Vera Brittain has influenced much of Victoria's career, for what has preoccupied her to a very great extent in her travels to war-torn parts of the world is the impact of conflict on women and children.

Google Victoria Brittain and you get a slightly distorted picture. Yes, you'll learn that she worked on *The Guardian* for 20 years, most recently as associate foreign editor. But also that she served on the National Executive Council of the Respect Coalition and has been a patron of Palestine Solidarity, implying a political activism one perhaps does not expect of national newspaper journalists.

But, as a journalist of similar vintage, I understand exactly how one gets radicalised by being steeped in one's subject. My own 'beat' was the industrial rather than the foreign one, so it was strikes not wars that I got immersed in. But I started out with no history or knowledge of the labour movement and very soon found myself not only an industrial relations specialist but also a trade union activist and, had Google existed in those days, would no doubt have been labelled a 'fellow traveller' of the Communist Party or International Socialists, whereas in

fact I'd never even been to a Labour Party meeting! So I can very easily see how even a boarding school-educated banker's daughter, which Brittain is, can have got so very caught up in the plight of refugees – especially in and from the Third World.

But, to go back to the beginning, having failed to get the job as Katharine Whitehorn's PA, Brittain's first break turned out to be on the *Investors Chronicle*, which hired her in 1966. A year later she joined the *Times Review of Industry* and met her (now ex, though they are still good friends) husband.

He was posted to Washington and, thanks to her friendship with *The Times'* features editor, which led to a freelance contract, she was able to accompany him and still work. The deal was to submit a 2,000-word article once a month on anything that caught her eye – and, given it was 1968 when both Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy were killed, there was no shortage of material.

She was also invited to fill in for the *New Statesman's* then Washington correspondent Andrew Kopkind while he was ill. After a couple of months, he announced he was moving on anyway and they gave Brittain his job.

While her reports were not exclusively on political topics, she was very much working in what was then seen as a man's world and admits she found people rather patronising, "but gentlemanly"!

## Vietnam war

Of course, one of the key preoccupations for the USA at this time was the Vietnam war, and Victoria was "desperate to go". By 1970 she managed to get a part-time position reporting for ITN, first in London, then Paris and, ultimately, in Vietnam for three to four weeks. She claims her shyness meant television reporting did not come naturally to her. However, she so loved being in Vietnam that she managed to convince *The Times*, which was by now withdrawing its correspondent there as the war was winding down, to take her on.

And she stayed in Vietnam for a couple of years. So what sort of life was that for a young British woman? Well, "there



▲ Victoria: loves Hampstead but campaigns on rather more global issues

were a lot of macho young men there," she says, "but I was very cautious." Actually born in Bombay, where her father was working at the time, she says she "loved being in Asia; it felt very familiar. And I made lots of Vietnamese women friends – orphans and refugees, the inevitable result of war."

She saw her job very much as going to look at things, to try to understand them and communicate what she found. Not that this was particularly easy. In a wonderful article on the role of the foreign correspondent which she wrote for the *New Statesman* nearly 10 years ago, she recalled that communication was by telex: "the only contact we had from London was the monthly cheque and an occasional envelope of clippings. The time difference meant that correspondents had to spend the whole day talking to soldiers, refugees, monks or politicians, and still sober up after dinner before filing their day's story."

Not surprisingly, the stress of the job was too much for many, but Brittain says being freelance meant she was not at the



beck and call of big bosses and therefore not having to live on adrenalin like some of her colleagues.

The Vietnam stint in fact was the start of more than two decades of foreign reporting. In 1974, still working for *The Times*, she was posted to Algiers at the start of the Western Saharan war for independence against Morocco and Mauritania; her relative fluency in French, helped by her spell in Vietnam, made this assignment less tough to cope with than one might expect.

However, she did find things easier when she moved to Nairobi in 1976, and spent five years covering east Africa for *The Guardian*; not just Kenya, but Ethiopia where Haili Selassie was overthrown, Uganda as Idi Amin's reign came to an end, the Seychelles during an attempted coup and Somalia where central government was collapsing.

## South Africa

In 1981 she moved back to London as editor of *The Guardian Third World Review*. The contributors were all nationals of the countries in question, so her acquaintance with many African and third world journalists, academics, intellectuals and leaders was invaluable. The job extended her own area of expertise to southern Africa's newly independent Angola and Mozambique and, further north, to the Sahel drought which affected some of the least covered countries of west and central Africa, such as Mali, Chad, Senegal and Niger.

