

The Formosa Garden



Newsletter – Summer 2024



Well finally it seemed the Gods were smiling on us -- the first really warm day of the year coincided with the annual Canalway Cavalcade, spread over the three days of the early May Bank Holiday. The event, organised by the Inland Waterways Association, has been going since 1983 & as well as the traditional pageant of more than a hundred boats there were street stalls, live music, children's activities & that most British of entertainment, Morris dancers!

Anyway we have plenty of events in store on our own doorstep, the first of them being the **London Open Gardens Weekend** on **Sunday 9th June** when members of the public will get the chance to sample Formosa's otherwise hidden delights. The Garden is looking particularly good at the moment I think with the trees in full leaf & shrubs & plants adding to its lush appearance (no doubt the almost constant rain

has helped!). The Castellain Road gate will be open to visitors from 2-5 pm.



A few days later on **Wednesday 12th June** the touring company **Shakespeare in the Squares** will be staging one of the Bard's lesser-known comedies, *All's Well that Ends Well*. Tickets have been selling fast but

there are still some available via Eventbrite at <https://SITS-allswell-Formosa.eventbrite.co.uk>.

The performance will begin at 7 pm & the Garden will be open for picnics 90 minutes beforehand when beverages will be offered by the caterers Mosimann's. The whole event is kindly being sponsored by Chestertons Estate Agents.

FAMILY FUN DAY: THE COUNTDOWN BEGINS

Less than a month to go now to the Fun Day on **Saturday 29th June** & the time-table has been finalised as follows:

- 1-4 pm: Face-painting
- 2-4 pm: Pony rides
- 1-5.30 pm: Bouncy castles, surfboard simulator
- 3-5 pm: Lucas Jet Circus performance in the marquee
- 3-4 pm: The Great Formosa Bake-Off competition (*see below*)
- 5-6 pm: Traditional sports day races, with Tug of War challenge
- 5-6 pm: Kids' disco party with music statues & other fun games
- 6-9 pm: Live music by *Havana Good Times* & salsa dancing with DJ disco music in between the sets, plus a special guest (*see alongside...*)

Please will parents be sure to supervise their children at all times, since the party organisers can't take any responsibility for them. Also don't forget that you will need your job on the day to get into the Garden.

Last but certainly not least we would like to thank our sponsors, the Hampstead Orthodontic Practice, Winkworth's estate agents & our own Westbourne Management, for their generous support.

TIME TO COOK UP A STORM!



There are two age categories for this year's Bake Off, kindly organised once again by Susan Wright: 12 years & under, who should bring biscuits or cupcakes, & 13 years plus, who should bring a celebration cake or a

tea loaf. No need to enter in advance – just turn up on the day & bring your creations to the Bake-Off stand in the Garden at 3 pm. They'll be judged on taste, texture, appearance & technical complexity. The winners will be announced at 4 pm.

After the event you can either take your products home or allow the organisers to sell them for charity, in which case bakers should provide a full list of ingredients for the benefit of anyone who may have an allergy.

WELL HULLO DOLLY!



You may have read recent news reports that Dolly Parton has discovered she has Welsh ancestry. Well we in Formosa can go one better & announce that she will be performing for us at the Family Fun Day as part of the evening entertainment. It's true that she will bear a startling likeness to Nicki Starkey, actress & singer & sister of long-time Board stalwart Peter Cross. Dolly became part of Nicki's repertoire when she played the role at a highly successful fund-raising event some years ago. And she's putting residents on notice on this occasion that audience participation will

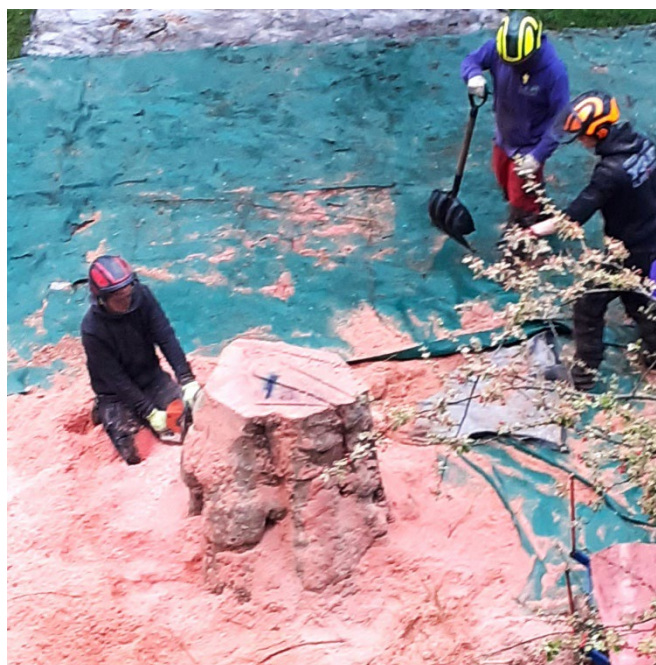
be expected, particularly from male members: “I’ll be looking for my Kenny Rogers!” One last question tho’: did she have the necessary ...er...attributes to carry off a convincing impersonation? “No neither of those!” was her cheery reply, “it’s all down to a pair of rolled-up socks”.

