



WNA News



The Newsletter of the Westbourne Neighbourhood Association

Your 81-Annual Newsletter

Issue No. 65 - Winter 2008/09

Crisis over - your new WNA

In Spring 2008 the future of the Westbourne Neighbourhood Association (WNA) was in doubt. We had lost, or were about to lose, many of our committee members, some of whom had served for many years. You may remember the last WNA Newsletter entitled "WNA in Crisis". This was a cry for help to the local community to try and attract new committee members to enable the WNA to continue with their good work and not to have to close after 35 years in existence.

Well, the cry worked and we now have a new committee combining both existing members and new recruits, all from our local community.

It has taken us a few months to find our feet and get our first "new look" newsletter together but we are there now and looking forward to continuing the good work of the WNA.

What is the WNA?

For those of you who are not familiar with the WNA, we are a neighbourhood association that has been running since 1973. We are officially recognised by Westminster City Council which keeps us informed of local issues which might be of interest to our residents. We are a community voice liaising with local councillors and government, the police, TFL, planners and developers, etc., on behalf of the community on issues which affect us all. We are also a focal point for our small

community and organise a few social events every year to bring everyone together and enable people to meet with old and new neighbours.

A map of the area that is covered by the WNA is printed on the reverse of the letter accompanying this newsletter.

Past Successes

The WNA has been involved with many community issues during its 35-year history and has put forward residents views on many subjects. To name only a few and give you some idea of our work, these include: the prevention of the building of an arterial route through Moorhouse Road; the saving of the little park on Talbot Road; road safety issues at the junction of Chepstow Road with Westbourne Grove; and the ongoing bus noise problem on Chepstow Road.

Future Projects

And so to the future.... We on the committee want to give you some idea of what our priorities are for the near future. In doing so, we do not wish to promise too much. The achievements of a small amenity group are by definition going to be

limited. Nonetheless, this is where we think our energies should be directed.

There are, of course, ongoing and regular matters, such as planning applications and licensing. You will read something on each of these elsewhere in this Newsletter.

Beyond that, we want to do the following:

- ✦ reinstate street representatives, so that there is a good flow of information in both directions between the WNA committee and the residents in our area.
- ✦ improve our membership from the current level of 140 families to a bigger proportion of those living in our catchment area.
- ✦ lobby in regard to bus problems, across our patch but also in particular areas, such as Chepstow Road, where noise and vibration have been a particular problem. This is a chronic issue which from time to time becomes acute for residents.
- ✦ press for traffic-calming measures where needed, to improve safety in our streets. Ledbury Road seems to be a particular concern at the moment.
- ✦ address street-cleaning issues, especially with regard to dog fouling.
- ✦ continue working with other amenity groups on matters which affect us all, such as bus routes, clean air, noise pollution, cleaning and waste, and Carnival.

Above all, we want to focus on what is relevant to you and your families. Please let us know what is important to you.

The New Committee

Andrew Jordan (Chairman)

Tim Davis (Treasurer)

Jessica Arah (Secretary)

Tricia Wrigglesworth (Membership Secretary)

Deborah Bartlett

Derrick Knight

Richard Perkins

Sue Quentrec

Rosalind Topping

Tony Williams

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Dear Neighbour

I am very pleased to welcome you to the winter edition of our relaunched WNA Newsletter. Our apologies for not getting this out before now.

There has been something of a hiatus since you received the summer newsletters. In those newsletters, our predecessors on the committee indicated that they had served for a number of years and that they, understandably, felt it was time to stand down. They asked for everyone's support in making sure that the WNA, now moving into its 36th year, was able to continue.

I am pleased to say that a number of people volunteered to be on the committee. Some of us are very knowledgeable about planning, licensing, transport and architecture, and others, like me, are more ignorant but still willing to have a go. As a result we have a new committee, a list of whose members is set out elsewhere in this newsletter. Many of us are learning a lot as we go, and I hope we can do as well as our predecessors in acting as a forum for the enhancement and protection of the lovely area we all live in. In particular, if I can do half as well as my predecessor, Pat Burn, I shall be delighted.

Please let us know what you think of the relaunched Newsletter and the articles within. This edition has been sent not just to members, but also to the wider community. Subsequent issues will be for members only. So, if you are not a member, please join up now!

