



# Park Hill Residents Association NEWSLETTER

Issue 126

Keeping you up to date with local news and services [www.phra.org.uk](http://www.phra.org.uk)

Winter 2016

## Open Minds and Open Hearts

We look ahead uncertainly this Christmas. Few of us could have foreseen last Christmas what this year would bring: from the vote to leave the European Community to the election of Donald Trump as US President and the tragic accident on our doorstep at Sandilands on 9 November.

All in their different ways present challenges – to the world, to our nation and to our community.

As a nation, many of us are concerned that, wherever the future lies, the country should look outward, not inward. We need to remain open to the world around us – both in mind and heart – ready to rise to new opportunities and challenges, whilst preserving values like our tolerance for others and our readiness to help those in need.

The same is true of our community here. We face a period of great change. In the next few years, 10,500 homes are planned to be built in the town centre and the population of Croydon as a whole is due to increase by 60,000 to 426,000 – an increase approaching 20 per cent. In this situation, Park Hill needs to be open – welcoming those who want to live responsibly and with respect for their neighbours, and ready to look out for the less fortunate. We saw vividly how the resources of the community came together in the aftermath of the tram accident.

In this issue, we highlight two remarkable local organisations which help the homeless in our community – Nightwatch and the Croydon Churches Floating Shelter for the Homeless – and another which seeks to change lives further afield – TWAM. We ask you to support the work they do and to give thanks that so many people in our community are ready to work voluntarily to help others. Here indeed is the spirit of Christmas.

In that spirit, Park Hill Residents Association wishes you a happy celebration this festive season, whatever your tradition, and a New Year full of promise.

### Inside:

#### Pages 5 & 6

##### Good Causes

Christmas is a time for helping and giving. On pages 5&6 we talk about three charities – two in Croydon and one overseas which seek to help people in need. We invite you to support their work this Christmas.

#### Page 6

##### Spring Clean & Website

Once again, we invite residents to clean the verges of Park Hill Road and other places at the start of the New Year on 15 January. We also invite you to make more use of our new website.

#### Page 8-9

##### Park Hill Personalities

We talk to one of Park Hill's senior residents Lois Baker, who looks back at her wartime experiences.

#### Pages 11 & 12

##### Here & There

We offer our sympathies to all affected by the tram accident on 9 November. We remember Kay Manley, a long-standing member. We tell you what's happening on new developments and round up other local news.

This newsletter is distributed to 2,600 households in the Park Hill area.



# Introducing the **1596** **CLUB** at **Whitgift Care**



Enjoy the company of new friends and a freshly prepared lunch, in our welcoming and supportive Whitgift Care homes.

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18 <sup>th</sup> 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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# GOOD CAUSES

*Christmas is a time for helping and giving. Here are three charities – two in Croydon and one overseas which seek to help people in need. We invite you to support their work.*

## NIGHTWATCH IN CROYDON



### What is Nightwatch?

Nightwatch has been providing help for homeless people in Croydon for 40 years. They are at work every day of the year.

### What do they do?

Their core activity is providing a meeting point staffed by volunteers in the Queen's Gardens by the Town Hall every night at 9.30pm which gives basic help with food and clothing but also seeks to deal with longer-term needs. They deal with people who are homeless on the streets, in squats, in hostels and in bed and breakfast accommodation as well as those who are housed but are simply too poor to buy food and who need help to stop them becoming homeless again.

They regularly see 50 people a night on weekdays at the Queen's Gardens and about 80 on Sundays. They try to get people moving on in various ways, depending on their needs and wishes. Everyone is treated as an individual and advice and help is tailored to meet their needs.

They seek to prevent future homelessness, helping people with expensive items like cookers and fridges which are beyond their means. They provide clothing such as work boots and protective clothing, bakery shoes and trousers, decorators' whites and brushes for people looking for work. They supply books or travel cards for people re-entering education. In 2015, they helped resettle 61 people in new accommodation – over a third female – and helped another 52 people with small items of furniture.

### Who provides the service?

All those working with Nightwatch are volunteers – there are no paid staff. They have 150 volunteers in all and they are indeed the largest volunteer organisation in Croydon. They spend just 4% of their income on administration. But Nightwatch needs funds to provide both the immediate service of food and clothing and the longer-term help with training and accommodation.