She worked extensively in the front line states during what she describes as apartheid South Africa's 'undeclared war' in southern Africa and in 1988, when *Third World Review* closed down, she wrote the book 'Hidden Lives, Hidden Deaths: South Africa's Crippling of a Continent' and co-edited 'Children of Resistance', a collection of testimonies based on interviews with children who'd been imprisoned and tortured by South African police.

She also wrote numerous conference papers for the African National Congress (ANC) and gave seminars for SWAPO (the Namibian liberation movement) in the camps of Angola. And a decade later she wrote 'Death of Dignity', a study of Angola from the mid-1980s and in particular about its civil war.

From 1988 until 2002 she was variously assistant, then deputy and finally associate foreign editor of *The Guardian*. During this time and as a freelance since she has not only continued to write about what she

has seen but has done a considerable amount of public speaking and also translation. As well as translating papers and speeches for Thomas Sankara, President of Burkina Faso from 1983-87 and commonly referred to as 'Africa's Che Guevara', and for Tanzania's first President Julius Nyerere, she joined a Norwegian Foreign Ministry visit to the Sahel states as translator and facilitator.

Positively the worst place she has ever visited, she says, was the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), where most of its 50 million people live on 20 cents a day, HIV/Aids is epidemic and rape has been systematically used as a weapon of war. In 2002 she wrote about the "hidden war going on against women and girls", with abduction, rape, sexual slavery, torture and death "an everyday reality for every woman". And, she adds now, it is depressing that something so terrible and shocking just carries on.

She was in DRC capital Kinshasa on 9/11 ("a fitting place from which to watch the emergence of a horribly uncertain new world"), then working (part-time) for UNIFEM (the UN committee on gender issues) on a report on the impact of conflict on women.

This project also took her to East Timor, Cambodia, the Balkans, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Colombia, Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Her role was to write down the women's stories and see how the various conflicts affected them and their children. "It was a massive wake-up call," she says. Visiting refugee camps provides "a very sobering illustration" of each country's own very specific set of injustices and abuse, but in each case she met strong and inspirational women who were making a real difference.

An earlier UN study on which she was asked to advise – on children and war – was headed by one of her heroines, Graça Machel, former first lady of Mozambique and now married to Nelson Mandela. Other "great moral figures" she admires include Trevor Huddleston; former CND general secretary Bruce Kent, who lived in Maresfield Gardens in the mid-1970s; current CND general secretary Kate Hudson; and the late ANC President Oliver Tambo, whose wife Adelaide worked in a geriatric home in Hampstead while in exile here.

Brittain also got to know Gillian Slovo, daughter of South African anti-apartheid leaders Ruth First and Joe Slovo, and when Gillian was asked by Kilburn's Tricycle theatre to write one of their documentary dramas on the

subject of Guantanamo, she approached Victoria to do the interviews with the families of detainees. The resulting play, 'Guantanamo: Honour Bound to Defend Freedom', ran at the Tricycle in 2004, transferred to the West End, and then to the US (Off Broadway) and elsewhere.

It was while working on this that she met the father of Moazzam Begg, one of the British prisoners whose fate is described in the play, and after his release co-authored a book with Moazzam, 'Enemy Combatant: A British Muslim's Journey to Guantanamo and Back'. "A very nice educated guy with a brilliant memory, and not least about his Birmingham childhood," she says. "Everyone knew he was innocent."

She repeated the docudrama format more recently with 'Waiting', a play about women refugees in Britain whose husbands were in Guantanamo or detained under suspicion of terrorism but not charged. After their husbands' arrests, as Brittain wrote at the time, "these women were abruptly isolated, even within their own communities. Their children's futures became unpredictable; the children themselves were scarred by confusion, fear and – the older ones, sometimes – hatred."

## Saving the children

Victoria Brittain still writes for *The Guardian* and various other publications, gives talks and seminars in England and France, sits on the council of the Institute of Race Relations and supports Amnesty, CND, the British Institute of Human Rights, Widows Rights International and Save the Children. One of her abiding ambitions is to make a contribution to the lives of less privileged children.

In fact it was wanting to be near her own children (and now grandchildren) who live in the area that drew her to Hampstead after 40 years in Islington, and she loves it here. Her flat in Maresfield Gardens is in the house once lived in by former Prime Minister Herbert Asquith and she claims to sense "the echoes and ghosts of history" there. She also loves the trees, her neighbours and says she can set her clock by the schoolchildren at the end of the garden.

Actually, she's not too happy with the proposal to build yet another school at her end of Maresfield, but tends to focus her campaigning efforts more on global issues. Having said that, though, there is something very appropriate about having a sympathetic campaigner for refugees in these streets that have been home to so many refugees in the past.