*** THE WINE-TASTING SCHEDULED FOR 20th JULY HAS BEEN POSTPONED FOR LOGISTICAL REASONS. KEEP AN EYE ON MY BLOG & LOOK OUT FOR A SEPARATE FLYER FOR A NEW DATE.**

FILM NIGHT: THE CHOICE IS YOURS!

Following last September’s highly successful debut of the **Open-Air Film Night** organiser Marc Scrimshire is planning once again to canvass residents’ views on what film should be shown this time around. The event is scheduled for **Sunday 8th September** so keep a watch on my blog to see when public polling opens.

SO WHAT DID HAPPEN WITH THOSE TREES?



As residents will know we are part-way through a 50-year Masterplan, approved several years ago, to remove & replant trees in the Garden. We also regularly pollard the trees every two years to stem their further growth.

However this year’s plan was halted mid-process leaving three stumps & incomplete pollarding & several residents have called for an explanation of this.

Enquiries by the Board revealed that the correct permissions had not been obtained by The Tree Agency, which triggered an investigation by Westminster Council into a possible planning breach. If it’s found that an offence has been committed that could mean a warning or other penalty for the tree agency as being the liable party. The Garden has now had a written apology from them.

The Board’s own investigation also revealed that the agreed sequence of trees to be removed in the Masterplan had not been followed (which was the reason that no formal notification was given to residents) & the Board has taken the necessary action to address this.

Planning permission for pollarding has now been granted, but due to the practical constraints of doing the work in the Summer months when the trees are in full leaf it has been put back to the Winter when it will be easier & less hazardous.

The remaining three stumps will be ground down to path level as soon as our tree suppliers have time in their schedule.

The Board is recommending that the whole question of the Masterplan be re-visited at our annual AGM on Tuesday July 2nd. It also wants to open a discussion then on the role & responsibilities of Directors & the process by which we can ensure that every Director acts at all times in accordance with the wishes of the Board & the wider community.

STOP PRESS: We’ve just heard that Westminster Council has found there *was* a planning breach on the part of The Tree Agency but that no further action is proposed because the Council took the view that the removal of the trees *would* have been granted consent had they waited for the necessary authorisation. However the Tree Agency has been required to give a written undertaking that no further tree works will be carried out without the requisite consent in future.

CONTRACTORS, DON'T DO THIS!



Propping open the Castellain Road gate in this way causes burn-out of the motor mechanism which costs several thousand pounds to replace. Among the worst offenders are LJP Scaffolding, who've already been issued with a final warning. They were also given a fine for which the freeholder is actually liable, although it is open to them to pass the cost on. This underlines the fact that it is the responsibility of those who are having work done to grant their contractor access by lending them their key fob so they can come & go in the authorised way.

WEED-KILLER BANNED FROM GARDEN

After sharp-eyed resident Paul Labbett spotted signs that the grass was turning yellow at the edge of the lawn, he raised concerns that potentially toxic weed-killer was being used on the paths which could leach into the grass, tree roots & water system, as well as pose a health

hazard to children & dogs & cats & wildlife more generally. At the request of the Board Gravitas agreed to switch to a combination of vinegar & water to spray the weeds in future.

MEET THE GARDEN'S OLDEST RESIDENT!

No it's not Ross Pye, long-time denizen first of the Crescent & now Formosa Garden (sorry, Ross!) -- it's actually Shakers, a pompek or cross between a Pomeranian & a Pekingese, who lives on Warrington Crescent with her owners, Dane & Chris.



Shakers is seventeen-and-a-half in dog years which computes to a staggering 119 in human terms. Owner Dane, who hails from Trinidad & Tobago, explains her unusual name: "When I was at University my favourite pub was called Shakers but unfortunately it closed down & when a neighbour bought her for me as a puppy, I decided it was a good way to keep the name alive!".

Dane came to the UK in 2013 but left Shakers behind until he was settled with a job & place to live. He missed her terribly but there was one consolation: "I used to Facetime her most days!". Four years later a tearful Dane was re-united with Shakers at Gatwick after her ten-hour journey from Trinidad.

Shakers lost her sight about three years ago but otherwise has no health problems & gambols round the garden very happily, although she greatly misses her long-time companion, Chris's dog Gunnar, who sadly died last July. Could she herself make it to a doggy 18 in September??