### How can I help?

You can donate on-line or by e-mail or cheques may be sent to Nightwatch, PO Box 9576, London SE23 3ZH. If you are interested in volunteering for Nightwatch, look on their website for details of how to apply.

## CROYDON CHURCHES FLOATING SHELTER



***Each winter, Croydon Churches Floating Shelter provides overnight shelter and food to homeless people who otherwise would have nowhere to go.***

It does this in an unusual way. Each week from November to March, seven churches in Croydon each offer accommodation for one night. In all, 21 churches are now involved in this project and up to 14 people are housed each night. St Matthew's in Chichester Road is one of the Churches in the project, offering help in January/February.

Volunteers at each Church prepare beds and cook an evening meal for the guests who arrive about 7.30pm. Volunteers serve the evening meal and stay overnight. The 'guests' also have breakfast in the morning and are given a packed lunch to take with them when they leave.

The guests are referred mainly by Croydon Reach (part of Thames Reach) a government funded organisation helping homeless people in London to get hostel accommodation, benefits, health care, training and employment.

All the work is done by volunteers. The project (which is a registered charity) has no paid staff. Nonetheless, there are expenses of various kinds – not just the food but providing beds and bedding and heating and lighting the premises used. The project is grateful therefore for any gifts toward the cost of its work with the homeless.

You can make a gift by bank transfer. The project's bank details are as follows:-

CAF Bank Ltd. Sort Code: 40-52-40; Account: Croydon Churches Floating Shelter - Account Number 00013862.

Alternatively cheques can be sent to Jonathan Baxter at 72 Hartland Way, Croydon, CR0 8RF payable to Croydon Churches Floating Shelter.

The project claims Gift Aid and could forward forms to donors in due course.



*Continued on page 6*



# GOOD CAUSES

Continued from page 5

## TOOLS WITH A MISSION - TWAM

**PHRA Committee member Bill Smart writes about a group which uses unwanted tools (and other things) to enable needy people to change their lives, here and overseas.**

Is your loft, shed, garage or house full of things you no longer use? Are you down-sizing, moving into sheltered accommodation or helping elderly relatives to do so? Don't worry, there is a solution. No, not the local dump! Tools With a Mission - TWAM - would be delighted to help you out.

TWAM began some thirty years ago when a group of men in Kent found themselves in just the situations described above. They had the idea of donating their unwanted tools to help others who could put them to good use. The idea blossomed and TWAM is now a registered charity that collects, refurbishes and sends across the world (and across the UK) tools which would otherwise be thrown out. 'Tools' include all tradesmen's and DIY tools, sewing and knitting machines, haberdashery, computers, sturdy bicycles, school text books and school packs containing basic school materials.

### How does TWAM work?

The story begins with a phone call to a local collector offering to donate tools or equipment. When the collector has a load ready, a van takes the tools to Ipswich, the HQ and main refurbishing centre for TWAM. A team of volunteers then sorts, repairs, sharpens and packs the tools into trade kits ready to send overseas, mostly to Africa. There TWAM works with organisations who teach local people a trade. On completion of the training, the pupil is given a complete tool kit in his or her chosen trade and is then able to go and earn a living, and support a family or



a community.

In the UK TWAM supports projects such as the Suffolk Refugee Centre who receive sewing machines, ex-offenders programmes requiring gardening tools, special needs and community projects requiring allotment and gardening tools. They work with prison charities, youth projects and any number of organisations that support helping people earn a livelihood. They also support individuals volunteering as a way back into work and provide a safe place to volunteer for people with special needs.

### What makes TWAM different?

There are features about TWAM that set it apart from other charities - there are only two or three paid personnel, everyone else is a volunteer and the tools and equipment go directly to the people who are going to use them.

### How to find out more about TWAM

If you want to find out more about TWAM and a full list of the things they collect, go to [twam.co.uk](http://twam.co.uk) on the internet.

My wife Elizabeth and I are the local TWAM collectors. If you have items to donate, please ring us on 020 8681 0057.

## SPRING CLEAN 2017

Once again, we invite residents to clean the verges of Park Hill Road and other places at the start of a New Year.