Our role for the next year or so consists of a watching brief on matters such as planning, licensing, traffic, etc., along with the important matter of clarifying our policy on a number of matters. This is where we need your help. We cannot decide policy without knowing what you think. Please feel free to email us with your views on any community issues you feel strongly about.

We also wish to assess your appetite for receiving material from us,

including this Newsletter, electronically. Of course we shall continue to communicate in writing on paper with people who prefer that.

Apologies for the lack of festive drinks this year. We will have a small get together after the AGM in April and will do something in the Spring/Summer instead. Details of the AGM appear on the back-page of this newsletter. I do hope you will come.

In the meantime, I wish you and your families a very happy 2009.



Andrew Jordan
Chairman

WESTMINSTER NEWS

As a registered neighbourhood association with Westminster Council, the WNA is kept updated on various issues which may affect our immediate and surrounding areas. Here are just a few of the items that we thought you might find of interest.

Westminster's New Leader

Councillor Colin Barrow was elected the new leader of Westminster in June 2008, following his predecessor, Sir Simon Milton's, appointment as Boris Johnson's senior planning adviser.

Setting out his vision for Westminster, Cllr Barrow, 56, has pledged to revamp central London to ensure it is ready for the 2012 Olympics when the eyes of the world will be on the capital. He is also determined to improve the state of the city's streets and public spaces and singled out Marble Arch as a "mess" that needed to be restored.

"I want the rest of the world to be amazed at the quality of design, cleanliness and safety of our streets,

certainly in 2012, and preferably by this time next year," he said.

"As you walk around the City you see little bits of debris that are left behind as people, often from the public sector, move on to the next thing. Traffic cones, bits of barriers, waste put out at the wrong time and place want it all gone."

"I have a personal target of restoring Marble Arch from the mess that it is currently in, to become an area of which we can be proud and the visitors to our City can admire."

In a wide-ranging speech, Cllr Barrow, who is also chairman of the National Autistic Society, said he wanted Westminster to be the standard by which others judge public services.

"Westminster is not simply another council. It aspires, rightly, to be the best of the best, to be a global leader in city management," he said.

"Good government is not expensive government. The past decade has shown beyond doubt that Westminster Council is a better guardian of public money than national government. We really do deliver more for less."

Announcing other key initiatives, Cllr Barrow said that Westminster would become carbon neutral in the next five years and housing provision in the city would be transformed, with an extensive rebuilding programme.

Paying tribute to Sir Simon Milton who led Westminster for eight years, Cllr Barrow added: "Simon is widely regarded as the finest civic leader of his generation, and we have all been very fortunate to be part of his team."

Cllr Barrow was elected to Westminster in 2002. A leading city businessman, he founded and ran the investment arm of hedge fund firm Man Group up to and through its flotation in 1994.

He lives in Westminster with his partner Ana and has two young sons, Simon and James. His interests include bridge, skiing, scuba diving and oriental art.

Photo courtesy of Westminster Council

Westminster's City Recovery Programme

As the country faces an economic slowdown, Westminster City Council is determined to ensure the continued prosperity and vitality of its businesses and communities. To this end, it has announced a new package of initiatives to help with the cost of living for residents and the livelihood of local businesses.

Councillor Colin Barrow delivered a speech at a full council meeting on 29th October 2008 outlining Westminster's "City Recovery Programme". This includes 15 measures covering the offer of training and financial advice to individuals and businesses; a freeze on council tax for 2009-2010, loans for those struggling with mortgages and an additional car-free day to boost revenue for the West End.

Further details of the City Recovery Programme, including a copy of the speech made by Councillor Barrow, can be found at: www.westminster.gov.uk/onecity.

Westminster's "Noise Strategy" Initiative

Westminster, the city in which we live, is noisy! The council's 24-hour Noise Team now receives over 18,000 reports of noise problems a year. Last year the Leader of Westminster City Council made a commitment to develop the first noise strategy for Westminster to reduce noise problems and the associated issue of vibration which, like noise, can be disturbing, as the residents of Chepstow Road know only too well.