**NNA**

# How low can you go?

*Last November saw the adoption of new policies to control the impact of basements both on local flooding and on damage to nearby properties. Tony Hillier reports on the incidence and implications of basement development in the neighbourhood and on progress to mitigate the potential damage*

CAMDEN recently published some borough-wide statistics on planning applications for basements. Between June 2005 and February 2010 there were 953, representing a monthly rate of six times that made between January 1984 and December 2002. Around 75 per cent of these have been for buildings for residential use. The main concentrations have been south west of Hampstead Heath, north of the High Street, south west of Belsize Park tube station and around Primrose Hill. Just over half have been approved.

The reasons for the rise in applications seem clear. Property prices have increased considerably in the past 30 years, coupled with the fact that the cost of moving has been inflated by increases in land transfer tax. Developing below ground has allowed living space and property value to be increased, while avoiding planning restrictions on policy issues such as 'overdevelopment', which are deemed to be aesthetic rather than structural outcomes to avoid, and therefore apply above ground only.

So why all the fuss? In a word: uncontrolled damage or harm to neighbours. There are four types of potential harm. One of these – noise, street damage and disruption – while the works are going on, is covered by well established national law and is virtually uncontrollable during the hours of 8am to 6pm, provided the developer uses best building practice.

A second, namely 'planning blight', is just bad luck. If your neighbours get typically time-limited permission to dig a big basement next door, they can then spend, say, two years selling their house with planning permission to someone who takes three years to build it. The value of your house will be adversely affected, but there are no remedies.

For the other two – local flooding and structural damage to neighbours' property – the law in theory offers preventative remedies. It is these that the Heath & Hampstead Society (H&HS) has concentrated on during the past two years, because they are open to being dealt with at the Camden level, rather than the national policy or law-making level. (It should be pointed out that



Photo: Nigel Shindler

## ▲ Disastrous development in Agar Grove, one of the H&HS case studies

planning applications are decided on by reference to local and national planning policies and guidance, which come within the framework of the planning system, as well as to national laws and statutes.) Even so it has proved a tough obstacle course.

Why did we (the H&HS) bother? Surely the law doesn't allow someone to damage your property or build a dangerous building and get away with it? It is true that, if you can prove that the damage was caused by the neighbour's excavation, you can sue. The problem is you might find your house is uninhabitable while you pursue your remedies, whether or not you have a Party Wall Agreement. You might also have difficulty recovering damages from your neighbour's offshore company or via their interest in the insurance contract taken out by the building contractor.

## Toothless regulations

What about the building regulations? These apply to how your neighbour builds the basement, but do not address the possible impact the excavation may have on your property. In any case, since the powers of the District Surveyor were removed in the 1980s, and given to the developer to choose a subcontractor to carry out, these regulations are toothless.

In very practical terms we bothered because many members of the Society were suffering serious damage from next door basements and neither Camden, nor the courts, nor the Planning Inspectorate were doing anything about it. A number

of us were convinced that this was due to a poor understanding of our particular geological and groundwater conditions.

Although these are not unique to Hampstead, the presence locally of four of London's ancient river catchments on the upper and water bearing divisions of London clay, in streets with rows of 18th and 19th century houses with old and quite weak foundations, called for a drastic new look at planning policy and possibly building design and practice.

At the beginning we faced a combination of weak Camden planning policy (confined to tree protection and light-well control), and controversial and poorly understood national policy. In addition virtually all experts in planning practice, architecture, surveying, building and planning law, who played a part in local applications, whether acting for Camden, the developers or the objectors, seemed to be under the impression that the risk of neighbour damage could not be dealt with at the planning stage. But we felt that the overriding principle should be to consider the impact development may have and, if serious damage can be predicted, to prevent it.

From this analysis we have now taken five steps. First we identified two experts, Michael de Freitas and Michael Eldred, with the necessary high-powered credentials to advise us in disputes with wealthy developers. The necessary expertise includes geology, hydrogeology, geotechnics and structural engineering, because all excavation causes ground movement and this is



what may cause damage. They advised us that for any basement excavation the resulting damage can be predicted and in the majority of cases any predicted damage can be mitigated – at a cost.

You start by calculating ground movement. The extent of this depends on a variety of factors. First are the soil and underground water conditions on both the site being developed and the site next door. These must be measured by means of professionally conducted and analysed techniques, such as recent on-site boreholes in sufficient numbers and appropriately placed.

### Size of cracks

Then there is the depth of the basement; its proximity to the neighbours; the design and methodology of the proposed containment measures and later construction and the state of the foundations and structure next door.

