

FRIENDS of HORNSEY CHURCH TOWER NEWSLETTER NO 35 SUMMER 2003



NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING THURSDAY 17 JULY AT 8pm AT THE CHURCH TOWER

The Friends AGM will be held at the tower again and is your chance to; hear about events over what has been a successful year for the Friends; offer your services to the committee; or make any points you want about Friend's business. Refreshments will be available.

The AGM itself will follow the usual form. The Chair will give his report on the past year; the Treasurer will tell us about the state of our finances; then there will be an opportunity to elect officials and hear other progress reports.

Please come along if you can.

Congratulations

Bridget Cherry, a founding member of the Friends and our Secretary for the last few years, was awarded an OBE in the recent honours list for her services to architectural history. Our warm congratulations go to Bridget for this deserved honour. We would like to think that the honour rewards in some small way her work towards saving the tower.

Works to the tower

The repair works to the tower funded by the grant secured from English Heritage and Heritage Lottery Fund are likely to start a little later than planned owing to problems completing the tendering. St James Homes are developing over 400 flats on the former waterworks site which has now been renamed New River Village. The distinctive modern structure facing the churchyard will be the NRV sales office for the next four years. We are due to receive a cheque from St James Homes for £20,000 as a contribution towards the works as was required by a condition of the planning consent.

Open Day May 18th

Our annual fund raising day took place early this year to anticipate the builders beginning their repair works. The weather was kind once again and we managed to raise several hundred pounds from visitors to the tower, sales of bric a brac and teas, and the ever popular abseiling teddy bears. Thanks to all those who helped out.

Lime Day June 10th

Member Lachlan McDonald organised an interesting series of activities centred on the tower to promote the use of hydrated lime in building works. Lime mortar was used before the invention of portland cement. It has a number of advantages over cement - chiefly its ability to deal with movement. Lime is also a more sustainable material as it permits recycling of bricks. Repairs to the tower will use lime rather than cement, in line with the requirements of English Heritage. Visitors to the lime day (mainly construction professionals and contractors) were able to see a demonstration of repointing using a lime mortar on one of the chest tombs. Friends also took the opportunity to undertake some brick repairs to the same tomb using a lime mix.

Progress in the churchyard

The wildlife hedges planted in March with the help of the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers and parents from St Mary's Infants are doing reasonably well. A prolonged dry period shortly after planting does not seem to have caused too much lasting damage.

The new hedge on Hornsey High Street comprises a mix of hawthorn, blackthorn, hazel, field maple and dog rose whereas that on Temple Road is holly. The High Street hedge is protected by a temporary wooden picket fence. The existing hawthorn in the original High Street hedge was retained and having been cut hard back is now regenerating. A number of the hedge seedlings have not taken, particularly the Blackthorn and Dog Rose, but we intend to fill in gaps in the autumn.

The holly hedge on the Temple Road junction will in time present a solid boundary that will help deter fly tipping there. Many of the small hollies regularly find themselves covered by old mattresses and other domestic detritus but are holding on.

The Friends also planted a range of wild flowers in the churchyard – among them primroses, cowslips, foxgloves. Trees grown by local people and Haringey Tree Trust from seed were also planted in the churchyard amongst them Oak,, Horse Chestnut and Yew. It is difficult to track their progress now that the surrounding vegetation has grown up.

The Friends have longer term plans to improve the management of the churchyard although this will depend on the cooperation of Haringey Council. A draft management plan for the churchyard has been completed and we are attempting to agree this with Haringey. This plan proposes a mowing regime that is sympathetic to wild plants; more regular litter clearance; sympathetic historic lighting and path surfaces installed; and the creation of a dog free area close to the St Mary's nursery school entrance. Depending on costs we may spend the balance of our BTCV grant on installing railings to create the dog free area

On a sadder note, we fear for the health of the finest tree in the churchyard – the 150 year old horse chestnut on the western boundary. The tree is this year brown and withered and we can only assume that it has been tampered with. This magnificent tree was in rude health last year when the Friends campaigned against the scale of the development proposed in the adjacent builders yard. Without the tree the builder's yard site has more potential development value as its branches over hang the site. We are presently taking advice to see if there is anything that can be done to save the tree.

Artist at the Tower

Early June saw the tower used as a location for a sequence of filming about engraver and artist Wenceslas Hollar (1607 – 1677). An actor in full Stuart period costume was filmed as Hollar sketching from the top of the tower. The film will be used in a Channel Four series "The Story of London" which is to be screened sometime in the winter. Hollar was originally from Prague but settled in England and is best remembered for his topographical views. "The Long View of London" for example, is a unique record of London before the Great Fire in 1666 and was sketched from church towers. Hollar, interestingly, fought on the Royalist side in the Civil War. Filming itself was interrupted by a short thunder storm. The actor, director, camera man, script editor and make up artists all proved that the roof can be evacuated very quickly. The Friends received a small fee for opening the tower.

Open House Day 2003

If building works are not already underway then the tower will be open to the public on Open House day on 21 September. Help from members on this day would be welcome.

Welcome to new members

Ken Clarke, Toby Johnson, Mrs K Brett, Mrs M Curtis, Miss P Gibbs, Kristina Glenn, Tony Hunt, Miss J Robinson, Peter Whincup, Victoria Hills and Tony Robinson.

Have you paid your subscription ?

Those who may have forgotten their subscription this year should send a cheque for £5 to FOHCT c/o William Arthurs Treasurer, Friends of Hornsey Church Tower, Old School House, 136 Tottenham Lane, London N8 7EL

Visit our Website www.communicate.co.uk/london/fohct/

In future we will be pasting newsletters on the web site and e mailing them. Please let us have your web address if you would like to receive an electronic copy. We will continue to post newsletters by Royal Mail to those who are not on the internet or prefer hard copy as well. Ken Clarke has kindly agreed to become newsletter editor.

[picture omitted from online version]

This interesting view by Alfred Braddock was taken on a snowy day in April 1908 and shows the tower with nave attached. The gate in the foreground served the new St Mary's Church. The wall still exists and encloses the St Mary's nursery playground. Behind the tram (which ran from Turnpike Lane to the foot of Muswell Hill) there appears to be a hedge and railings enclosing the old churchyard. Our new wildlife hedge may therefore be a faithful restoration. Source : *Hornsey and Crouch End Archive photos by Ken Gay.*