

## Parties for toddlers (and pirates) too

As part of the RA's drive for younger membership, two Events Committee members, Suburb mums Florence Cooke and Elaine Robinson, organised an event for the youngest members of our community. One Sunday afternoon in March the usually sedate rooms of Fellowship House were transformed into a singing and dancing Toddlers Pirate Party. Around 40 youngsters dressed up as pirates and fairies congregated together with their parents for an afternoon of song, dance and entertainment.

Children's entertainer Alex kept the children enthralled with songs and enthusiastically encouraged everyone to join in, whilst face painter Lindsay transformed smiling faces into colourful images of spiderman, batman, lions and pirates. Energetic dancing and singing soon took its toll and everybody was ready for some food. The organisers had thought ahead and provided lunch packs and drinks for the children. Meanwhile the parents enjoyed the homemade cakes and a cup of tea. Lucy Wacks' 'Pirate Castle' chocolate cake



attracted lots of "oohs and aahs" from children and parents alike.

The afternoon proved a great success! All the children were entertained and parents had a chance to enjoy the first rays of spring sunshine. Soon the picnic rugs were spread out on the lawn and the opportunity was taken to make new friends and to meet new neighbours.

When it was time to go home everyone agreed that this was an event to be repeated. A big thank you went to the organisers, Florence and Elaine, and the helpers on the day, Jennye and Jonathan Seres and Joyce and David Littaur.

HELLA SCHRADER



## Confessions of a tennis nut

I am a self-confessed tennis nut and look forward every year to Wimbledon. Indeed, I could say that they are the highlight of the summer for me.

On my retirement from the City, I was fortunate to be accepted into the ranks of the Honorary Stewards (HS) after some rigorous questioning and on-site training. My day starts at 08.00 sharp when I join the large team of HS in Wimbledon Park where the day queue for tickets is formed. Some spectators will have queued overnight with others arriving early in the morning hoping to secure a ticket for a major show court that day. Most people are content to buy a Ground Pass which gives access to all the outside courts and a limited number of unreserved seats on three show courts.

The queue will have been managed by HS overnight, and some of our team start at 06.00 in order to assist the early queue management. A big team of Day Stewards made up of young, eager university students bring enthusiastic support to the overall effort. The queue quickly grows and in no time the numbers can swell to 10,000 or more. Naturally, good weather encourages people to come to Wimbledon, but if a certain Scottish gentleman is playing that day, then the numbers swell exponentially.

Working with the queues outside the ground sounds like a rather unattractive part of the job – in fact the opposite is true. One meets people from all around the world who share the same enthusiasm for the game. The atmosphere is unique



in my experience, with everyone well behaved and in high spirits in the anticipation of seeing some tennis later in the day. Many of the fans are seasoned Wimbledon visitors and prefer to queue for tickets rather than chance their luck in the official public ballot. I would probably award the Australian visitors the prize for the best party makers!

The role of the HS is to marshal the queues and provide assistance and information to visitors. The Service Stewards from HM Forces and Emergency Services perform a different but vital role and they are all exceptional people who are committed to do their very best.

After a very quick lunch, a posting to one of the show courts is the reward for the morning's hard work. During service breaks, spectators come and go from the courts and occasionally people move during play. This presents a constant challenge to keep people in their seats to respect both the players and spectators. Mobile phones provide the largest headache and the biggest source of irritation to fellow spectators, and while most are happy to switch them off or put them on silent, there are always one or two serial offenders who we have to deal with. Tact and diplomacy are, as ever, the way forward and it is heartening to have the gratitude of other spectators after dealing with these types of situations.

HS are required to stay until the end of play on their courts which could be 9pm or even 11pm if a match is running late on Centre Court. With extreme exhaustion and aching legs and feet, I drive home, collapse into bed and then rise again at 05.45 to start the next day.

The Championships seem to reach a climax on the middle Saturday and the second Monday, after which the queues start to reduce as the singles matches are concentrated mainly on Centre Court, for which there are no on-day sales after the second Wednesday. The reason is a long-standing policy borne out of concern for the Club's neighbours over the potentially enormous crowds which could result – particularly with a British finalist – if Centre Court tickets were still sold on the gate.

It feels a little as though the party is already over. Some of my fellow Honorary Stewards bid farewell then and return to their homes in various corners of the UK. Not all these people are retired like me and many have full time demanding jobs. I meet people from all walks of life – all with one thing in common – a love of tennis. I particularly like the discipline and order of the whole Championships which run like clockwork. This does not happen by chance but through meticulous planning and the considerable efforts of so many people.

Many of the HS return year after year and, if invited to take part again, I will certainly do so. It is seriously hard work but great fun, and I am fortunate to meet some really outstanding people.

PAUL WENHAM

## Avoiding jams around Brookland School

Residents living in Brookland Rise, Brookland Hill, Hill Top and other roads in the vicinity of Brookland School have long been used to traffic problems at either end of the school day as parents descend upon the area in large numbers to drop or collect their children. The result is that for half an hour or so twice a day roads in the Brooklands area can become so congested that many of the school's neighbours try to avoid leaving their homes or returning by car. In the main residents accept the disruption with equanimity acknowledging that traffic usually disperses very quickly after the rush.

But non-curricular events at the school also cause congestion and are often more of a problem

for the residents than are normal school movements as they are harder to anticipate. The RA's Roads & Traffic Committee is working with the school's head teachers and governors to try to find effective ways of publicising information about extra-curricular events at the school which might be disruptive to traffic. To that end we are pleased to say that the Chairman of Governors has offered to update the HGS Chatline with such information on a quarterly basis. This should help residents to make plans on those days when the school's premises are unexpectedly being used. We are also hoping to print a schedule of forthcoming school events in future editions of Suburb News.

In a further effort to reduce congestion the school is looking into whether there is any way to alert London's main courier companies to suggest that they try to avoid making deliveries in the Brookland area at the times when the roads are already full of school traffic. A single large van trying to make a drop-off at such a time can create gridlock all the way from Brookland Rise to Ossulton Way with no guarantee of being able to park anywhere near the delivery address even after it has struggled through the congestion. Residents who are expecting deliveries on school days might therefore want to consider asking their suppliers to avoid the area for a period of time either side

of 9am and 3.30pm whenever this is possible.

School staff have also assured us they are anxious that residents should not be inconvenienced by parents parking badly, particularly across private driveways.

If such behaviour is spotted they have asked that residents inform the school, preferably by email to office@brooklandjnr.barnetmail.net including photos of the car in question, showing its number plate.

School staff try hard to discourage inconsiderate parking and where appropriate they will pass photos and registration details to the local police who will contact the owner by letter or with a visit.

GARY SHAW

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