

MUM'S THE WORD



By Gigi Eligoloff of Mums Rock

I LOVE the neighbourly nature of my area. Most days I'll bump into a handful of friendly people while K and I go about our everyday business.

But sometimes the expectation for social intercourse can be too high. This morning I was greeted by a couple of woolly-hatted women who wanted to talk about God.

If they'd wanted to discuss the dog poo crisis on our road or even the mystery of the disappearing recycling sacks, I would have gladly welcomed them in. But they refused to take the hint until I pointed out that I had no intention of discussing my relationship (or lack of it) with God, with two perfect strangers on my doorstep.

I would no sooner discuss my religious leanings with them than I would tell them how often my other half and I recreate the finale in *Dirty Dancing* (as it's you – twice a month. And yes, we have the time of our lives).

However, neighbourliness took another hit recently in the form of a group of residents blocking the thrill-inducing plans for a new development in Brook Green.

Last summer, K and I spent almost an hour at the very jolly consultation where we were invited to vote for the kind of improvements we would like.

In particular this was aiming to develop space that could be

used by the eight-13 age group, who are not catered for at all at the moment. Unless you include browsing in Hollisters.

Plans were lovingly put together for ping-pong tables, a cafe, better toilets (at last!) as well as some sympathetic landscaping around the existing trees.

Let's face it, despite the fact that it's green, Brook Green has always been a glorious oasis waiting to happen...

So plans were made and hopes were raised. But at the final hour it seems a group of residents objected to everything but the redevelopment of the existing playground footprint and managed to get the plans changed.

Just like that.

So now there are no ping-pong tables, no landscaping, no cafe, and nothing for that ultra-difficult-to-distract-and-entertain age group of tweenies.

And if you've got a garden the size of a paving stone, then asking them to amuse themselves on a glorified grassy bit of land isn't going to cut it.

Why is it that the residents who wanted a voice were consulted only to be shouted down by a vocal minority?

“
Brook Green has always been a glorious oasis waiting to happen...”

Columnist Gigi Eligoloff is the founder of Mums Rock, a digital 'drop-in' site for all independently-minded mums and dads. She lives in West Kensington. Visit: www.mumsrock.com

MUMSROCK

From the Archives Fulham Town Hall

► The serious business of council life was accompanied by a social whirl at the new Fulham Town Hall, as Jane Kimber writes

FULHAM Town Hall, which is a Grade II-listed building, was built for Fulham Vestry in 1888-90.

Designed by George Edwards, it was constructed of Portland stone in a classical style. Mr Edwards was the winner of a competition to design the building, which attracted many entrants and became acrimonious, with accusations of unfairness.

The new town hall soon proved too small, and an extension facing Harwood Road was added in 1904-5 by Francis Wood, the borough engineer. A later extension was built in 1934, when the Fulham Registration Service was transferred to Fulham Town Hall from 129 Fulham Palace Road.

The local newspaper described the opening ceremony of the town hall extension in flowery prose: “As things go in Fulham it was a very brilliant scene indeed. The floor was finely carpeted, the electric lights shielded by those pretty crinkly-paper shades which have made such an impression on previous



occasions, and the walls were quite an art exhibition.

“The elite of Fulham lolled lazily in sofa stalls beneath the shade of sheltering palms. Mr Sangwine played *Alice, where art thou?* (with variations) upon the grand piano. Rippling laughter, the hum of conversation and the rustling of rich silks filled the air, heavy with the perfumes of Arabia and Walham Green.”

Despite the rather sarcastic tone of this article, a good deal of Fulham's social life did in fact take place at the town hall, where societies met and



CIVIC PRIDE: Open-top buses head by Fulham Town Hall in this old hand-tinted photograph (above) and a view of a mayor-making ceremony (left)

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As things go in Fulham it was a very brilliant scene indeed

concerts, dances and similar gatherings were held. The large hall had one of the best dance floors in London.