In the simplest terms, noise is defined as "unwanted sound" and the Westminster Noise Survey undertaken earlier this year confirmed that Westminster is significantly noisier than other parts of London, exceeding the guideline levels set by the World Health Organisation by a large margin. In addition a noise attitude survey was recently undertaken among Westminster residents – perhaps you were among them – and this revealed that the top sources of noise problems were (i) road traffic noise, (ii) noise from

construction, (iii) noise from road works and (iv) noise from neighbours.

The Council is now asking for views from individuals and organisations such as the WNA as to which noise issues and problems the Westminster Noise Strategy should focus on and how to address noise problems in Westminster. Thereafter it will be publishing a Draft Noise Strategy for comment before it is finalised and formally approved for implementation in 2009.

Sue Quentrec/Tim Davis

PLANNING

Planning and the Paving Stone: Do we want to be another Chelsea?

Lots of Chelsea streets are quite grand but rather sterile with paved-over front gardens and car standings with parked 4x4s. The Westbourne Neighbourhood has a very different character, with equally interesting architecture but lots of charming front gardens. But are those who come to enjoy the amenities of the area destroying the very qualities they came to enjoy?

Our association is largely there to preserve and enhance amenity in our area. Amenity has many components, one of the foremost of which is the visual quality of the area. We take the view that the exteriors of houses help compose the interior of our streets. The beauty of our area gives immeasurable pleasure to inhabitants and visitors alike as well as contributing to the financial value of our properties. Our area has an exceptional distinct visual character: beautiful early Victorian buildings, tree-lined streets with lovingly tended front gardens and window boxes which, together with the peace and quiet, close proximity to the amenities around the corner and good transport links, make it the best place to live near central London.

We are part of a conservation area which implies that we are subject, in theory, to stringent controls,

especially as regards the fronts of our properties, because our houses are deemed to be of architectural, visual and historic importance. In former times the restrictive covenant ensured that the visual integrity of an area was maintained but as our area went into social decline in the period up to the 1970s it was agreed that conservation area status was appropriate to preserve what was left. Of course planning policies change and even at their best are blunt tools to ensure the integral quality of our environment. One most dreadful mistake in our area was allowing the utterly inappropriate outward appearance of the Westbourne block of flats on the corner of Westbourne Grove and Chepstow Rd. A more recent example is the encroachment of paved forecourts replacing tended gardens.

Whilst the Westbourne Neighbourhood Association does not get involved in disputes between neighbours, it does take a position where it feels that something is in the overwhelming interest of the people in the area as a whole. At the moment it is seeking to oppose the paving-over of front gardens for whatever reason, be it the creation of car-standing spaces or the result of additional storeys being added to houses by excavating underground.

If either of these two types of developments is allowed to occur, then every effort must be made to make absolutely sure that mature planted fronts are reinstated and that the resultant front garden is ideally better than what was destroyed or at least as pleasant.

It is the policy of Westminster City Council to resist turning front gardens into car-standing spaces but they have not succeeded in stopping their spread. In part this is due to the fact that access to the highway is dealt with under transport and actual conversion of the standing space is dealt with under planning. There has also been a softening of attitudes at national level and perhaps a few court cases going in favour of allowing car standings. So not only are more car-standing spaces being built, but front gardens are being

paved so that pretty gardens are replaced with sterile spaces.

Of course it has to be realised that car-standing spaces in front gardens often add value to individual properties, but they usually diminish the amenity of the street and area as a whole. Those who rip out gardens and create sterile fronts are free riders who are destroying the very quality which may well have attracted them to the area in the first place. Those who absolutely must put in car-standing space should at least consult a decent design guide which shows how car-standing can be created more sympathetically so that the impact on the appearance of the street is minimised. They should also have a look around the area where some examples of reasonable looking car-standing spaces, in front gardens, already exist.

Apart from loss of amenity it should also be remembered that paving over front gardens has been shown to increase the risk of flooding, as storm drains cannot cope with water which previously had simply soaked away into garden soil. Also, because of the enforcement of engineering standards, car standings actually reduce the amount of on-street parking space left on the street. In addition there is the loss of the trees and shrubs of our gardens which go to make up an ecosystem for the birds, butterflies and bees as well as contributing to the oxygen in the environment. We should, we are told, be doing more, not less, to help prevent global warming, and certainly not reducing the numbers of oxygen-giving trees and plants.

