

THE ARLINGTONIAN

April 2013

The newsletter of the Arlington Association

A year of neighbourly action

Since the first edition of *The Arlingtonian* was published last April, it has been an action-packed twelve months for the Arlington Association. Together we've planted, gardened, celebrated, objected, donated, won prizes, sourced funding and thrown some rather handsome parties...

This time last year we were rejoicing in our first host of golden daffodils. Like all the best bulbs, the daffs have returned, but this year they shine in a square more packed than ever with new plants, bulbs, shrubs and trees.

In fact since we first started to tend the square as a community group, our new plantings total more than 25,000, including some exotic palms (see page 2). That's not counting the herbs and veg in our community garden (left), which celebrates the first anniversary of its official opening on 21 April. It's gratifying to see neighbours pop out on Friday and Saturday evenings to snip a little thyme or rosemary to flavour their evening meal.

We are very grateful to the friends and neighbours who turn up to our community gardening Saturdays every month. There can't be any regular user of the square who hasn't noticed the many changes our volunteer gardeners have made. As the director of VisitBritain said when she visited during Open Squares Weekend last June, "London has wonderful open green spaces where people can come and relax – and this is a showpiece of that."

Funding for the future

The National Gardens Scheme has recently awarded us an Elspeth Thompson Bursary of just over £3,000. Elspeth



(left), who died in 2010, wrote the Urban Gardener column in the *Sunday Telegraph*. Her husband Frank says: "She had a knack of seeing and creating beauty in unlikely places and was enthusiastic about those who gardened for the benefit of others." The NGS bursary supports individuals or community projects that capture this

spirit. We will use our award to complete the renovation of the raised area at the north of the square and to create an Arlington Square Community Hub.

We are also grateful to the charity Cripplegate Foundation which has awarded us £1,500 from Islington Council's Community Chest for small groups to support our monthly community gardening days. The charity aims to improve lives for local people, building a better future for us all.

AA Chair Gordon McArthur was honoured with a BT People Award of £500 in recognition of his voluntary commitment to improving our area. He has donated his prize money to the Arlington Square planting fund.

Gordon's BT award bring the total we have raised for our local community projects over the last few months to just over £5,000.

On behalf of the Association Gordon also collected a Highly Commended from the Mayor of Islington (right) in the prestigious Lisa Pontecorvo Award. The award, in memory of the local community activist who died in 2008, recognises the contribution of Islington organisations and individuals who make our borough a greener and better place to live.



Good causes for celebration

We all have our favourite memories to treasure from last year's community get-togethers. Possibly the boisterous carol singing at the Christmas party (right), or the addictive Human Fruit Machine at the summer fete, or those union flag suits at the Jubilee Big Lunch. What's yours? You can relive the



best moments by exploring the Gallery of pictures and videos on our website www.arlingtonassociation.org.uk.

Together at our celebrations we have raised over £1,000 for local good causes. The Christmas party raffle raised £385 for Hanover School, who have asked us to pass on their heartfelt thanks for their "awesome" new playground. Other good causes that have benefited from your generosity at the Jubilee Lunch and the Summer Fete include the Arlington Project residents' garden makeover, the Sunday Club for the elderly and homeless at St John's and a local youth club. If you would like to nominate a good cause please let us know in time for the Association's AGM on 15 April. The causes need to be local and areas where relatively small amounts can make a real difference. Email your suggestions to arlingtonassociation@hotmail.co.uk.

Come to the AA AGM

Monday 15 April, 7pm, Hanbury Arms

Join us upstairs at the Hanbury for the Annual General Meeting of the Arlington Association. It's a great opportunity to meet your neighbours and your Association's committee members. Local councillor Martin Klute and Safer Neighbourhood Team member Sergeant Liam Redrup will be speaking and we'll be reviewing the last year with pictures and video. All residents in the area are very welcome.



The new Palm Court

Arlington Square now has a touch of Palm Springs and the Mediterranean Riviera with two 8-foot palm trees and a couple of tall, exotic cordylines.

When a resident of Rennies Court by the Southbank in Southwark told us that a major redevelopment meant that everything in their communal garden was destined for landfill, we quickly mobilised an AA Plant Rescue Squad. Over one weekend the Squad collected two large trailer-loads of trees and shrubs – no mean feat, as Rennies Court garden is three storeys high.

Gordon McArthur, chair of the AA, says: “Our sincere thanks go to our friends at Rennies Court for being so community-spirited in wanting to ensure the plants they have enjoyed went to a good home. At times the Plant Rescue Squad thought we had bitten off more than we could chew but with determination and some mountaineering skills – you’ll need to watch the video – we triumphed and brought a fantastic selection back to the square.”

Other rescued plants include witch hazels, a magnolia and a camellia. The two videos showing the exploits of the rescue weekend are in the Gallery section on our website www.arlingtonassociation.org.uk.

