

# RESIDENTS MEET BARNET ON WHEELIE DEBACLE

A delegation of members of the RA Council, led by Chairman Eileen Whelan, and Trust Manager Chris Kellerman, met senior officers of Barnet Council in the company of Suburb Councillors Roy Shutz and Frank Davis on 16 September. The meeting was intended to be another in the series of consultations between Suburb residents and the Council on problems that had arisen following the introduction of wheeled bins in autumn 1989. However it turned into a post-mortem on the performance of Tyler Waste Management, the contractor who took over the refuse collection service from the Council's binmen at the beginning of August after compulsory tendering for council services had been forced on local authorities by the government. The delegation produced a sheaf of complaints, including bins not collected at all or not returned to agreed collection points; bins left on the pavement; damage by the

refuse vehicles to trees and pavements; incompetent handling of black sacks - spilling the contents on the road; constantly changing bin teams; noisy collections early in the morning; abuse shouted at residents; and finally, the ultimate insult to frustrated residents, inability to get through on the Council telephone hotline to make complaints!

The officers were well aware of the problems and had been making considerable efforts to resolve them. They had been expecting teething difficulties when the operators of the service changed, but not to the extent that the Council would have to invoke the penalty clauses in the contract within two months: points totted up for defaults, which can lead to withholding of payment by the Council. Not only did Tyler change routes and areas for the collection in their bid for economies, as had been expected, but it seems also that they suffered very high turnover of

refuse collectors in the first few weeks. Although Tyler were given all the details of the painstaking survey of arrangements agreed between Trust, Barnet and RA in summer 1989 for each individual property, the information was simply not being used at the workplace. However the delegation was assured that turnover had dropped and the teams were now 90% stable; supervision had been increased, both by Tyler's foremen and Barnet's officers, to ensure that the specification would be properly followed; and the Council would also issue statements letting residents know the level of service they could expect.

Residents should continue to try to telephone the Council hotline (081-446 5237) to make complaints if collections are missed; those who cannot get through and who have access to fax could send a written complaint to the Controller of Engineering Services, fax number 081-446 6494. Complaints are passed to Tyler the same day for rectification within 24 hours, and one of the Council's District Officers checks that the complaint is justified. Complainants about particular incidents should be sure to note the time and registration number of the vehicle involved so that management can identify the team concerned. The District

Officers will be giving priority to monitoring the refuse collection, on Wednesday and Friday, in the Suburb, but both residents and officers agreed that the increased monitoring should be as much as possible in a spirit of helpfulness rather than merely fault-finding.

A number of specific cases were also discussed, which the Council will try to resolve. In some instances it will make contact with residents to explain misunderstandings that may have arisen as a result of informal agreements that may have been reached between the former team of Council binmen and residents, which can now no longer apply under the new contract. It was also made clear that the contract stipulates that the refuse collectors must not ask for money, i.e. not come round asking for Christmas boxes.

A difficulty not directly connected with the new contract is that demand for the larger 330 litre bins has been steadily increasing throughout the Borough, so that the Council has run out and there is a pause in bin exchanges while more are purchased by tender. The officers are trying to check whether residents are in fact recycling less, because garden refuse can now be put in bins and people are therefore deciding they would prefer a bigger bin, or whether they are taking precautions against missed collections, due to inefficiencies of the contractor or

extended intervals between collections at bank holidays. The Council agreed to try to give good advance warning of changed arrangements for holidays.

#### Traffic

The meeting went on to discuss traffic matters. The Council agreed to send a representative to the public meeting to be chaired by John Marshall MP, planned for 7 November to introduce the concept of traffic calming to Suburb residents. Officers are of course well aware of the issues, but it was explained to the delegation that Barnet's financial situation is such that traffic improvements can only be carried out if there is justification in terms of accident reduction; this is the criterion for setting priorities. All such funding in the short term (for the next few years) is already earmarked. Unfortunately even if 100% funding could be raised for a Suburb project, e.g. by use of the money that the Secretary of State for Transport has said he wants used for 20 mph schemes, there would be no guarantee that it could be implemented, because schemes have to fit in with Barnet's traffic policies and also most traffic calming schemes have revenue expenditure consequences.

#### Gas and Cable

On other matters, the Council agreed to chivy British Gas for the promised bollards on Willfield Green after they have laid the new gas main through the Suburb. As a matter of course Barnet will be checking that the final reinstatement of the road is done properly and that trees damaged by the gas work will be restituted. Also, the Council is expecting that Videotron will be starting to lay their cable television ducts in mid-October; an officer has been assigned to record the condition of pavements before they are dug up, to ensure that they are also properly restored.

#### Friendly

Despite the fury that the new refuse arrangements have aroused in some quarters, the brunt of which has been borne by the ward councillors and RA Chairman, the meeting was friendly and constructive throughout. This is perhaps indicative of the mutual respect that has developed in the past two years between the Trust and RA on the one hand, and the Borough on the other, in seeking to find reasonable solutions to the new issues and problems that have arisen on Hampstead Garden Suburb.

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## BRIGID GRAFTON GREEN

Hampstead Garden Suburb has suffered a grievous loss by the death on 5 September of Brigid Grafton Green. Born in Australia of an Irish father and an Australian mother, her family moved to Ireland when she was three years old. She was subsequently educated mainly in England and finally graduated from Oxford.

During the war years she worked for the Ministry of Information and subsequently worked in journalism. During this time she met and married Grafton Green - himself a journalist of repute.

They came to live in the Suburb in the late 1940's and from the very beginning, Brigid contributed in many ways to Suburb life. In her early days she was an outstanding tennis player at Farm Walk Tennis Club - while being a full-time mother to her son and daughter and wife and hostess for her husband.

Later on she enlarged her academic skills through extramural classes sponsored by London University at the Hampstead Garden Suburb Institute. Her Diploma in Archaeology was followed later by one in Local History. For the latter her thesis was on the history of Hampstead Garden Suburb. Thereby she acquired a keen interest in Dame Henrietta Barnett and she was working on a definitive life of the Dame when her final illness struck.

She became secretary of the Hendon & District Archeological Society in 1970 and for many years was responsible for its recognition nationwide and increased membership.

Her main archeological interest was in the Roman period and her knowledge of Roman "potsherds" and "mortaria" was invaluable in presenting the Brockley Hill exhibition at Church Farm House. The Society itself regards as one of her finest achievements the Roman Banquet held in December 1979. Brigid adapted recipes from a



genuine Roman writer - the 1st century Apicius. The Society's cooks followed her explicit instructions to produce an authentic, if simplified, banquet on "Samian" pottery produced by our potter. Tables were lit by Roman lamps made in the Institute's pottery. All the guests wore Roman costumes made as nearly as possible to drawings and instructions supplied by Brigid!

Her interest in local history was invaluable in many ways - particularly in conservation and preservation of listed buildings and sites. She was well-known to the local planning department and they would on occasion ring her for advice.

Her work with the Suburb archives was very important and brought her into contact with architects and town-planners from far and wide.

Brigid was a perfectionist, and any task she undertook to do was performed to the best of her ability. In her everyday life, however, she was always ready to talk to and help anyone who contacted her and nothing was too small or too large for her to give kindly guidance.

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