In the end, nothing works better to improve the visual and general quality of an area than the tasteful efforts of the inhabitants themselves and a bit of community spirit. Our lovely streets are enhanced by the efforts of dozens and dozens of gardeners and careful owners who enhance enormously the amenity for us all. The WNA will oppose the paving over of front gardens but whilst we are consulted on each planning application ours is only one voice. Even the local authority, despite its policy and resources, seems impotent to prevent the march of the sterile

paving stone. Only the responsible action of enlightened individuals and families exercising good taste and public-spiritedness might yet halt and reverse the miserable advance of the paving stone.

If you have a view on this, or any other matter concerning the amenity of our area, we would love to hear from you. As an amenity group we can only support changes that appear to be overwhelmingly in the interests of the people of our area as a whole or where the benefits to some residents are enormous and the costs are small and not falling on the poor or vulnerable. Our planning sub-committee is currently working on a long list of things which we think might make our area even nicer and make our lives here more pleasant. We would welcome your views on this or anything else that worries you about the area where we live.

Richard Perkins

LICENSING

By way of background, under the Licensing Act of 2003, the supply of alcohol, regulated entertainment and late-night refreshment are all licensable activities at premises. The Act has four main objectives, these being:

- Prevention of crime and disorder
- Public safety
- Prevention of public nuisance
- Protection of children from harm

In Westminster the council issues these licences with a requirement to adhere to certain conditions and a number of noise conditions have been attached to new premises' licences being granted in the Westminster area. New applications for licences are relatively few in number and where problems arise from existing licensed premises, which comprise the vast majority, changes can only be made through a formal review process if the licensee has failed to comply with the set conditions. The review process can be initiated by a responsible authority such as the council, but also by residents and businesses acting

individually or collectively through organisations such as the WNA.

Within the WNA conservation area two established businesses have recently applied to the council for licences/change of conditions:

Marianna's Café, 6 Chepstow Road

has been granted new licences to sell alcohol, for performance of dance, performance of live music and performance of recorded music until 11pm Monday to Saturday and 6pm on Sunday. As yet there are no signs of the new licences being activated.

The Commander, 47 Hereford Road

This former pub/restaurant has just undergone major refurbishment work, having applied for some changes to the conditions of its licence imposed in 2006 to prevent nuisance noise emanating from the premises. As we go to press the Commander has just re-opened as a bar/brasserie which also incorporates an outdoor sales area selling "high end" fish, flowers and meat to people walking in off the street.

