



A Happy 2025 to one & all! The trouble I tend to find is after the excitements of the festive season the New Year soon starts to feel pretty much like the old. That's not the case here in Formosa though as there is a very big change coming down the track – after 21 years with Westbourne Management, we are moving to new Managing Agents. While acknowledging the service they have given us, the Board believes the needs of the Garden and its residents have evolved over time and a new agency will better suit our present-day requirements. Please see the Board's full statement in the attached supplement.

### **CALLING ALL BAKING ENTHUSIASTS....**

*By Susan Wright*

It's time to mark your calendars for the most delicious event of the year, The Great Formosa Bake-Off -- set to return as part of the Formosa Summer Party on **Saturday 28th June**. This much-loved competition

promises another exciting showcase of baking talent from across the community.



This year the competition will once again feature **two categories** to challenge bakers of all ages and skill levels:

1. **Junior Category:** Open to participants aged **12 years and under**, this challenge invites young bakers to create an **attractive and tasty tray-bake**.
2. **Senior Category:** Open to bakers aged **13 and above**, the challenge is to produce an **unusual celebration cake**. This can include a cake with a unique shape or design or one that features an unexpected ingredient.

**Team entries** are also welcome, so gather your friends or family members and join forces to create something truly spectacular.

#### ANOTHER BLAZING TRIUMPH!



Once again Fireworks Night on 2<sup>nd</sup> November was the highlight of the Winter social calendar, with residents thronging the Garden to enjoy the kind of spectacular display we've come to expect from the award-winning team at Firework Crazy, enhanced by the blazing bonfire maintained by Jan & his team from Gravitax.

This time the available space was increased to allow more room for spectators to gather safely & enjoy an unobstructed view of the display.

#### AND COULD YOU PLAY A PART NEXT TIME ROUND?

Sadly Marc Scrimshire, who has organised Fireworks Night of recent years, is now taking on other responsibilities on the Committee, so we are looking for a new volunteer to help maintain this much-appreciated tradition, scheduled to take place this year on **Saturday November 8th**. As Event Manager you would be part of the Events team and work with our new Managing Agents AMSBM to oversee and co-ordinate the display. If you are interested please get in touch at [support@formasagarden.co.uk](mailto:support@formasagarden.co.uk). You don't need to be a Formosa share-holder – just some-one with enthusiasm & a bit of spare time!

#### FESTIVE FIRST FOR WARWICK AVENUE

Around 200 people turned out on December 2<sup>nd</sup> for the ceremonial switching on of Christmas tree lights next to the cabbies' hut by Warwick Avenue station, followed by carols from two local school choirs.



The ceremony was performed by the Deputy Lord Mayor Ian Adams & the organisers of this first-time event gave special thanks to Berkeley Homes & Clifton Nurseries for their support, alongside funding from the Little Venice Ward budget.



Not to be outdone, on the very same night the famous illuminations on the big tree in the middle of Formosa Garden were switched on, & unlike the now-dismantled Christmas tree at Warwick Avenue will be providing some much-needed brightness in the Winter gloom through until the end of February.

#### **WARWICK AVENUE IMPROVEMENTS: MOVING TO THE NEXT PHASE**

You may remember that last year Westminster Council identified the rather scruffy area around the tube station as ripe for improvement under Phase One of their newly published Paddington Public Realm Strategy, with the aim of making it a natural focal point for the neighbourhood & a green gateway down to the Regents Canal. Public consultation on their four initial design proposals took place last Summer & elicited 338 survey responses plus feedback gathered through public exhibitions & community events. All this has now been analysed & fed into their Engagement Report, published in December, which lists a series of key recommendations. You can find it by following this link <https://shorturl.at/i5zGh>

#### **IS FORMOSA STREET LONDON'S MOST COSMOPOLITAN?**

*Novelist & long-time Formosa resident Harriet Crawley certainly thinks so. She's resumed her stroll along the shop-lined stretch between Castellain Road & Warrington Crescent:*

In the last Newsletter we toured the North side of Formosa Street. Now let me take you along the South side, starting at the Randolph Crescent end.