OH RATS! COULD WE HAVE AN INFESTATION?

A large rat was recently spotted scurrying across gardens at the back of Sutherland Avenue, as a result of which the gardeners have now been asked to keep an eye out for any concealed nests as they go about their regular duties. Of course the surest way of getting rid of them would be with traps but unfortunately these come with a risk to all those using the Garden, especially children & animals. However residents can also do their bit by taking care not to leave food out on patios & on the street side, making sure food waste bins put out for collection have their lids firmly closed & any rubbish sacks are securely tied.

TALK ABOUT PAPERING OVER THE CRACKS....

Coinciding with my diatribe about the state of Warwick Avenue tube in the last Newsletter staff at this most dilapidated of stations seemingly decided to paint over the damp stains above the escalators, tho' not very effectively.

Meanwhile I've written to our local Labour Councillor Sara Hassan asking her to intervene with Sadiq Khan to try to get some money released to do the station up properly, but at the time of writing there's been no reply. Yet Warwick Avenue is one of the few places on the Underground which appear to merit more than just its name on the station sign:



What's the point of flagging up the Little Venice connection when the station is such a turn-off for expectant tourists?

SCENE ON THE STREET: NO 2

Wonder who prettified this phone box at the corner of Castellain Road & Sutherland Avenue?

Someone has stuck what look like transfers of leaves on alternating panes. Pity the box hardly ever gets used in these days of mobile phones tho', as evinced by the large amount of rubbish on the floor inside!



NEW PLAN FOR HERB GARDEN

The offending "coffin-style" frame has now been removed from the middle of the grass & will be replaced by a herb patch within the Med bed, with the work hopefully being done some time this Summer. The herb selection for all to enjoy is likely to be mint, rosemary, thyme, parsley & chives.

NEWS IN BRIEF:

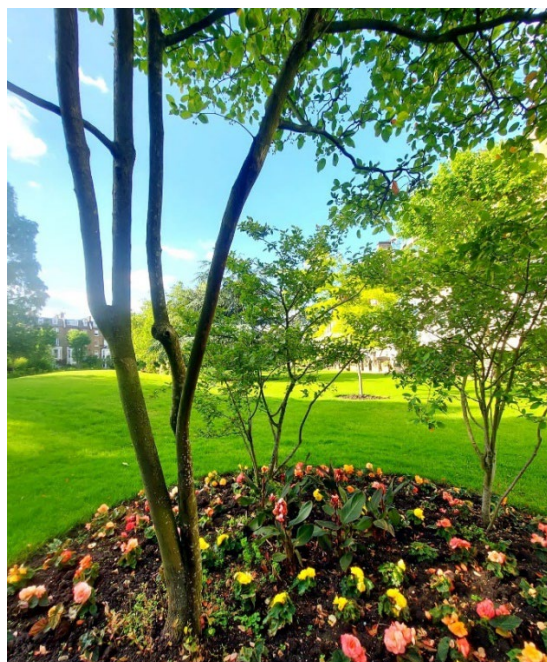
- Following the resignation from the Board of its Chairman, Sandy David, we are pleased to welcome new member Susan Wright.



Susan was in fact on the Board a few years ago & boasts a formidable array of technological skills which were responsible among other things for a re-vamping of the Formosa website & this new-look all singing, all dancing Newsletter!

- Don't forget the **Formosa AGM**, this year on **Tuesday July 2nd** at St Saviour's Primary School, Shirland Road. As well as financial & budgetary matters there will be a chance to put any queries relating to the Garden to Jan, the head of Gravitas. Questions for the Board can be submitted in advance to salvatore@wb19.co.uk.
- This year's Little Venice Film Festival will run from October 22nd—27th. The Festival champions inclusivity by supporting independent film-makers, amplifying under-represented voices in cinema, removing cost barriers to attendance and putting on specialised screenings for disabled, deaf and neuro-divergent audiences. Local venues will include the Puppet Theatre Barge & Canal Café Theatre. For full details of the programme please go to www.littlevenicefilmfestival.org/schedule.

- Now that Summer is (allegedly) here & use of the Garden likely to increase don't forget the Formosa rules aimed at keeping it a pleasant space for all: no noisy music or ball games, open-air barbecues, personal items, toys or garden furniture etc.



The next Newsletter is due to be published in mid-October & as ever we are keen to hear from residents, so if you fancy picking up your pen, or more likely these days firing up your PC, please send any material to me at vivvy.robins@gmail.com by September 30th.

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
- Formosa AGM – Tuesday July 2nd
- Open-Air Film Night – Sunday 8th September
- Bonfire Night – Saturday 2nd November

The ever-popular wine-tasting, this year sponsored by Savills, is being re-scheduled. Please keep an eye on my blog & look out for a separate flyer once we have a new date to announce