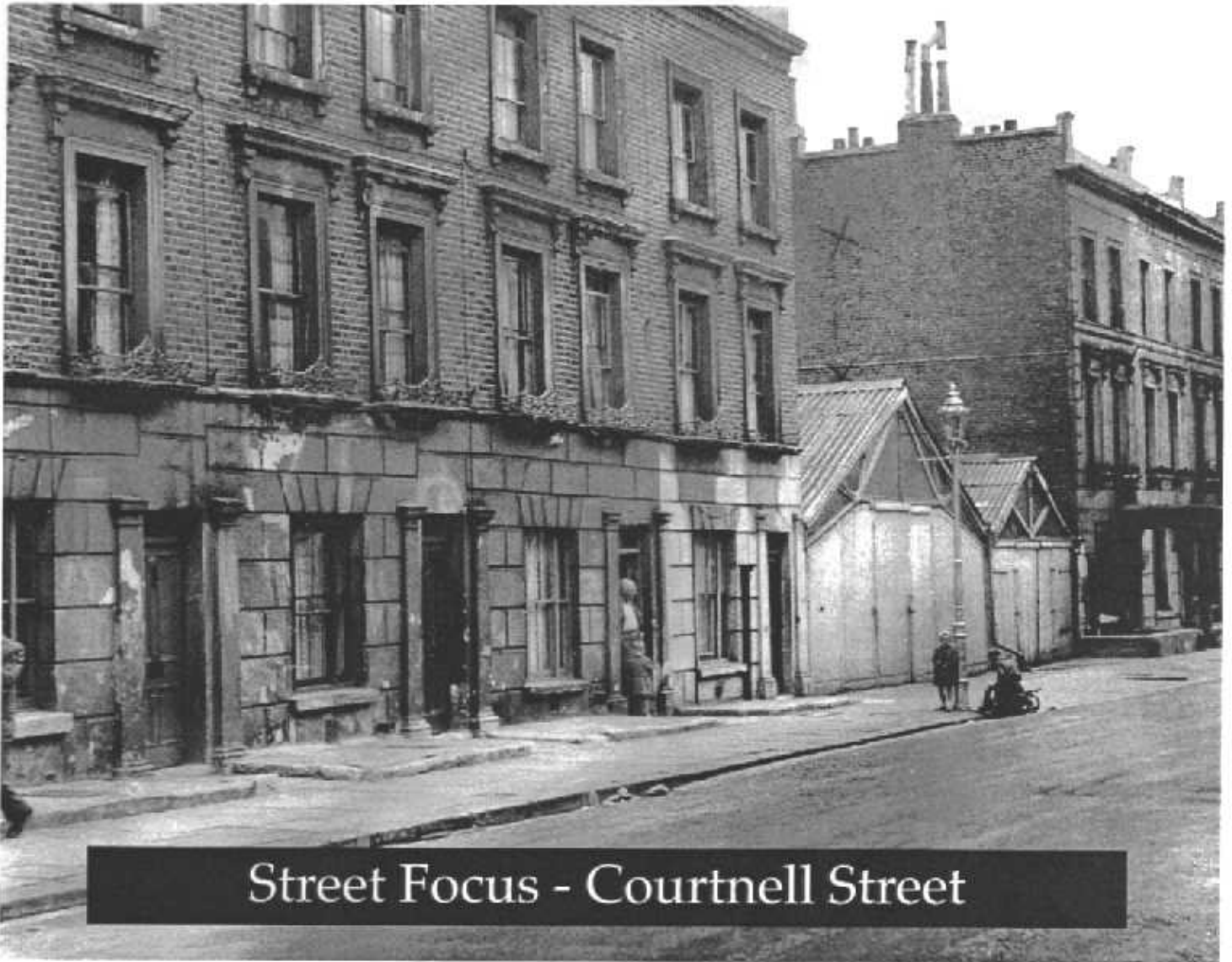
Tim Davis

CRIME UPDATE

With the media predicting a rise in crime due to the credit crunch, now is the time to make sure your home and property are as secure as can be.

SelectaDNA is a forensic property-marking kit and is officially approved by the police. Each pack contains a bottle of UV tracer fluid with its own unique DNA-type profile which is registered to your home. Although it is invisible to the naked eye, any property marked with SelectaDNA is always identifiable to the police and therefore acts as a significant deterrent to would-be burglars. Further information about the product can be found on the SelectaDNA website at www.selectadna.co.uk.

A limited amount of the 'Police Kits' are available free of charge from the Bayswater Safer Neighbourhood Team. Please contact Donna Carroll of the Metropolitan Police, or one of her colleagues, on 07920 233948 to discuss further.



Street Focus - Courtnell Street

A new feature within WNA News is to highlight one of the streets within our area. In this issue it is the turn of Courtnell Street which, like many of the streets in this area, was laid out in 1847. Initially there were no houses on the street and it was known as Cumberland Place (on the east side) and Cumberland Terrace (on the west side). The street was later named Courtnell Street after Reuben Courtnell Greatorex, an architect for the area developers.

Above you will see a remarkable picture of the street in the 1950s. Postwar Courtnell Street presented a very different picture to what you will see today. The area was in decline and many houses were multi-occupancy. As you can see, iron railings and gates had been removed and allegedly sent off to factories to help with the war effort. Although I seem to remember reading that these were later found at Wormwood Scrubs, having never been used for anything further! Many of the porches had also collapsed and had not been replaced.

The picture above represents nos. 18-24 on the east side of the street. The larger of the sheds stood until the 1980s when it was finally knocked down and made into two houses, nos. 18b and 18c. The smaller of the sheds has changed somewhat. The ground floor is our wonderful

neighbourhood garage, Holland Park Motor Services, run by the ever-helpful Ray and there is a flat above.