Needless to say, the very next day after our subtropical palm grove was installed, we had the first snow of the year. But our new palms and cordylines seem to have survived the winter unscathed.

Pictures show: the AA's Plant Rescue Squad installing the square's palms and cordylines – which were soon covered in snow

‘Pocket parks’ for the New North Road

The entrances from the New North Road to St Paul Street, Rydon Street, Linton Street and Arlington Avenue are to be transformed into “Pocket Parks”. The plan, which has been agreed by the Council, the Fire Service and the Highways Department, is to green the spaces with trees, shrubs, bulbs and other plants – an improvement on the ugly castelated paving surfaces.

Some money towards the project has been allocated from the Ward Local Initiatives Fund, and the Arlington Association is investigating other sources of funding for this new community project.

It is hoped that the work to dig out the area and prepare for planting can start this autumn. There will still be cycleways through the new green areas.

The illustration suggests how the end of Rydon Street might look when the Pocket Park has matured, but the exact choice and eventual size of the trees will be determined in consultation with the Council. We are keen for neighbours to let us know their views about this initiative, including the type and size of trees they would like to see: please email us at arlingtonassociation@hotmail.co.uk.



Illustration kindly provided by award-winning Jan Kattein Architects, 277 New North Road

People Power

Have you joined our Arlington Association email group? It’s a great way of keeping up to date with events and the latest news affecting our area.

For example, last November Islington Council announced plans to introduce echelon parking (bays at an angle to the kerb) in St Peter’s, St Mary’s and Barnsbury wards, affecting 953 households and businesses. The Association promptly alerted our members to the plans for our neighbourhood, where 329 households would be affected by the change.

As a result, the Council received 137 objections from AA residents, listing thoughtful reasons why the proposal to increase parking bays with echelon parking was unnecessary, hazardous, a waste of money and out of keeping with the look of the area.

From the 624 households and businesses in the other wards, the Council received only 32 comments. Echelon parking will now be introduced in 13 other localities – but not in the Arlington Square Conservation Area.

To join our email group and keep abreast of the latest news in the area, simply email us at arlingtonassociation@hotmail.co.uk.

More magical music at St James'

Stand by for another season of top-class musical performances at St James' in Prebend Street as the 2013 Islington Proms get under way.

The season kicked off in March to great acclaim with the Cantallini Chamber Choir accompanied by the Hermitage Quartet and others, performing Haydn, Elgar and some stirring Russian motets.

By popular demand Cantallini will return on **15 June** with organist Rhidian Jones and a programme celebrating Britten and Purcell.

The impressive series continues with Arlington Square's resident concert pianist Rupert Egerton-Smith once again delighting his many fans on **29 June**. Rupert's international prize-winning concerts include first prize and audience award at the 20th International Concours des Grands Amateurs in Paris.

On **13 July** the enchanting Poeticall Musicke return to St James' with music from the height of the English Baroque including Locke's Broken Consorts, Lawes' Harp Consorts and songs by Purcell. The renowned blogger



Cantallini perform at this year's first Prom with the Hermitage Quartet and guest musicians. Top right: the "enchanting" early music consort Poeticall Musicke



Londonslant described a previous Poeticall Musicke performance at St James' as "an intimate evening with a group of young musicians whose performance matched their magical name...the evening was enhanced by the good acoustics of St James' Church." Read the blog at <http://londonslant.com/category/music-2>.

These good acoustics will be tested to the max on **11 May** when the WTW Big Band comes to the church along with the Martin Klute Trio. Jazz, swing and funk at St James'. Definitely not to be missed.

After the opening Proms concert in March, one audience member was heard to say: "I can't believe we have such a high-quality concert venue so close to home. And at such good prices. Aren't we lucky?"

All concerts start at 7.30, and refreshments are usually served. Tickets cost only £10 (concessions £8) and can be bought at the door or in advance from the Vicarage, 1A Arlington Square.

The programme for September, October and November is still being finalised. The autumn concerts will include a Children's Prom in October and piano recitals by Hurokei Seki in September and Evelina Puzaita in November.

Showing off to the public

After last year's success, Arlington Square is once again taking part in Open Garden Squares Weekend, the London-wide celebration of our city's most notable gardens and squares.

We'll be offering teas and guided tours as well as a children's treasure hunt and recipe ideas for the herbs and vegetables we grow in the community garden. Because Arlington Square is a public square, admission is free but if you'd also like to visit any of the other 200 gardens and squares taking part over the weekend, tickets are £10 in advance from www.opensquares.org, or £12 during the weekend.

We'll be welcoming visitors to the square from 10am to 5pm on Saturday 8 June and 2-5pm on Sunday 9th. Do please let us know if you'd like to help in the square any time during the weekend.

Meanwhile, four local gardens have been judged fine enough to be included in the famous National Gardens Scheme (NGS) Yellow Book and will open to the public on Sunday 16 June, 2-5.30pm. Visitors to 5 Rees Street, 26 Arlington Avenue and 21 and 25 Arlington Square will be able to see the very different ways we can create relaxing spaces in our tiny back-garden plots.

