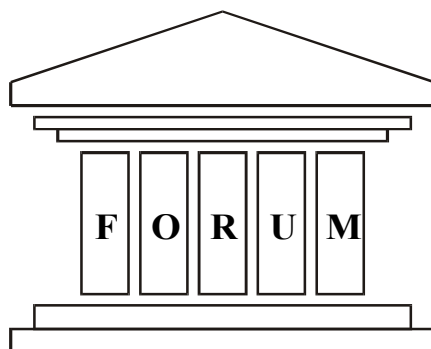


MERTON PARK WARD RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION



Autumn 2009

Issue No 40

===== 20TH ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL =====

In the words of the Beatles, "It was twenty years ago today..."

In our case that's 20 years since Merton Park Independent Residents was founded. Although it was formed to combat a single major threat – a road scheme that would have cut a swathe through the ward – the Independent Residents have gone on to address a succession of issues, large and small.

To celebrate our milestone we have invited Bridget Smith, our first councillor, to write about what happened in 1989 and asked Hubert Child, our Chairman, to pick out a few highlights since then. Then Peter Southgate gives us a "twitter-style" perspective on the work of Independent Residents councillors today.

**Public meeting on the Nelson Hospital
Thursday 19 November at 7pm
Wimbledon College of Art, Merton Hall Road**

NELSON HOSPITAL – *SOME PROGRESS, SOME QUESTIONS*

The NHS London Capital Investment Committee has approved plans for projects in South West London which include the development of a Local Care Centre on the Nelson Hospital site. Under the plans, the centre would provide a range of services including two GP practices, diagnostic equipment, rooms for visiting consultants and various clinics.

The project managers have now reached a stage at which they wish to present their ideas to a wider public and listen to comments before final decisions are made. Issues open for discussion are:

- the overall use of the Nelson site - not all of it will be available for the Centre. Part of the site may be sold. This would limit the space available for any future expansion of the GP practices to provide for increased patient numbers and a wider range of services
- the range of services to be provided directly and in cooperation with other social and voluntary organisations
- traffic, parking and other environmental issues

Take the opportunity to join in the discussion – come to the meeting on 19 November (details above).

**Bob Welchman, Chair
Nelson Hospital Reference Group**

Merton Park Ward Residents Association (MPWRA) sponsors your Independent councillors as Merton Park Ward Independent Residents (MPWIR) on Merton Council

Karin Forbes (karin.forbes@merton.gov.uk) – 58 Mostyn Road SW19 3LN – 8540 3314
Peter Southgate (peter.southgate@merton.gov.uk) – 22 Dorset Road SW19 3HA – 8542 2053
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===== 20TH ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL =====

Twenty years ago, in October 1989, I was elected as Merton Park's first Independent Resident local councillor.

A by-election occurred unexpectedly when one of the three Merton Park councillors had to stand down for personal reasons. Suddenly there was an opportunity to try to get someone from Merton Park on to the council to speak up for the people who opposed the building of the so-called Merton Relief Road. The council was planning to continue Merantun Way westwards across the playing field and across a corner of the Merton Park Conservation Area, demolishing several Victorian houses of character and speeding the traffic on its way to the A3. Many people thought this was a very bad idea.

Now there was to be a by-election. But who was willing to be the candidate? When our neighbour looked over the fence and said, "What about you, Bridget?" my first reaction was, "Good heavens, no!" But then I thought, "Someone must do it, so why not me?"

There were lots of willing supporters. We had two or three weeks to learn the ropes: deadlines for nominating a candidate; campaign meetings; designing leaflets and delivering them to all the households in the ward; knocking on doors to explain the advantages of having an Independent councillor. One of the most encouraging responses I got on the doorstep was, "How nice to have an Independent like in the old days before the political parties became so involved on the local scene."

Then came election day and enough people in Merton Park thought what we were doing was a good idea. I was elected.

I can't remember when the expression "a steep learning curve" became current. Maybe it was more recently than 1989, but that is what I was on, especially so because my election caused the council to be hung (Conservatives 28, Labour 25, Longthornton Independents 3, and me 1). I sat on all the main committees: Policy and Resources; Social Services; Education and Development and, of course, took an interest in all sorts of issues. Although the council was hung, the plan for the Relief Road could not be halted at once because the Longthornton Independents were voting with the Conservatives on this. I, of course, joined with the opposition on this, and raised questions and argued against the scheme at every opportunity.

It was a great support to me at that time, when I was feeling somewhat out of my depth, to have the backing first of the election team and then of the Merton Park Ward Residents Association. When it came to the local elections in May 1990 Dese Child and Neville Beddoe joined me as Independent Residents candidates and the three of us were elected. After those elections the Labour group formed the administration and put a stop to the Relief Road project.