The wonderful ledges with beautiful detailed iron railings seen on the first floors of the houses in this photo are all missing now, and the current owners are in the process of getting these classic Victorian features reinstated. Unbelievably, the pattern for the intricate detailed ironwork is still in existence and continues to be manufactured by specialist companies upon request.

Courtnell Street has over time housed several famous and talented people, especially from the creative worlds of TV, film and art. The TV presenter Paula Yates lived in Courtnell Street during her troubled times after the death of Michael Hutchence and before her untimely death at the age of 40.

Whereas Paula Yates was a household name, living only a few doors away was a less publicly known, but hugely creative, talent. That was Felicity Ashbee who unfortunately died last year. Felicity deserves greater mention and overleaf you will find a short article written by Pat Burn, the recently retired WNA Chairman.

Sue Quentrec

A Tribute to Felicity Ashbee

Felicity was a very well known and much loved local figure and not everyone might be aware that she died last summer at the age of 95 years.

She moved to Courtnell Street in 1963 at a time when the road looked very different from how it looks today. She had relocated from Edgware Road when the flat she occupied was demolished in order to make way for the flyover which was to pass through what was her living room. Felicity was not one to embark on a house makeover just for the sake of it, and both the gas cooker and gas fridge she inherited with the move lasted her to the end of her days!

She filled the house with art, books and anything that reflected her many interests. She kept alive the legacy of the work of her father (C.R. Ashbee, architect, designer and aficionado of the Arts and Crafts movement) and lectured widely on him. She subsequently published two acclaimed memoirs chronicling her parents' lives and her experience of being a child in Jerusalem where the family lived for five years (from 1918). A couple of photos, both taken by Felicity in Courtnell Street, can be seen here on the right.

Felicity's obituaries appeared in The Independent on 9 August 2008, The Guardian on 20 August 2008 and The Times on 2 September 2008, all complete with photographs.

I met Felicity when I joined the WNA committee, of which Felicity had been a member since its inception in 1973. Any meeting with Felicity present would be imbued with her enthusiasm, energy and sometimes quirky take on matters. Meetings were never dull! She was a regular contributor to the newsletters and left no stone unturned when she researched the origins of balconettes adorning so many houses and the history of the named protagonist of the Prince Bonaparte pub.

I have a debt of gratitude to her for the many years of friendship and have wonderful memories of when I accompanied her on a trip to Moscow. A branch of her mother's family had emigrated to Russia in the 19th century and Felicity had traced a remaining cousin, Ata, and they became firm friends. This inspired her to learn Russian so she could fully explore the nuances of everything that interested her.

Felicity's life was characterised by an unswerving commitment to everything she undertook and this was echoed in her worldwide friendships. She possessed a vibrant and vivacious personality and as an artist, writer and teacher she touched many lives. Indeed a life well lived.

Pat Burn

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Children playing in Courtnell Street with one of Felicity's sculptures. At the end of the street is Talbot Road where you can still see the original terraced houses before they were demolished to make way for the Wessex Gardens Estate.



A mobile knife sharpener outside Felicity's House, No. 21 Courtnell Street.

Street Focus - Summer 2009

Chepstow Road will be our next road to feature in "Street Focus". If you have any old photos, interesting stories or information on past residents etc. that you think will be of interest, please email them to:

wnanews@yahoo.co.uk

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How green is your Garden

The results of the WNA's 2008 Garden and Window Box Competition

Joint Winner - Best Garden



10 Artesian Road
Gardeners: Jo Boorman, Peter Boorman and Helen Cooper

The summer of 2008 had been wet and miserable so it was not until 29 August that our judges, Jessica Arah and Derrick Knight, ventured into the streets to view our gardens. Even that day was not conducive to photography, so Derrick returned to photograph the shortlist on the following day.

Those few gardeners who had braved the elements to maintain their plots were all in the running. As with previous competitions we considered both window boxes and complete

Joint Winner - Best Garden



37 Courtnell Street
Gardener: Sheila Harkness

gardens. Of the boxes, we were impressed with both 14 and 16 Courtnell Street and with 61 Artesian Road.