This year the spring clean will take place on

**Sunday 15 January 2017  
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! It's a good deed to start the New Year. You meet your neighbours. You see something for your work. We'd be very grateful for your support.

## OUR WEBSITE - WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

Our website - [phra.org.uk](http://phra.org.uk) - seeks to provide a place where residents can exchange news and views. Residents can contribute news, give details of upcoming events, have their say on local issues, report on local services such as builders, beauticians or restaurants, look at planning applications, find out where and how to learn and contribute photos. But - and it's a big but - it all depends on residents and so far, there has



been little response from residents. As a result, the site is not working as we had hoped.

Take a look at the site and see what you can contribute. Make this site come to life!



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# Park Hill Personalities:

*One of Park Hill's senior residents **Lois Baker** looks back at her wartime experiences.*

When Lois Baker was working in the Air Ministry in London during the Second World War, she was 'like an elephant storming through the jungle', said one colleague. Her energy and drive brought her to the heart of the war effort – in the office of Sir George Thomson, a Nobel Prize winner and Scientific Adviser to the RAF.

When she moved there in 1942, aged 20, she'd already worked for three years in the Air Ministry. But this was a very different job. Now she was to work in Whitehall dealing with Secret and Top Secret papers. Officially she was there as a Clerical Officer, responsible among other things for receiving papers, sending them on and keeping track of where they were. But she took an interest in what she was handling and quickly grasped what was going on.

The RAF needed the help of scientists in the war effort. It had started before the war with the development of radar which was vital in the Battle of Britain in 1940. Once the war began, there were more and more questions which needed scientific input. How could radar be developed and used in aircraft? How could the impact of bombing Germany be assessed? How could flying bombs be diverted, intercepted and destroyed? Could strips of foil fool German radar? Reports on these and many other questions flowed across Lois's desk in Whitehall. As time went on, she understood more and more of what she saw – and took more responsibility.

Not that she could say anything about it to anyone outside the office. Even when flying bombs started falling near her home in Anerley near Penge in 1944, she could not tell her parents what these new bombs were, though she knew a good deal about them. She simply told her parents to get under the table and stay there!

It was only at work that she could share her knowledge. This helped develop a close-knit group. For a long time she was the only civilian in the group – everyone else was in uniform – but she was very much part of the team. Sir George Thomson, the Scientific Adviser, was a dignified quiet man. Working to him was the Head of Administration, Wing Commander Macdonnell, who was Lois's boss. 'Mac', as he was known, had been a theatrical agent. Indeed he still was. He saw no reason why the war should interfere with his activities and continued to run his agency from his desk in Whitehall. Among his clients was Vera Lynn, the top singer of



the time – the Forces' Sweetheart. Mac (who later managed the London Palladium) was only one of many colourful characters including Thurston Dart who later became a leading classical musician and scholar and John Dykes Bower, assistant organist at St Pauls Cathedral. The radio comedians Kenneth Horne and Richard Murdoch worked in another section in the same building.

There was also a stream of visitors to the office: Dr Jacob Bronowski, the scientist and later a TV personality; Sir Solly Zuckerman, a zoologist who became an expert in the effects of bomb blast and was to be the Government's Chief Scientific Adviser; and the Head of the London Fire Brigade, the aptly named Commander Firebrace.

Pay was meagre – Lois started at about £1.50 a week and gradually earned more. Hours were long – 56 hours a week with weekend working. Travelling to and from work could often be difficult because of air raid damage. Trains would stop short of the main stations and Lois might have to walk the rest of the way to work. But there was no thought of not making the effort. 'I felt', she says 'as if I were part of a family and that someone would be looking out for me.' And there was a social life linked to work – lunch with colleagues at the canteen at the National Gallery, at the Wings Club near Westminster Abbey or Lyons Corner House (two course lunches for less than 10p) and outings to the theatre.

Life at home was difficult. During the blitz in 1940-41, Lois and her parents slept in the cellar, and as the war went on, made do with fewer clothes and less food. Lois made gloves, socks and slippers and a friend's mother made her a coat from an old Army blanket.



