



Yes, that cherry tree picture is telling us – it's officially Spring! Once again captivated passers-by have been busy papping the blossoms outside the big house on the corner of Warrington Crescent & Clifton Road. The extraordinary thing is that the tree actually began to flower as far back as the end of December before the January cold snap put paid to any further growth.

Anyway, time now to look ahead to a full summer of social events in the Garden. The big news is that we have a sponsor for the **annual wine-tasting**, due to take place this year on the slightly later date of Saturday **20th July**. The estate agents Savills, one of the world's leading property companies, have very generously offered to underwrite the cost of this always popular event which features wine provided by the Winery on Clifton Parade.

There'll be more details of their sponsorship in our Summer edition.

Before that of course we have the **London Open Gardens Weekend** when the otherwise hidden delights of Formosa will be revealed to the wider world on Sunday **9th June** between the hours of 2–5 pm.



And just a few days later, on Wednesday **12th June**, the touring company **Shakespeare in the Squares** will return to the Garden to stage one of the Bard's lesser-known comedies, *All's Well that Ends Well*. The event is kindly being sponsored by the estate agents Chesterton's & the performance will begin at 7 pm, with the Garden open for picnics from 5.30 pm.

You can buy tickets via Eventbrite by going to the following link: <https://SITS-allswell-Formosa.eventbrite.co.uk>.



This year's **Family Fun Day** follows on Saturday **29th June** when activities will include pony rides, face-painting, inflatable castles & obstacle courses. Adults & children alike will be able to hone their surfing skills on the surf simulators before hitting the beach over the holidays.

Pizza and drinks will be served throughout the day, supplemented hopefully by ice creams from the legendary Raimondo.

Daytime events will be followed by traditional 'Sports day' competitions, including a Tug of War to be held between 5 and 6 pm. Between 6–9 pm the evening programme will feature a live band & as well as a live DJ.

As last year we will also be running a Bake-Off competition, kindly organised by Susan Wright. There are two categories: Junior Bake-Off for 12 years & under & an open competition for those aged 13 & over. **There's no need to book a place in advance – just turn up with your contribution on the day!** *Full details will follow closer to the event.*



The Fun Day is kindly co-sponsored by estate agents Winkworth, our own Westbourne Management & the Hampstead Orthodontic Clinic.

Our Summer social schedule will wrap up with the **Open-Air Film Night** on Sunday **8th September**. There will be further details of that & the Family Fun Day in the next Newsletter & also my regular blogs on the Formosa website.

SIMPLY THE BEST – BUT FOR HOW LONG?

I was gratified if unsurprised to see Little Venice listed in a recent Sunday Times as one of the top places to live in the capital. The article lavished praise on the towpaths & tree-lined streets as "cherished London sweet spots" & incidentally introduced me to a new word: "gongoozling", which apparently is the canal-side equivalent of train-spotting (though who or what was being spotted wasn't clear). But recently there seems to have been a bit of an upsurge in anti-social behaviour such as rubbish-dumping, & one area in particular has become so down-at-heel of recent

months that Westminster City Council are proposing to take action:



IS THIS LITTLE VENICE'S UNLOVELIEST CORNER?

Yes, it's the area around Warwick Avenue tube station, now identified by the Council as ripe for improvement under Phase One of their recently published Paddington Public Realm Strategy. They point out that the area should be a natural centre for the neighbourhood & provide a green gateway down to the canal that gives Little Venice its name; instead it's marred by poor lay-out, lack of clear sign-posting & an unsightly clutter of bike stands & recycling bins.

At a meeting with Westminster's "place-shaping" teams in early March local residents echoed many of the Council's concerns. Among their bugbears: the historic green cabmen's shelter which dispenses drinks to taxi-drivers but often appears reluctant to serve ordinary punters; the ugly brick vent up from the tube below; the shabby state of St Saviour's Church across the road which acts as a magnet for people sleeping rough & the down-at-heel appearance front & back of the – according to its website, four-star! – Colonnade Hotel.



Residents suggested any new proposals could take inspiration from a Parisian square with benches & maybe a little café or regular market -- or even a gravel surface to allow for the odd game of boules! There was also talk of a statue to Alan Turing or the poet Robert Browning, both eminent local residents.

