



Park Hill Residents Association NEWSLETTER

Issue 132

Keeping you up to date with local news and services www.phra.org.uk

Winter 2018

On Your Doorstep

One afternoon last summer, a six year old girl and her parents were walking down Brownlow Road when they realised that they were being followed by two masked men on mopeds.

One of the men drew his moped across the pavement. The other approached the family and took out a long knife. He drew the knife to the child's throat to seize a gold necklace and then tried to approach the child's mother. The child's father managed to intercept him. The two of them wrestled in a rose bush whilst the mother tried to pull the robber away. She rang the doorbell of a nearby house but there was no reply. There were passers-by but they did not intervene or call the police. After a few minutes the men left. The family then informed the police who have made investigations but no arrests have been made so far.

This robbery in broad daylight on a quiet street was bad enough. What made it worse was the failure of the passers-by who saw it but did nothing about it. They did not even call the police. They just passed by on the other side, caring only for their own safety and not wanting to be involved.

It is understandable that people do not want to risk injury in this sort of situation. The incident must have been frightening to watch. But that does not mean doing nothing. Swift reporting to the police from a mobile phone might have made all the difference – not least to the victims who now feel that they have been abandoned by the community where they live.

'No man is an island' said John Donne 400 years ago and it is as true now as it was then. We all need each other. If we do nothing to help others, we cannot expect others to help us when we need them.

As we look back on 2018, let us remember that summer afternoon on our doorstep – those who suffered and those who let it happen. What can we do - individually and together - to stop violence and to protect our neighbourhood? There is some advice from the police elsewhere in this Newsletter about protecting ourselves but what can we do to help and protect others?

Against this sombre background, Park Hill Residents Association wishes you a safe and peaceful festive season.

Inside:



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Helping those with troubled minds

Every year at this time we invite you to contribute to organisations which help others in need. Turn to page 5 to find out whom you can help this year.

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Park Hill Personalities

We talk to Darius Weithers, Assistant Curate at St Matthew's about what brought him to be a clergyman in Park Hill.

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Here and There

Read all about Tree planting in Croydon, Fairfield Halls opening date and advice on looking after you and yours at this time.

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Spring Clean 2019

Residents are invited to collect litter from the verges of Park Hill Road etc on Sunday 20th January at 12 noon meeting at St Matthew's Church.

Trains - Solving the Croydon Bottleneck

Read about the bottleneck problem at the Selhurst Triangle and what Network Rail is proposing to do to help East Croydon station cope with commuters' needs.



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Christmas Services at St Matthew's



9 th Dec 10.00am	Nativity
16 th Dec 6.00pm	Carol Service
Christmas Eve 5.00pm	Christingle
Christmas Eve 11.00pm	Carols by Candlelight
Christmas Eve 11.30pm	Midnight Communion
Christmas Day 10.00am	Family Communion

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HELPING THOSE WITH TROUBLED MINDS

Every year at this time we invite you to contribute to organisations which help others in need. This year we invite you to make a gift to Mind in Croydon which helps people with mental problems, and to two groups helping those with dementia and their families. Please give generously.



Mind in Croydon has been providing services for people with mental health problems and their families for 50 years.

We provide a wide range of support, including counselling, advice and day services and each year we support more than 2,000 people directly and many thousands more via our information line and online guide. We have a project in East Croydon that provides on-going support for more than 700 people. This service provides friendship and practical support for people who otherwise would be lonely and isolated. This service is always in need of financial support as we meet the costs of providing a drop-in for up to 100 people a day from our own resources.

You can find out more about our work, including how to make a donation at www.mindincroydon.org.uk. You can contact us on **020 8668 2210**.



DEMENTIA

850,000 people in this country suffer from dementia and numbers are growing as the population ages. Nearly 40% of us have a family member or close friend who has dementia.



The Alzheimer's Society works to help in various ways – from funding research into the causes of Alzheimers to supporting a network of local groups. These provide a range of services including social activities such as dementia cafes and singing for the brain, advice and

assistance to individuals and their families in their homes on a one-to-one basis including peer support and befriending.