This calculation can be made and the impact it will have (eg the size of the cracks) can also be predicted and either accepted or refused. However, the advisers and contractors engaged on domestic development often lack the expertise to do a proper job and/or the developer is not prepared to pay for one.

Secondly, with the help of our legal adviser, David Altaras of Counsel, we identified a national planning policy, known as PPG 14 and dating from the 1990s, which does place within the planning system the need for a local planning authority to require a developer to go through a process such as our experts described above, so that they can be satisfied that planning approval should not be given until the impact of a proposal is felt to be acceptable.

Although Camden initially resisted the relevance of this policy, they were eventually persuaded that it does apply locally, even though its predecessor policy was historically drafted for the protection of disused mining areas.

Thirdly, we were lucky in timing, because Camden was in the process during 2008-10 of consulting on a whole new set of local planning policies known as the Local Development Framework (LDF). This enabled us to recommend the drafting of two new policies, DP23 to control the impact of basements on local flooding and DP 27 to control the impact on damage to neighbour structures. These were adopted in November 2010 and must be taken into account when basement applications are determined.

Fourthly, because of the professional controversy, both geotechnical and legal,

surrounding this whole area, Camden invited the firm Arup, one of the few with world class experts in all the necessary disciplines, to write a guide note. This was to provide professional evidence that local conditions justify the introduction of the new LDF policies and to give advice in this very technical area on how these policies should be interpreted and applied.

With significant input from the Society and our experts, the result is a first class document obtainable under Camden's LDF website, which introduces a five-step basement impact assessment procedure. This offers a logical sequence of questions leading to a logical sequence of investigations which the developer must present to Camden, whether the basement needs three metres depth or 10. It too was published in November 2010, and will form part of new supplementary planning guidance, which Camden will publish on 6 April 2011.

### Terrible damage

Finally, we have given Camden notice formally requesting that they introduce a new statute to apply locally, preventing any basement application, however small, from being treated as permitted development. We engaged Michael Eldred to write three case histories (on Heath Passage NW3, South Hill Park NW3 and Agar Grove N1) as examples of basement developments which were not properly investigated at the planning stage and caused terrible damage to neighbours. In one case both properties were completely destroyed. These are presented as evidence to support the case for insisting that all basements must be reviewed under the new process.

Will this settle our problems locally? We have progressed nearly as far as possible, and can claim to be somewhat ahead of the rest of the country. Camden will consult on eliminating the permitted development route for some small basements, a case we should strongly support. After 6 April we have to be vigilant in insisting the council applies its new policies and guidance. As part of this, we should lobby through our councillors for them and Camden officers to receive some introductory technical training to understand the issues.

The contact details of the experts to advise on these technical aspects of basement applications, both for diggers and objectors, are published in the next issue of the H&HS newsletter. **NNA**

*Tony Hillier is chairman of the Heath & Hampstead Society*

## Let there be light!

FOR MOST of the year, people get up well after sunrise but are then denied opportunities in the evening for daylight-dependent activities by the onset of darkness. While working at the Policy Studies Institute in the late 1980s NNA member Mayer Hillman undertook several detailed studies which established that the advantages of putting clocks forward by an hour, both in summer and in winter, would far outweigh the disadvantages — the loss of an hour of daylight on winter mornings only. The principal benefit would be improved health and quality of life resulting from the extra hour of evening daylight.

Since the publication of Mayer's reports, there have been six unsuccessful Private Members Bills to bring about the change. Public opinion polls have consistently shown that the great majority of the population would welcome it, but the Government still opposes it on the grounds that "people right across the country must first be convinced that this is a good thing".

Last year, however, a recently-elected Conservative MP, Rebecca Harris, took up the cause. At the end of a highly spirited 4½ hour debate in the House of Commons at the Second Reading of her Bill, the motion to proceed to the Committee Stage was carried by 92 votes to 10! Watch this space! And, for further information, see [www.mayerhillman.com](http://www.mayerhillman.com)

## Fancy footwork?

*Patricia Whitehouse reports*

IF LIKE ME you have been a patient of the Daleham Gardens Podiatry Clinic, you will probably have received a letter last year about its closure.

With the letter came a page of alternative clinics but none of them seemed to me particularly easy to travel to so I replied explaining this. I was advised to try the Kentish Town Centre but, if that was too difficult, to apply for NHS transport to the clinic of my choice or to apply to receive care in my home.