I know I have enough clothes but even so I cannot resist dropping into *The Brimful Store*. Shop assistant Becky, from Dublin, tells me the store is owned by an Indian lady called Bhavan who sources the clothes and gifts not only from India but also from Denmark and Australia. Everything here is beautiful.



The shop used to be called 'Pipa' but the owner changed the name to 'Brimful' when her shop re-opened after lockdown. She explained that 'Brimful', meaning full to capacity, was a significant word in the Hindi tradition.

Every self-respecting shopping street should have a great hairdresser. Formosa has the *Sixty 8 Atelier*, owned and managed by Sam, Lebanese, born in Beirut and now a British citizen. Like all really good coiffeurs Sam can be temperamental, but he's a master stylist and cutter with real flair and has a dedicated clientele.



I know I should get my nails done more often. No excuse. Next door to Sam is *Cobalt Nail & Massage* (so sorry, but I hate massage). I do go from time to time and am always impressed by the speed and efficiency of the staff, young women from Iran, Korea and India led by Kunthinka, who is from Thailand. Manicure or pedicure, these women really know what they are doing.

Next up we have *The Formosa Dining Room*. This is my home from home. It has the best fish and chips in London. At long last the FDR has a superb manager in Hugo, who is half Polish and half Italian. In winter I sit at the round table by the fire, eat my fish and chips and drink New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc. Through the glass partition you can see the chefs hard at work; one is from the Caribbean, the other from Bangladesh.



The Formosa Dining Room is part of *The Prince Alfred* pub which has featured in many films -- not surprisingly, since it is a listed building that was built in 1865 with superb wooden partitions, elaborately carved, and exquisitely engraved glass.

A hundred and sixty years later the Prince Alfred is still a much-loved local pub which brings us all together. On summer evenings the pavements outside are packed with happy patrons, laughing and talking and drinking, and momentarily forgetting the cares of the world.

Formosa Street is unique: a rare local mixture of nationalities, shops and services. Here, on the North side and the South side, you have kind people looking out for one another. How lucky we are!

### ... BUT COULD IT ONE DAY LOOK LIKE THIS?



You may remember back in the Summer a petition was launched calling for this short stretch of Formosa Street between Warrington Crescent & Castellain Road to be pedestrianised. The argument was that the road was not needed as a through route for traffic & could be turned instead into a safe space for people to shop, eat & socialise, as well as increasing footfall for local businesses. Well, the petition attracted 365 signatures which was short of the 500 needed to automatically trigger a debate at Westminster Council's inner cabinet, but it did go before the full Council last September & now its officers are busy drawing up a report for the Cabinet Member for City Management, Cllr Paul Dimoldenberg. The organiser of the petition, Sutherland Avenue resident John Gregson, said that while nothing was guaranteed he was in hopes that the proposal would be taken forward since it was in line with the Labour Council's policy of giving priority to pedestrians over vehicles.

### FORMOSA GARDEN: THE BEST IS YET TO COME

*By Jan Melkenbeek of Gravitas*



We have been full steam ahead to get things ready for Spring and hope that this year will be one of the best we have seen in the Formosa garden.

We should have the first snow drops coming through about now. This will officially mark the start of the flower season, followed within a few weeks by all the daffodils. We already have hellebores flowering in the woodland section close to the irrigation tank.

We are also about to enlarge the tree pits in order to enable the trees to absorb more water during the drier summers we are now experiencing.

And we are planning to top up the gravel paths as there are patches where the gravel has been kicked or worn away over time.

New benches for the Warrington bed & the Med bed are currently on order. We hope to get the name of Formosa Garden etched into the wood as has been done with several of the other benches



#### IT'S A FIRST: AN ACTUAL READER'S LETTER!



Last but not least full pollarding of the plane trees will take place later this month, from **11<sup>th</sup> --14<sup>th</sup> February**. We know that many residents find this troublesome given the unavoidable level of noise & would like to apologise in advance for any disturbance caused, but unfortunately the work had to be suspended last March so is overdue to be carried out.