You can give towards this work by phoning **0330 333 0804** or on the Alzheimer's Society website www.alzheimers.org.uk follow the links to 'Make a donation'.



Music therapy provides a vital opportunity for people with dementia to express emotions and interact with others in a safe and supportive environment. It gives them a chance

to express themselves and communicate without the need to find the right words. Methodist Homes for the Aged (MHA) is one of the largest providers of residential care and provides music therapy free to all its residents with dementia who could benefit from it.

You can make a donation towards this work by phoning **01332 221641** or go to the MHA music therapy website www.mha.org.uk and follow the link from there to the funding website. (MHA looks after people from all backgrounds).

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Park Hill Personalities:

We talk to Darius Weithers, Assistant Curate at St Matthew's about what brought him to be a clergyman in Park Hill and his hopes for his life here.

Darius's work as Curate at St Matthew's is the final stage in his training to be a priest in the Church of England. Training to be a priest takes nearly as long as training to be a doctor. First, there is a long and rigorous selection procedure. Applicants need to show that they have the capacity to meet a daunting list of requirements – resilient, adaptable, collaborative, self-aware and mature - to mention just a few. If selected, they then go to a Theological College for two or three years to learn as it were the theory. On graduation he/she will be then assigned to a Parish as a curate for three years to put his/her knowledge into practice – to develop skills as a priest and gradually take on the full responsibilities of a priest helping a Vicar. Only after that will the priest be appointed a Vicar.

Darius and his family came to St Matthew's in June as a Curate. He wanted a Church that was rather different to the Churches he had belonged to which had a more informal style of worship – and to live in an area rather different to those he had lived in before.

For seven years from 2009 – 2016 he had been Youth Pastor at All Saints Peckham. All Saints Peckham is a remarkable Church which serves an economically diverse area. In the 1990s its congregation was so small that it was earmarked for closure. A new Vicar arrived. The Bishop said that the Church could stay open if the congregation doubled to 40 and a new heating system was installed. This was done in six months and the Church has grown greatly since then. Some 250 adults and 90 children attend Sunday morning services. Darius was one of a large staff. On arrival at All Saints, his main responsibility was to reach out to attract youngsters from outside the Church – who happened to be mostly boys. It was hard work. They set up a youth club and no one came for weeks. Eventually

one year 7 boy came and had so much fun that he asked if he could invite his school friends. The club grew to over twenty young people in a couple of years. Many who came to the youth club came from challenging social and family backgrounds. But, little by little, Darius – and the youth team - worked with them. For Darius, providing a space where the boys could relax and be safe on a Friday night was of key importance. Over the years, Darius and the team built some strong relationships of mutual love, trust and respect with the boys. Various camping trips and residential – taking them away from London and offering new experiences – became a staple part of the youth work at All Saints. "What is funny," says Darius "is that I am convinced that these boys made more of an impact on me than I did on them."

Being able to relate to those boys was important to Darius. Growing up in a strict West Indian household whilst also identifying as British caused some friction between him and his parents. Being one of only a few British West Indians in a large white school was a particularly challenging experience for him. He left school at 18 and had a series of what he describes as 'quite boring office jobs'. His other life was being a DJ at the weekends. Eventually he left home and as he puts it, 'went off the rails'.

The turning point for Darius came when a girl in his office persuaded him to attend an Alpha course on the Christian faith being held at a local Baptist Church. Initially he went to be with her but increasingly he came face to face with the Church's claims about the person and work of Jesus Christ. He was impressed too with the dignity and love of those he met at the Church and the way they treated him with respect. "They accepted me as I was and, conflicted as I was, made me feel special." He came to feel that he had a



calling to be an overseas missionary and went to the All Nations College in Hertfordshire where he studied for a degree in Biblical and Inter-cultural Studies. During his course, however, he went to Brazil and came to the view that he could be of more use in his home country working with those in need there rather trying to work in a different culture. So when he graduated, he applied for the post at All Saints. The Vicar asked if he could start in a week and he stayed for seven years.