*Pictured right:*

*Whilst Lois was at the Air Ministry, she persuaded her colleagues to sign a table cloth and then she embroidered their signatures. This photo shows the signature of Richard Murdoch, a star comedian who was working in Whitehall in the RAF at the same time.*



Sometimes, Lois admits, she was frightened- – for instance, walking up Whitehall in a daylight raid with colleagues from the Women's Auxiliary Air Force or lying on her face one morning at Penge East station waiting for a flying bomb to drop. (Everyone got up once the bomb had dropped nearby, she recalls, and pretended nothing had happened.)

Now more than seventy years later, at the age of 94, her memories of those times are vivid. They were, she says, some of the best years of her life. She enjoyed the lively minds of her colleagues and the opportunities they gave her because she was quick on the uptake and ready to apply herself to new tasks. She never knew, she says, what the day would bring and every day was different. She had a satisfying job at the centre of things and she was needed.

She insists that she did nothing special. But her memories illustrate how women in Britain rose to the challenge of war and contributed to victory. We salute her and her generation.

### Your PHRA Committee:

**CHAIRMAN** - John Ingman

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**NEWSLETTER EDITOR/PUBLISHER** - John Chambers

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**Other members are:** Patricia Bonham, Fiona Nicol (Membership), Ujjal Ghosal (IT), Bill Smart, David Stanton (Treasurer) and Robert Webb (Secretary).

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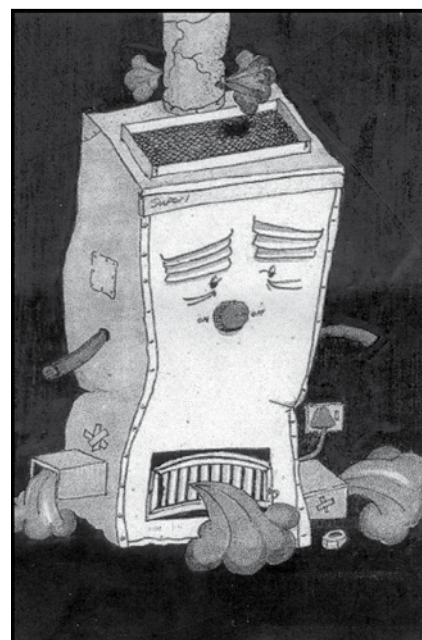
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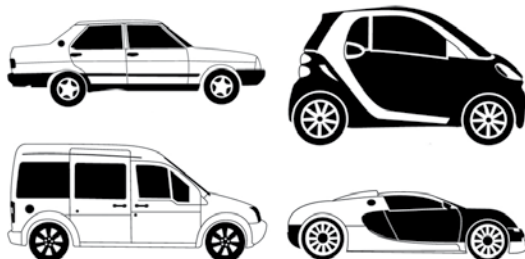


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# Here & There

## – A Round-up of Local News

### **Tram accident, Sandilands, 9 November**

We send our sympathies to the families of those who lost their lives in the tram accident at Sandilands on 9 November and to those injured in the incident, some of whom were severely hurt. We thank the emergency services for all they did to deal with the aftermath of the accident and to ease the suffering of those affected by it.

### **Kay Manley**

Kay Manley died in August 2016, aged 87.



Kay was one of the founders of the Residents Association in 1974. She had moved to Park Hill about 1970 with a young family and was concerned that the residents of Park Hill should have a voice. Many areas of Park Hill had been cleared of old houses and were waiting to be developed. Kay was determined that the mature trees which were such

a feature of Park Hill should be preserved in these new developments as far as possible. There were other practical problems, too which needed to be solved – no bus service, uncontrolled parking by commuters, no proper shop and an inadequate power supply.

Kay organised the membership of the Association and set up a system for distributing the Newsletter – which we still use. She worked on a series of successful social events and set up a service to keep an eye on elderly people who had moved into new flats and were living among strangers.

In the 1980s she moved with her husband to Sussex but after he died, she came back to Park Hill. She became progressively less mobile and in recent years was confined to a wheel chair. But that did not stop her taking a lively interest in local matters and the work of the Association. She remained keen to protect the landscape and ensure that Park Hill still had a green outlook.

Despite her handicap, she was for the most part cheerful and positive. She will be missed. We send our condolences and fond memories to her children Allison and Austin, and Roy, her constant companion in her later years.