*Editor's Note: The Board would like to thank Jan & his team for all that they do, much of it unsung – for example by making good the Mound after our annual firework display (top right)!*

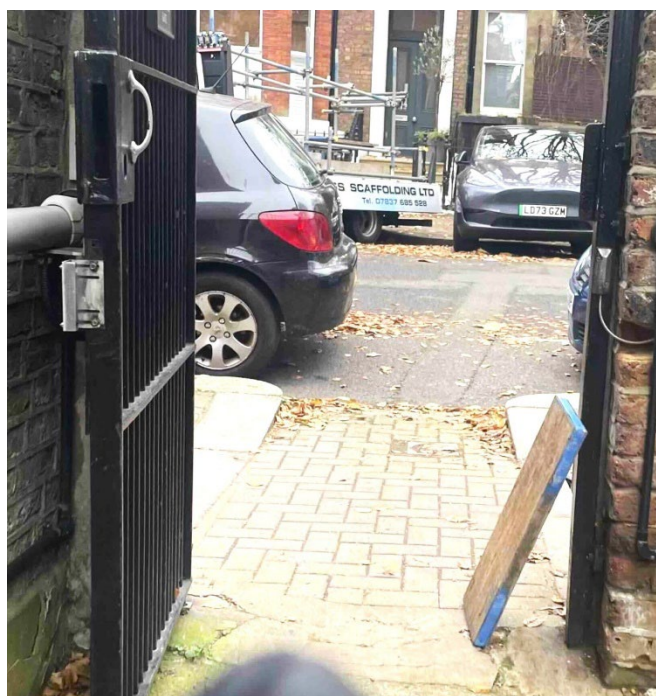
Hullo neighbours! My name is Damasine Raemdonck van Megrode, I'm 24 years old & originally from Belgium but I've been living on the beautiful Warrington Crescent for the past year. I speak French, Dutch, and English, so feel free to say Hi in any of these languages—I'll gladly chat with you!

After starting my architectural studies in Belgium I'm pursuing my master's degree at the Architectural Association School in London, diving deep into designing, creating, and sometimes furiously gluing tiny model pieces together!

Meanwhile I'd like to offer my baby-sitting services if you need someone responsible and energetic to watch over your little ones. I'd love to help out - whether it's story-telling, arts and crafts, or simply being a trustworthy extra pair of hands.

You can contact me at [damasine.rvm@gmail.com](mailto:damasine.rvm@gmail.com) or via WhatsApp on 0032476773695.

### OH NO NOT AGAIN!!



Only a couple of months after a firm called LJP Scaffolding was spotted propping open this automatic gate at the Castellain Road entrance to the Garden another company, Capital Access, has been caught doing the self-same thing.

Residents who employ scaffolders are kindly requested to point out that this sort of irresponsible behaviour could earn the company a fine or even a ban for repeat offences as happened with LJP.

### NEWS IN BRIEF:

- Our ever-popular wine-tasting – an annual fixture ever since it lifted us out of the Covid doldrums back in 2021– will take place this year on **August 30<sup>th</sup>**, courtesy once more of the Winery on Clifton Parade. Owner David Motion sources all his wines from abroad, often from small growers, which makes for some highly unusual & specialist labels. Details of how to apply for tickets will be published nearer the time.
- This year's rent charge that covers the cost of running the Formosa Garden is being kept unchanged for the first time in several years. Despite ongoing investment in the estate and inflationary forces still at work from all our suppliers the Board has decided that exceptionally our outgoings can be met without any increase, thanks to their own cost management & the kind support of our event sponsors.
- There have been reports of another burglary on the Garden over the Christmas & New Year period, with the perpetrators forcing entry on the Warrington Crescent side. Residents are as ever advised to keep alert, check the quality of their external locks & keep on the look-out for one another.

#### DATES FOR THE DIARY 2025:

- London Open Gardens Weekend 7th/8th June
- Formosa Summer Party 28<sup>th</sup> June (including the Great Formosa Bake-Off)
- Wine-tasting 30<sup>th</sup> August
- Bonfire Night 8<sup>th</sup> November

*The next Newsletter is due to be published at the beginning of April & as ever we welcome contributions from residents. We are particularly keen to receive any further readers' letters, provided that they are, in the words of the adverts, legal, decent, honest & truthful! Please send material to me at [vivvy.robins@gmail.com](mailto:vivvy.robins@gmail.com) by March 17<sup>th</sup>.*