The work there was demanding - the Christian faith in action on the front line. Increasingly, however, he felt the gap between the lives of the boys he worked with and the church he belonged to. The congregation, though active, stood at some distance from the boys Darius had been working with. He did not want to leave but he believed that the best way to affect the relationship the church has with people such as the boys he worked with – on the edge of society – was to become a priest. Others encouraged him to put himself forward. He was selected and went to Trinity College Bristol to study for a MA degree in Theology.

During his time at All Saints, he met his wife Grace through Christian

Connection, an online dating website for Christians.

They went for their first date at the Science Museum and subsequently married. They have two children – Amayah aged four and Talia who is two. Another daughter is expected in the New Year.

Darius and Grace are grateful for the warm reception they and their family have received from the congregation at St Matthew's. They like too the diversity of the congregation – reflected in the flags on the Church wall of the countries where members were born – and the Church's concern for those who have links to it. St Matthew's faces challenges – proclaiming the gospel of Christ in a neighbourhood where many belong to other faiths or have no faith at all. It provides a place for many community activities in Park Hill but it has to be more than a feature of the landscape. It needs to be accessible to young and old and to people at different stages in their spiritual journey. It must tell the good news and as Darius says 'have the best parties'.

Darius and his family look forward to their first Christmas at St Matthew's – the Toy Service, the Carol Service, the Nativity play, the Christingle service for children on Christmas Eve, the celebration of Holy Communion on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. It will be a busy time and not much opportunity to relax until after Christmas but, he hopes, a fulfilling one.

We send him and his family our good wishes for their future at St Matthew's. May this period of training and practice prepare him for a full and active life in the priesthood.

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RIDGEHANGER, PARK HILL RISE: BACKGROUND TO THE DECISION

In the last Newsletter, we reported on proposals to demolish this large house at the top of Park Hill Rise and replace it with a block of nine flats – six two-bedroomed and three three-bedroomed. The Association objected to this development which would be too intensive and intrusive. If it went ahead, various changes should be made to the design to reduce its impact. The application was considered by the Council Planning Committee on 27 September. Richard Tweed (whose house backs on to Ridgehanger) spoke on behalf of local residents and Park Hill Residents Association.



The Committee were not prepared to reduce the height of the building – apparently the minimum height for a new building in Park Hill is now three storeys. Nor were they prepared to remove the balconies which overlook other properties but the glass on the balconies was to be obscured to reduce loss of privacy. The screen of trees which grows round the boundaries of the site away from the road was also to be retained during construction. Future residents were to keep this screen of trees as boundaries at their present height for at least five years.

Subject to these changes, the proposals were agreed.

The Wider Context

This application was one of a number considered by the Planning Committee that evening and some interesting points emerged:-

- The Council seem prepared to grant planning permission for virtually any development which provides extra homes. They were even prepared to allow one half of a semi-detached house in Purley to be converted into a block of flats, despite the impact this would have on the owner of the other half of the semi.
- Developers are therefore bidding for small blocks of flats anywhere they

can be fitted in. They don't however want more than nine flats in a block as they then have to provide affordable housing – ie housing at reduced prices for those with special needs.

- The Council don't seem much concerned about appearance – the key question is the number of homes. They seem to take the view that if they refuse a plan, developers will go to appeal and win – and so nothing will be gained.
- In these circumstances there is little prospect of building new family homes of any size and there is indeed a real threat to the landscaping of areas like Park Hill.

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Here & There

– A Round-up of Local News

BRACEWOOD GARDENS: A TREE OF HOPE

A small oak tree has been planted in the common land in Bracewood Gardens to mark the 100th anniversary of the end of the First World War. Oaks – a symbol of strength and survival – are slow growing trees and the new tree has been planted with hope for the future – hope that today's children and their children will see it grow into a mighty oak during a time of peace.