Indeed, 61 Artesian Road came very close to sweeping the board with both the garden and the three window boxes. Having won the competition the previous year, perhaps the owners will not be too disappointed not to have been chosen. Other gardens of interest were 4 Northumberland Place, 8 Artesian Road and 86 Hereford Road.

The winning window box was at 51 Chepstow Road and was chosen for its overall shape, texture, and subtle

Winner - Best Window Box



51 Chepstow Road
Gardener: Nita Hulme

colouring which complemented the iron railings so well.

For the first time in this annual event it became impossible to choose between two gardens which were awarded joint first prize.

They were quite different in concept and implementation. The first, in no order of merit, 37 Courtnell Street, was chosen for its simple and effective use of a very small space producing a pleasing design in harmony with the steps down to the basement, and the second, 10 Artesian Road, because of its beautiful array of colour, defying the terrible weather and sensitively occupying all the various levels from ground floor to basement.

Many congratulations to our winners and thanks to all the horticulturalists who help to keep our streets looking beautiful with all their floral touches.

Judging for this year's competition will be held some time in the late spring/early summer.

Derrick Knight

IN APPRECIATION

We could not finish this edition of our Newsletter without paying tribute to the amazing job that has been performed by four exceptional people who have been on the WNA committee for many years and have recently retired. These members have contributed to many triumphs that have both protected its ambience and enhanced our lovely neighbourhood.

Even though they warrant at least a page of text each, they especially asked us not to write anything about them. So, semi-respecting their wishes, we are not going to gush on, but on behalf of every member of the WNA, both old and new, we would like to thank them sincerely for their time, effort and outstanding contribution to our neighbourhood.

The members are:

Pat Burn, outgoing Chair and a committee member since 1983.

Pamela Willson, outgoing Secretary and a committee member since 1994.

Hilary Adamson, outgoing Treasurer and a committee member since 1994.

Vera Williams, in charge of advertising and a committee member since 1996.

2009 AGM

**TUESDAY, 21 APRIL 2009
7.30 PM**

The Annual General Meeting of the WNA will be held on Tuesday, 21 April at 7.30pm at St. Stephen's Church Westbourne Park Road (at the corner with Talbot Road)

The AGM will be followed by drinks

Both members and non-members are welcome

**THIS IS YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD
PLEASE COME AND AIR YOUR VIEWS**

WANTED - BUS CHAMPIONS

The WNA have spent many years liaising with both TFL and Westminster Council on many of the issues affecting WNA residents with relation to local bus routes. We desperately need people who can help us with these ongoing negotiations. Can you help? Residents in Chepstow Road would be particularly welcome due to the ongoing problems in this road. Please contact our Chairman Andrew Jordan if you can help at wnanews@yahoo.co.uk.

THOUGHTS, IDEAS & INITIATIVES



What do you think of our new-look newsletter? Did you find it interesting? Are there other items you would like us to include?

Your thoughts and ideas would be really appreciated and we would be delighted to include relevant and appropriate

articles that any of our members would like to feature in future issues of WNA News.

Please feel free to email us at wnanews@yahoo.co.uk with any suggestions you may have.

We are Going Green

In a bid to try and be as green as we can, the WNA would rather email our newsletter to you to save on paper wastage. If you are happy to receive your newsletter by email only, please send your email address to wnanews@yahoo.co.uk.

We promise that we will only use this address for sending you the newsletter or to remind you of any upcoming WNA events. It will not be passed on to any other third party and will be kept private at all times.

IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF WNA NEWS

We will be reintroducing....

Talking Point - this is our letters page where readers can express their views or comments.

Tried and Tested - a list of services recommended by WNA members, eg. window cleaners, plumbers, handymen and cleaners. (Please note: the name of the person who recommended the service will always be published).

Eating Well - reviews of neighbourhood restaurants, cafés and pubs.

Street Representatives - a list of all our street representatives who help with the distribution of the newsletter and inform new residents about the Association. We still need street reps in the following roads: Artesian Road, Ledbury Road, Shrewsbury Road, Westbourne Park Road and the Wessex Gardens Estate. Can you help?

If you would like to contribute to any of the above, place an advertisement in the newsletter or become a street representative, please email us at wnanews@yahoo.co.uk.