Bridget Smith

WHAT HAPPENED NEXT?

Back in 1990, after the excitement surrounding our defeat of the Merton Relief Road, one resident said to me that we were a one issue party and would not last beyond the next election. Well, here we are, still going strong after 20 years.

Since then your councillors and the MPWRA have taken on other challenges. Perhaps the most memorable were their successful opposition to building on the Church Lane Playing Field and, during the schools reorganisation programme, plans to close our excellent and much-loved Merton Park Primary School.

But this has been far more than a story of simple opposition. Past editions of FORUM show that, right from the start, your councillors have been finding positive solutions to residents' concerns such as:

- road safety and rat running
- commuter parking

- plans to run a regular car boot sale in Morden
- a proposal to set up a bail hostel in Daybrook Road

And while these issues may have caught the headlines, our councillors and MPWRA members have also been busy representing residents wherever plans and policies have been discussed. They have ensured that all our views could be heard, not just inside the Council but also on boards and committees such as:

- the renovation of Morden Town Centre
- redevelopment of the Nelson Hospital site
- improving educational standards
- restoration of Sixth Forms in our schools

Your councillors and the MPWRA are still here to respond to local residents' concerns, whether for an individual, a street or the whole area.

Hubert Child, Chairman

Could you help to deliver FORUM twice a year in the Morden Area or Kingston Road?

Please contact Margaret Garrett on 020 8542 1378 or email mpwra@mertonpark.org.uk

===== 20TH ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL =====

So what do our councillors get up to? Here's a week in the life of Peter Southgate...

Wednesday: 93 bus to Aragon Primary School for first meeting of this year's Merton Schools Council with children from nine primary schools. Mayor in characteristically bravura form. Children from Joseph Hood Primary elected Chairman and Secretary. They look very pleased, and run the rest of the meeting. Afterwards I cadge lift in mayoral limo to meeting with officials of AFC Wimbledon seeking cross-party support for a return to the borough, building a new stadium on industrial land (area regeneration known as the "Emirates effect"). AFC do a lot of work with the community... with a base in Merton they could do more.

Thursday: Wife Pauline and I join Diwali lunch celebration with the Asian Elderly in Merton Hall. This means curry (good!). With their multi-faith nature they celebrate Eid, Diwali and Christmas. Find I am being discreetly lobbied to ensure their grant funding is not cut. Later, Governor training on the new Ofsted regime at Merton Park Primary School. Then meet someone keen to be a MPWRA-sponsored governor. Clearly he's very committed and would be ideal, so v pleased to recommend him.

Friday: Back from taking grandson to Dundonald Park...Call from a council-sponsored tenant. Family facing eviction from privately owned flat. Son has severe learning difficulties. I tried months ago to secure them more suitable accommodation but council officer said case wasn't "urgent" enough. Well, now it is. I contact his social worker to help me build a case. Let's hope that officer is still with LBM.

Monday: To annual conference of the Independent Group in London - an oxymoron title? - most of the 2,250 independent councillors in England and Wales are not party political. Useful day - Martin Bell gives a rousing speech and I note the three main political parties control 92% of all council seats, yet less than 2% of the voters are members of these parties.

Tuesday: Scrutiny meeting with the NHS and PCT (useful news about the Nelson)..... sit down to plan for all the things I failed to do last week!

Cllr Peter Southgate

RUTLISH SCHOOL GCSE RESULTS

As vice-chair of governors at Rutlish School I am very pleased to report that the school has achieved its best ever GCSE results. On the key government measure of 5 or more A*-C including English and maths they scored 50% (up from 43% last year and 34% in 2007). With the exception of the faith schools, Rutlish is the best performing borough school.

Cllr Karin Forbes

CPZ ZONE MP1 – A SECOND CHANCE TO JOIN

Many Stratton Road residents have found it very difficult to park safely in their road since the extension of the CPZ to include the southern section of Poplar Road and Erridge Road. Commuters and business people who used to park in these road sections regularly have moved to neighbouring roads, including Stratton Road. In addition, Stratton Road residents can no longer park in Erridge Road without their road being part of the CPZ. Meanwhile the residents of Circle Gardens have also voted in favour of the extension of the CPZ to include their road; this will be implemented in the near future and so there may well be further increase in displacement parking in neighbouring roads.

Usually the Cabinet Member for Street Management and the Council will not entertain re-opening a consultation until three years has passed. However, as a result of a petition and lobbying from the majority of residents in

Stratton Road, supported by lobbying from your councillors, the Cabinet Member has, very unusually, agreed to re-consult on the inclusion of Stratton Road in the MP1 Controlled Parking Zone. This opportunity to re-consider is a significant achievement.