TREE PLANTING ELSEWHERE

About 700 trees will be planted in the borough between December and March. The focus is on areas where air pollution is poor, and on streets with a vacant tree-pit. If you know of anywhere in Park Hill which fits these conditions, please get in touch with John.Ingman@blueyonder.co.uk

LOOKING AFTER YOURSELF, YOUR FAMILY AND YOUR POSSESSIONS AT THIS TIME



The Police Neighbourhood Watch Team have provided the following advice: -

- Burglary – Please keep windows and doors locked regardless of whether you are in or not. Residents might obtain CCTV cameras with night vision, so that a good quality photo or footage may be obtained to aid an investigation. Sensor lights would also be a good deterrent, with the sensors fixed to above animal level. You can also get doorbells, which incorporate CCTV, with the sensor, rather than the bell activating the CCTV - this gets sent to your mobile phone.
- Robbery – Make sure anything that is/perceived as expensive is hidden. Mobile phones should be only taken out when they need to be used. Be aware of your surroundings, and escape routes if needed. Also keep an eye on anyone who is around.
- Mopeds – If you see anyone riding in an anti-social way, take a note of their number plate if they have one. If they don't have a number plate, take a photo if you're able to, without putting yourself at risk.

FAIRFIELD HALLS – AUTUMN 2019?



The date for re-opening the Fairfield Halls has slipped again. The current estimate is now that the concert hall will re-open in September 2019 though parts of the venue will open for 'showcase events' (whatever they are) in the spring. We are assured by the Council that it will all be worth the wait and exciting events are planned which will be announced in the coming months. So far inclusive groups Savvy Theatre Company and Slide Dance Company have been offered a base at the venue – neither is exactly a household name. After all building the Halls is only the start. Mounting and sustaining a vibrant programme will take a lot of effort – and a good deal of money.

SHIRLEY & DISTRICT PROBUS CLUB

Shirley & District Probus Group is a fellowship group for retired professional and business men. It meets on the fourth Wednesday of each month at the Shirley Park Golf Course for lunch followed by a speaker. The talks cover a variety of topics. New members are made very welcome and the cost of membership and meal is modest. It is possible to attend two meetings as a 'visitor' before deciding whether to join.

As a social group the Group also arranges outings and holidays, sometimes in collaboration with other like minded groups in the area. In recent years the Club has mounted holidays in Greece, Menorca and Spain. Recent theatre outings to the West End have enjoyed The Jersey Boys and An American In Paris.

If you would like to find out more about the group, and maybe widen your circle of friends, you are invited to contact the Secretary Barry Copeman on 8777-2889 or email: barry.probus@gmail.com.

WHAT IS THE COUNCIL UP TO?

Croydon Council has recently bought the freehold of the Colonnades site off the Purley Way at a cost of £53m. This follows an earlier purchase of the freehold of the Croydon Park Hotel for £29.8m. The Council says that the purchase of the Colonnades will yield an income of £1.4m and this, like the purchase of the Croydon Park Hotel, will help finance local services. How?

The Council can borrow money from the Government's Public Works Loan Board at very low interest rates. It reckons to buy commercial properties using these funds and get rents from the occupiers which will be large enough not only to cover the cost of the loan and the interest on it but also yield a surplus which can be used to cover the cost of Council services. Faced with a steady reduction in government grants, the Council sees this as one way of bridging the gap.

All very well in theory but will it work in practice? The Colonnades for instance has been described as 'unloved and unvisited' – and even big shopping centres are finding it hard to attract tenants. The price seems high; a much more flourishing piece of real estate - the Purley Way Retail Park - further up the road sold for £45m two years ago. The price tag for the Croydon Park Hotel was said to be £5m more than an earlier asking price.

We appreciate that the Council is hard pressed for funds – Government grants to local authorities have shrunk by half since 2010. But we doubt that the Council should go into the notoriously uncertain property business. And we are concerned that this policy has never been discussed publicly by Councillors.



OPENINGS AND CLOSINGS



The long-awaited new A & E Department at Croydon University Hospital is due to open on 2 December.

There will be no rail services between Victoria and Clapham Junction stations from 23 December to 1 January due to track replacement. There will be bus services between the two stations or you could take a train to Waterloo from Clapham Junction. Or you could go to London Bridge and on to King's Cross.

STOP PRESS – PROPOSED CHANGE TO 433 BUS ROUTE

Transport for London are proposing that the 433 bus would finish its journey in future at the Fairfield Halls instead of West Croydon bus station. This would help reduce congestion in and around Wellesley Road during construction works in the Whitgift Centre. For further information, google 'Croydon Town Centre Bus Changes'.