### **Sports Centre, Archbishop Tenison's School**

The Council has now given planning permission for a new sports centre at the rear of Archbishop Tenison's School in Selborne Road – though they have laid down a number of conditions. These include that the sports centre may only be used by pupils from the school, and may only be used on school days from 8am – 7.00pm except on a maximum of twelve occasions during the year when the premises can be used till 9.00pm. We understand that these restrictions were made to deal with the concerns of people living nearby. We appreciate this but regret that they mean that the local community cannot take advantage of the facilities in the Sports Centre.

### **Around East Croydon Station**



Box Park finally opened at the end of October. It is remarkable that so many small businesses have been attracted to the site and we wish them well – not least because Croydon Council has lent £3 million towards the project. The design of the area, however, seems more suited to high summer than a damp English winter and the rough tables and benches look a bit bleak. But initially at least business seems to be booming.



It seems odd however that just as Box Park opened, the bus station at East Croydon closed for five months 'for refurbishment', making it difficult to reach the area and causing more problems for hard-pressed commuters who have enough problems to contend with. It is not clear why the bus station is being rebuilt. It seemed perfectly adequate for its purpose as it was. Perhaps a bit of re-painting and tidying up might have been welcome but nothing more. Hard not to feel that Transport for London have more money than they know what to do with.

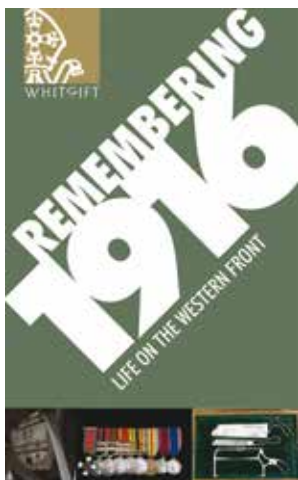
### **St Matthew's Church: Clothes and Books**

If you have clothes you do not need, then St Matthew's Church in Chichester Road will be glad to take them for charity. There is a bin in the foyer just by the front door. The clothes will be sent overseas. The Church also has a book stall in the foyer. You can leave books there or buy books. Proceeds go to Church funds. The Church is usually open most mornings and afternoons.



## Here & There (Continued)

### Remembering 1916 : Exhibition at Whitgift School



The 'Remembering 1916' exhibition at the Whitgift School in South Croydon has been extended to 16 April 2017. It is open daily – 10am – 5pm – and there are reduced rates for Croydon residents – take a utility bill or Council Tax statement as proof of residence. As we have said before, this is a remarkable exhibition spanning many aspects of the First World War from flying aces to animals, with exhibits from France and Germany as well as the UK. It will appeal to people of all ages.

### National Trust : Croydon & District Centre

The National Trust's local centre offers a range of activities this winter including monthly talks on Wednesday afternoons at Shirley Parish Hall, lunches and an outing to Scotney Castle. For more details, visit: [www.nationaltrust.org.uk/features/croydon-and-district-centre](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/features/croydon-and-district-centre) Or contact Angela Swan on 020 8657 0158 or e-mail: [alswan1814@yahoo.com](mailto:alswan1814@yahoo.com).

Please note that it is not necessary to be a member of the National Trust to join in the Centre's activities.



### Purley Oaks Recycling Centre: Temporary Closure

The Purley Oaks Recycling Centre – otherwise known as 'the dump' at Purley – is to close from 5-18 December, so that its layout can be improved and queues shortened. The Council say that the changes needed can only be done if the site is closed. There is certainly a pressing need to improve access to the site – the queues can be very long at times. But why do this work at a busy time before Christmas?

We must hope that the work is completed on time. Whilst the site at Purley is closed, residents can use the sites at Factory Lane and Fishers Farm – but these sites will of course be even busier than usual.

### Fairfield Halls



Finally, is anything happening at the Fairfield Halls? The Council has set up a website – [FairfieldCroydon.wordpress.com](http://FairfieldCroydon.wordpress.com) – with links to reports on progress. Preliminary work has started, including test drilling and stripping furniture and fittings in the foyer. Not a lot to show yet for a project due to be completed in 2018. Keep abreast of further developments on that website.

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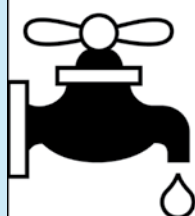


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