Whilst re-consulting **Stratton Road** residents, the Council feels that it should again offer **Kenley Road** and **Keswick Avenue** the opportunity for further consultation, as they are aware that there may well be an increase in consequential parking in these two roads. **Controlled Parking always stimulates lively debate amongst residents and it is important that as many as possible send their responses to the Council so that the extent of opinion is gauged accurately.**

Cllr Krysia Williams

CLIMATE CHANGE – how can you make a difference?

The UN Climate Conference 2009 opens in Copenhagen on 7 December. Representatives from more than 180 countries will meet for talks to seek a new international agreement to tackle climate change. What can we do on a local level to reduce our use of fossil fuels? I'm proposing to set up local Carbon Reduction Action Groups and will be talking about them at the MPWRA meeting on 1 December. To find out more, come to the meeting, visit the MPWRA website, www.mertonpark.org.uk or contact me on 020 8540 8419, email harold@forbessrp.co.uk.

Harold Forbes

WIMBLEDON CHASE - UPDATE

"Let's not just talk about trees, let's get them planted." So said John Ward, local architect, at the Wimbledon Chase residents' meeting at Wimbledon College of Art on 18 March 2009. Sadly, John died of a heart attack just two weeks later, but his words struck a chord with the many people who attended this important meeting to discuss the regeneration of Wimbledon Chase.

The overwhelming opinion was that the Chase would benefit from the planting of several large shade trees on both sides of the Kingston Road and the repainting of the dilapidated railway bridge. Other improvements were discussed such as better street lighting, public seating, bollards, street furniture and paving.

To their enormous credit, the council listened to what the residents wanted and responded swiftly and positively. They offered to supply and plant 24 London plane trees on either side of the Kingston Road between Wimbledon Chase railway station and Cannon Hill Lane. They also drew up detailed plans for the area with generously funded improvements to the "public realm". The work is scheduled to start on 2 November.

Raj Patel, the Wimbledon Chase based pharmacist, suggested a petition be raised to ask Network Rail to repaint the bridge. In early August the petition was presented at Chase station to Network Rail by Stephen Hammond MP and the company has agreed to repaint the bridge green in the autumn.

All in all, the project has been an excellent example of cross party co-operation by the local MP and councillors from all the local Wards bordering onto The Chase. The whole enterprise was instigated by Wimbledon Civic Forum, who are dedicated to improving life for Wimbledon residents.
Ian Smith

Editor's note: Ian's modesty prevents him from mentioning his key role in securing the regeneration of Wimbledon Chase. He has campaigned tirelessly to galvanise traders and residents alike into demanding action from the council and Network Rail. We wish him every success with his continuing campaign to improve Wimbledon town centre in time for the 2012 Olympics. Meanwhile, if your area of Merton Park Ward could benefit from the type of streetscene improvements described here, get in touch with your councillors.

Have you visited our website?

www.mertonpark.org.uk It's updated regularly with news of local events, instant access to important information plus extra on the articles in FORUM.

John Sargeant

Support us - join the MPWRA

There's a form enclosed or you can download one from the website.

Enquiries to membership@mertonpark.org.uk or phone 020 8542 2053

MPWRA MEETINGS - ALL WELCOME

Meetings are at **8pm** at **MERTON PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL**
Entrance from Erridge Road Playground Gate

Each meeting includes time for questions to your Ward Councillors

| | |
|------------|--|
| 1 December | Councillors' Question Time.....and mince pies, PLUS 'Climate Change – how can you make a difference?' Harold Forbes |
| 5 January | NO MEETING |
| 2 February | 'Merton Council – making it leaner and fitter' Chris Pope, Director of Transformation |
| 2 March | 'Scams, Doorstep Crime and Counterfeit Goods' Jan Davey, Trading Standards |
| 6 April | 'Morden Champion' Paul McGarry, Physical Regeneration Manager |

MPWRA Officers

| | | |
|----------------|-----------------|---------------|
| Chairman: | Hubert Child | 020 8540 3087 |
| Vice Chairman: | Graham Clark | 020 8542 9101 |
| Secretary: | Christine Stutt | 020 8543 6843 |
| Treasurer: | Fred Rayner | |

www.mertonpark.org.uk

MPWRA Committee

| | | |
|------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Desé Child | John Nelson-Jones | David Slocombe |
| Philippa Foskett | Jolanta Nowak | Bridget Smith |
| Ian Garbett | John Sargeant | Pauline Southgate |
| Edward Foley | Judy Sargeant | Paul Wood |