Public consultation on the initial design phase of the Public Realm Strategy is expected to take place in June but meanwhile you can have your say by visiting the Citizen Engagement Platform Commonplace.

SURELY THE BIGGEST EYE-SORE OF THE LOT

Unfortunately Westminster's development plans *don't* include the tube station itself -- one of the capital's oldest -- which is run by Transport for London & is frankly in a terrible state, with peeling paint on the ceiling above the escalators:



...& most of the wall tiles missing on the left hand side of the steps as you come up from the station

TFL are saying it's "improbable" these will be replaced soon as it "does not pose a security risk". Surely not ideal when the station is the starting point for most visitors to Little Venice from around the world!

STOP PRESS: The damp patches above the escalators have now been painted over! Word of this article must somehow have leaked....

REMEMBER TO STAY ALERT

Sad to say accompanying the recent upsurge in anti-social behaviour there's been something of an increase in criminal activity, with residents walking along while using their mobile phones some of the most vulnerable. I was standing at the bus stop outside Tesco's on Clifton Road the other day when a girl became very distressed after her phone was snatched by a guy on an electric bike who took off at speed.

Key boxes it seems are also popular targets. One was smashed outside a flat in Castellain Road recently & the man who gained entry made off with a couple of valuable electronic devices. Elsewhere a key safe was removed in its entirety which meant that the front door lock to the building had to be changed.

There have also been reports of a man loitering along Castellain Road checking doorways & peering down into basements, presumably on the look-out for parcels which unfortunately all too often seem to be abandoned outside buildings when no-one is at home.

Eternal vigilance seems to be the watchword here in short! However:

YOU CAN DO YOUR BIT TO COMBAT CRIME

There are a number of Neighbourhood Watch schemes in our area, of which the most local is

Castellain Road South – follow the link here:
<https://www.ourwatch.org.uk/scheme/67000/castellain-road-south>.

If you would like to set up a scheme for Sutherland Avenue or Warrington Crescent, just go to www.ourwatch.org.uk.

WHAT IS GOING ON WITH OUR TREES?



Sharp-eyed users of the Garden will have noticed that the bi-annual pollarding scheduled for early March was suspended after only a day or so following questions over the felling of three plane trees, two along Sutherland Avenue & one at the rear of Warrington Crescent. **The Formosa Board has now issued the following statement:**

“An administrative glitch between our tree agency & Westminster Council has meant that the pollarding process has had to be temporarily suspended.

“We understand that as soon as the permissions have been granted and our tree company has the resources necessary to complete the works, the pollarding will be completed as usual. Some residents have written to us to raise concerns regarding the sequencing of trees for felling and the process by which this was communicated.

“The Garden Committee would like to confirm that a thorough investigation has now taken place & lessons have been learned, particularly in respect of timely communication with residents. The Garden Committee wanted to apologise to any residents who have been concerned enough

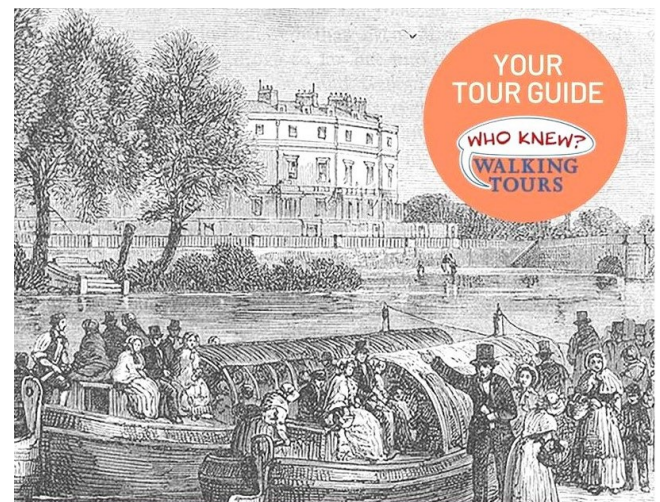
to write in and wanted to thank them for their passion for the garden.

“We plan to discuss the matter again at our annual AGM so please do come along!”



P.S. Here’s one resident, two-year-old Lara Lea, who seems entirely happy with the new reality!

SO YOU THINK YOU KNOW YOUR LOCAL HISTORY?