Admission to all four gardens is included in one £5 ticket (children free) and all the money goes to nursing, caring and gardening charities. The NGS raises more than £2.5 million a year and is Macmillan Cancer Support's biggest single donor. Find out more at www.ngs.org.uk.

Help to buy a Bechstein

St James' Church now has a concert grand! Fr John Burniston has managed to buy an exquisite Bechstein concert piano at an exceptionally good price.

The piano was made in Berlin in 1894 and our local piano experts Rupert Egerton-Smith, Anthony Hill and Andrew Brownell are all delighted with it. As it costs over £630 to hire a concert piano for one night, this makes hosting piano recitals at St James' much more affordable.

However, the Islington Proms committee now needs to raise £5,000 to repay the loan that secured the bargain. Would you be prepared to lend the committee some money, to be repaid in full from the proceeds from future Proms? Your loan will be for a maximum of three years but Miranda Jules, Proms Committee Treasurer, promises to repay loans from the first Proms profits to anyone anxious for a speedy return. Donations towards the cost of the piano will, of course, also be gratefully received.

If you are able to help in any way, please contact Miranda at mirandajules@hotmail.com, or Fr John at the Vicarage, 1A Arlington Square, N1 7DS, tel 020-7226 4108 or email vicar@stjamesislington.org.





New look for Union Square

After many meetings, consultations and a questionnaire, Union Square residents have finally chosen their favourite design for the transformation to be undertaken by the Hyde Group. The design, by landscape architects Breeze, has formal footpaths around the square, an informal path across the middle and a raised central lawn with formal planting beds. Work on redeveloping the square will start after the summer school holidays.

Obituary

We are sorry to report the death of former neighbour Paul Hansard. With his wife Valerie, Paul had the distinction of living in Arlington Square twice. They bought No 24 in 1956 but moved on in 1976 – then returned in 1995 when the house came back on the market. Many of us will remember Paul as a familiar figure in Arlington Square, sitting on a bench, often in a heavy dark coat, chatting to his neighbours. Paul and Valerie were well-known members of our community: Valerie was one of the founders of the Arlington Association in 2002. They were dedicated to the local area and loved the gardens of Arlington Square. Paul died in January this year, leaving Valerie, two sons and five grandchildren.



Calendar of events

- Arlington Association AGM:**
Monday 15 April, 7pm, Hanbury Arms
- Open Squares Weekend (see page 3):**
Saturday 8 June, 10am–5pm
Sunday 9 June, 2–5pm
- National Gardens Scheme (page 3):**
Sunday 16 June, 2–5.30pm
- Summer Fete:**
Saturday 7 September, 1.30–6pm, Arlington Square
- Community gardening days, all at 10am in Arlington Square:**
Saturday 6 April
Saturday 11 May
Saturday 1 June
Saturday 6 July
Saturday 3 August
Saturday 31 August
Saturday 5 October
Saturday 9 November

And now our own hymn tune

You know how hymn tunes have their own names – titles like *Royal Oak* or *Old Hundredth*? Now one of the latest additions to the hymn book is called *Arlington Square*!

Composer and organist John Crothers has published and recorded a number of compositions, most recently on the CD *A Sea without a Shore*, raising money for Cancer Research. He now lives in Paris and is chairman of the Royal School of Church Music committee in France.

When in London he often stays with Fr John Bur-niston at the vicarage, which inspired him to entitle his latest hymn tune *Arlington Square*. It's a setting of *The Church of God shall stand*, by the English hymn writer and retired bishop Timothy Dudley-Smith. "Our" new hymn will be sung for the first time at the Songs of Praise evening service at St James' on Pentecost evening, Sunday 19 May at 6.30pm. The service will be followed by seasonal refreshments.



Arlington Springwatch

The 2011 census shows that Islington is now the most densely populated borough in the UK, with 13,875 residents per square kilometre. This makes our green spaces all the more precious. But as well as encouraging more appreciative human visitors to Arlington Square, our planting efforts are enticing some interesting birdlife.

Residents report sightings of a greater spotted woodpecker in the square's ash trees most mornings, and keen-eyed neighbours have also spotted goldfinches and ring-necked parakeets. We've noticed more wrens than usual darting around the newly stocked borders, as well as blackbirds, sparrows and the much-loved robins. If you see any wildlife a little out of the ordinary, do let us know.

Sign of the times

Once upon a time, if you wanted to use a motor vehicle to crush your mobile phone, it wouldn't cost you anything. Now Islington Council are suggesting that we pay them a fee to indulge in this harmless pastime. Where will it end? The Arlington Association is determined to preserve local residents' rights when it comes to vehicular phone destruction. Contact us and we'll explain how you can park on your mobile absolutely free.