If you wish to comment on this proposal, email views to consultations@tfl.gov.uk or write to: FREEPOST, TFL CONSULTATIONS. Closing date is SUNDAY 13 JANUARY 2019.

Your PHRA Committee:

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Other members are: Patricia Bonham, Fiona Nicol (Membership), Bill Smart (Police Liaison), David Stanton (Treasurer) and Robert Webb (Secretary).

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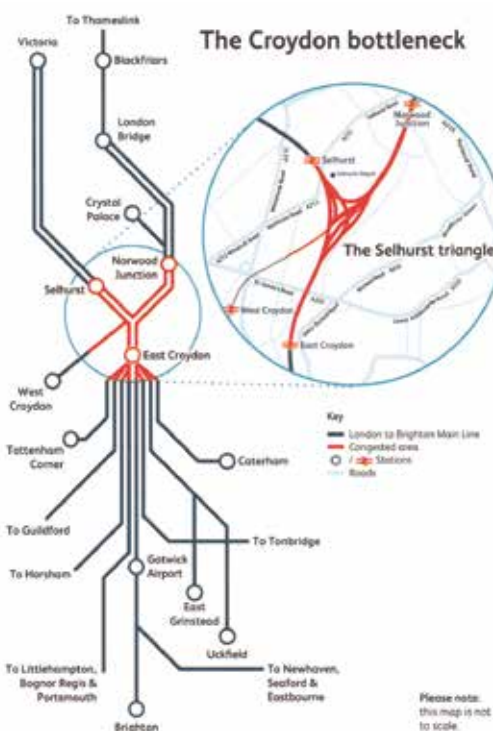


TRAINS - SOLVING THE CROYDON BOTTLENECK



wonder if local residents can survive the disruption to our town that these massive engineering works will create. Windmill Bridge will need rebuilding, and the two new tracks will entail compulsory land purchase which will affect homes and businesses around the tracks, particularly in Gloucester Road.

All this to avoid those mildly irritating delays as your train stops at a signal outside Selhurst, waiting for a platform to be free at East Croydon. Ah well, that's progress – but are there better ways to spend a billion or so?
Written by John Chambers



Did you know that every weekday, more than 1,700 trains carrying 300,000 passengers converge on East Croydon station and the 'Selhurst Triangle' – the series of junctions linking East Croydon, Selhurst and Norwood Junction, with London Victoria, London Bridge and beyond?

There's a huge bottleneck at the Selhurst Triangle, and not enough platforms at East Croydon to cope with our needs as commuters. So Network Rail is proposing to upgrade the Brighton Main Line, and the key to this vital service improvement is to unblock the intricate junction known as 'The Selhurst Triangle'.

The Department of Transport (DfT) commissioned a feasibility study in

2016 which has already cost £15m, and that has led to the current consultation with all interested parties, to gain both approval and finance for this huge development – the largest change to our transport infrastructure since Croydon Town Centre was developed in the 1960s.

The final cost is estimated to be over £1bn – needing funding from the government, the council and public/private partners and developers. As well as two new platforms at East Croydon station, other improvements should ideally include escalators and a new main concourse.

With work starting soon on the Westfield shopping centre, and the Fairfield Halls due for completion 'next year' (whenever that may be), we

SPRING CLEAN 2019

Once again, we invite residents to collect litter from the verges of Park Hill Road and other places at the start of a New Year. The spring clean will take place on:

**Sunday 20 January,
starting at 12 noon**

weather permitting.

Meet by the sundial at St Matthew's Church – at the corner of Chichester Road and Park Hill Road. The clean-up will last an hour but you are welcome to come for less. Please bring gloves – we will provide sacks and sticks. Do come! We'd be very grateful for your support. It's a good deed to start the New Year. You meet your neighbours. You see something for your work.



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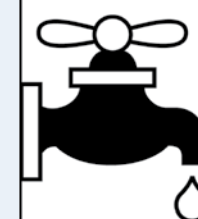


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