YOUR
TOUR GUIDE

WHO KNEW?
WALKING
TOURS

Tour date: Friday 12th April 2024
 10:00 Meet at Clifton Nurseries Café for coffee and pastries
 10:30 Depart for walk
 12:30 Finish at M&S at Merchant Square in the Paddington Basin
 Compliments of Wallacea Living, a luxury retirement community in W2

**WALLACEA
LIVING**
 THE TIME OF YOUR LATER LIFE

Well why not come on a free guided walk around W9 & W2 on **12th April**, organised by the Paddington Waterways & Maida Vale Society (W9W2)? The walk will be led by Andrew Glover of Who Knew? Walking Tours, which roam all over London delving into the capital’s history.

The tour departs from the Clifton Nurseries Café at 10.30 am (meet half-an-hour earlier for coffee & pastries) & finishes at Merchant Square in the Paddington Basin at 12.30 pm. It's being kindly sponsored by Wallacea Living, which runs a retirement housing community in Marylebone & if you want to take part, please email Stephanie Egell at stephanie.egell@wallacealiving.com.

GARDEN PARTIES JUST GOT BETTER

As we all know the Garden is a wonderful asset, with colour breaking out very early in the year:



But it really comes into its own during the Summer months, & the Board has decided to make some minor changes to the rules to enable residents to make full use of it if they want to enjoy it with others. Up until now parties involving more than 10 people have been required to get prior consent from Formosa Amenity, but this threshold has now been increased to 12. Permission will need have to be sought via our Managing Agents, Westbourne, & agreement obtained from immediate neighbours. In addition it will be permissible to set out a small serving table for drinks &/or food & parties no longer need to end by 8 pm but can continue until sunset where later. But please remember that the other rules still apply, including the ban on barbecues, glassware & garden furniture.

INCREASED PARKING CHARGES ON THE WAY



Disgruntled drivers are calling it yet another tax on motorists, but Westminster City Council are pressing ahead with their proposals to increase charges for residents' parking permits (along with the charge for pay-to-park casual kerbside parking). They say the aim is to reduce air pollution in Westminster as part of their ambition to meet their net zero emissions target by 2040 & also to introduce a "fairer & more proportionate" system of emissions-based charging in line with many neighbouring boroughs.

Public consultation on the proposals ended on 14th February & subject to its findings the new residents' permits will be introduced on the revised date of **3rd June** (with pay-to-park charges due to go up on **8th April**).

YOUR RECOMMENDATIONS NEEDED!

You may remember in the last Newsletter I put out a call for any recommendations for good tradesmen – make that tradespeople – off the back of an ad for local man George the Plumber (heatinggw@gmail.com). Well we have received a couple of names & intend to set up a page on the Formosa website where they can all be listed, but in the meantime keep 'em coming – via Salvatore at Westbourne on salvatore@wb19.co.uk. Good electricians, plumbers & painters particularly sought-after!

NEWS IN BRIEF:

- This year's AGM of Formosa Amenity will take place on Tuesday **2nd July** when free-holders will get the opportunity to question Board members & representatives of Westbourne Management & also Gravitas, who maintain the Garden. Time & location will be confirmed at a later date.
- Would dog-owners please note that the trial period allowing pets to remain off the lead for an extra half-an-hour in the morning ended with the advent of British Summer Time on 31st March. Permitted hours have now reverted to daybreak to 10 am but sad to say one or two outliers have been seen strolling around with their leash-less dogs as late as 11 am.
- Plans to create a communal herb garden which could serve as a gathering point for people to come & pick a selection of kitchen herbs somewhat misfired after the suppliers came up with this coffin-shaped box in the middle of the grass to near-universal condemnation:



It's been agreed with the Board that it will be re-designed & incorporated into the Med bed as had been the original

intention, with the work hopefully done by April.

The next Newsletter will appear at the beginning of June so please send any material to me at vivvy.robins@gmail.com by 20th May. Articles, letters or comments of any kind always welcome...it's your Newsletter as much as mine!

Dates for the Diary 2024

- London Open Gardens Weekend - 8th & 9th June
- Shakespeare in the Squares - Wednesday 12th June
- Family Fun Day - Saturday 29th June
- Wine-tasting - Saturday 20th July
- Open-Air Film Night - Sunday 8th September
- Bonfire Night - Saturday 2nd November

Keep an eye on future Newsletters & the Formosa website for further details.