I have not yet tried the Kentish Town journey but thought this advice might be useful to my neighbours. So, if you have any difficulties getting your podiatry needs attended to, contact:

Clair Powell (Lead Clinician) or Brian Benson, (Interim Head of Contracts), Camden PCT Provider Services, Bedford House, 3rd Floor, 125-33, Camden High Street, NW1 7JR. Or email Clair at: [clair.powell@camdenpct.nhs.uk](mailto:clair.powell@camdenpct.nhs.uk)

## WHAT'S BEEN ON AND WHAT'S COMING

**Anthony Coles reports:**

LAST SUMMER a group of neighbours from the Netherhall, Fitzjohns and Belsize residents' associations put on an amateur concert, 'A musical within a musical' at the Winchester Road Project (24 and 31 July) to raise funds for the local Marie Curie Hospice.

The autumn season kicked off with the Development Control Forum (6 Sept) about the proposals to rebuild South Hampstead High School. Many members attended this, as they did the ever-popular annual summer party at the Anna Freud Centre (19 Sept). On 20 Sept members enjoyed light refreshments at the formal opening of the new NNA noticeboard on Trinity Walk, outside Holy Trinity primary school (see report, page 2). The Froggnal and Fitzjohns Safer Neighbourhoods meeting (29 Sept) was an opportunity to get to know the local police team and Camden crime squad.

Netherhall House, together with Pamela and Simon Majaro, both appointed MBEs in the New Year Honours List for services to the Cavatina Trust, arranged a recital for strings by the Lallisto Quartet (13 Nov) and NNA members were also invited to a cello and piano recital at the House by Oscar Alabau and Ricard Rovirosa (5 Mar).

Patricia Orwell organised a jewellery sale (12-14 Nov) in aid of Macmillan Cancer Support at her home in Netherhall Gardens.



Sculptor Tom Merrifield (left, see 'NNA News', December 2009) held his annual winter exhibition (5 and 12 Dec) at his studio in Fitzjohn's Avenue, and also made a long-term loan of his statue

of prima ballerina Anna Pavlova to the London Jewish Cultural Centre based at Ivy House, her former home in North End Road next to Golders Hill Park.

NNA members were invited to several events courtesy of friends in other local associations. These included the Belsize Residents Association (BRA) members' walk (26 Sept) down roads named after the four Georgian lord chancellors Lyndhurst, Thurlow, Eldon and Wedderburn (the latter was the Earl of Rosslyn) and the Transition Hampstead talks on bees (5 Oct) and setting up a carbon-neutral farm (24 Nov).

December brought much carol singing: by St Anthony's School at the St Thomas More church, Maresfield Gardens (2 Dec), in Danish at the Danish YWCA in Maresfield (5 Dec), by Holy Trinity Church, Finchley Road, at the tube station (9 Dec) and by the BRA in Belsize Square (18 Dec).

The Freud Museum family art drop-in sessions on (19 and 22 Dec) proved

great fun for old and young alike, as did the Cavatina Concerts at Swiss Cottage Library on 3 Oct, 7 Nov and 12 Dec.

Former Freud Museum director Michael Molnar gave a talk (13 Jan) on Freud's visit to the National Portrait Gallery to tie in with the museum's exhibition *Objects in Mind*. Camden Council organised a series of free guided walks (8, 15, 29 Jan, 5 and 26 Feb) around the old celebrity-strewn Hampstead Parish churchyard.

Lastly thank you to all who kindly say you appreciate the emails I send out with local news and events – and also to those who have been able to help other members with finding wheelchairs, parking places, cleaners, assistance during the snow, etc. And in this last regard a thank you to Farokh Khoroshi (Fitzjohns Residents Association) for making Camden Council-supplied snow shovels available to our members.

### Forthcoming events

- Monday 4 April:** 7pm. NNA reception and AGM. Guest speaker Simon Majaro. 12 Maresfield Gardens
- Saturday 7 May:** 8pm. Piano recital in Netherhall House, by Ben Schoeman. Suggested donation £10
- Sunday 12 June:** 2-6pm. 16A Maresfield Gardens, Linda and Stephen Williams' Open Garden in aid of the National Garden Scheme – various charities. Free admission to NNA members

## NNA MEMBERSHIP 2011

IF YOU've not yet renewed your NNA membership, or are new to the area, please join now. It is still only £8 a household or £5 for an individual. The association works to maintain and/or improve the character of the environment, runs social events and provides a 'good neighbours' service. So please fill in this form and return it with your payment to the address below.

And if you have a new neighbour, or there are other flats in your building, please spread the word and encourage them to join or notify Membership Secretary Marie France O'Connor: [marie.france@btinternet.com](mailto:marie.france@btinternet.com) tel 7794 0512

Title: ..... Forename: ..... Surname: .....

Title: ..... Forename: ..... Surname: .....

Address: .....

Tel no: ..... Mobile: ..... Email: .....

Do you have any skills or interests that could help us?.....

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