The stained glass window at the head of the stairs leading to the great hall was designed by Francis H Spear and made by the firm of Lowndes and Drury

at the Glass House, the well-known stained glass studio in Lettice Street.

It was presented to the town hall in 1931 by Alderman WJ Waldron, then mayor of Fulham, and shows the granting of the manor of Fulham to the Bishop of London in the early 8th century. Some of the figures of ‘Fulham citizens’ are actually portraits of councillors and council officers in 1931. Other stained glass windows in the council chamber were installed in the 1920s and depict historic scenes.

In 1934, when the Fulham Registration Service was relocated to the town hall, Miss KM Busby was the superintendent registrar, the only woman in the country to hold that post. She had followed in the footsteps of her father, Alfred Busby, who served in the Registration Service for 45 years.

It is now possible to get married in the former council chamber or the mayor's parlour at Fulham Town Hall, and the interior of the building has been refurbished.

● Have you got a local history question? Email: handfnews@lbhf.gov.uk
● The H&F Archives and Local History Centre is open to the public and is at The Lilla Huset, 191 Talgarth Road, Hammer-smith. Call 020 8741 5159.

Your shout

Wonderful walk for a grey day leads to super cityscape



BY DIGBY WARDE-ALDAM

SO, WE'RE over a month into the new year. In many ways, this is great: January is over, and thus the inevitable mountain range of problems it presents is gone, like when flying to Greece on a budget airline and giving a muted cheer as, through the clouds, the snow-clad

Alpine villages give way to pastures and industrial estates.

What the dawn of February also means is that anything you needed to but failed to do in January is made all the more pressing.

I have several impending deadlines which are nowhere near being met, the ceiling in the flat below me is leaking, which is probably my fault, and I've splashed out the last of my cash (which will be sorely needed for next month's gas bill) on some train tickets to Paris.

All of these problems have one simple, short-term solution – going for long, aimless walks through west London. I'm ignoring the impending crisis by finding new routes from North End Road to such exotic destinations as the council tax desk at Hammersmith Town Hall and, uh, the big Tesco at Brook Green.

The most depressing thing about this is not the fact that I'm trying my hardest to avoid work, but the things with which I occupy myself

in order to do so. For example, at the moment, my idea of a great day out is standing in the Waitrose at Fulham Broadway for four hours while a guy with a staple gun patrols the aisles sticking reduced-price labels on to cheap cuts of meat.

The only truly wonderful thing I've accomplished has been discovering what is arguably the best view in west London.

Cross the borough border into Kensington at Warwick Road, and stroll westwards along Talgarth Road. The view from the

railway bridge is breathtaking, in a grim sort of way. The Empress State Building, Charing Cross Hospital and Ashfield House loom ominously, and the panorama of the weather-beaten railway tracks running from Olympia into Earls Court is simply bizarre. It's a scene of quaint Victorian industrialisation completely at odds with the awkward modernist skyscrapers that surround it. Weirdly, unlike almost everything else on earth, this panorama is better observed on the sort of unremittingly grey day that is the norm for February.

It's these areas of wasteland that really distinguish a city, and it's appropriate that H&F should have played host to the late JG Ballard, the first man to romanticise them unconditionally.

This view encapsulates a small but universal social history, from steam engine to Tesco megastore.

Anyway... I should really get on with that essay...

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Letters to the Editor

We want to hear from you! Send your letters to: h&f news, Hammersmith Town Hall, Room 39, London W6 9JU. Email: handfnews@lbhf.gov.uk
The Editor reserves the right to edit letters. Anonymous letters will not be considered but names and addresses can be withheld upon request

Hotel sounds good but what about extra traffic?

ALTHOUGH the new hotel plan in Shepherds Bush Green seems a good idea (Hotel has familiar face but is futuristic behind, January 26) – especially the 60 new bicycle spots – what about car parking?

A hotel this size will generate a lot of extra cars and delivery lorries to the area around the green. Unless there is more provision for extra cars and other traffic the hotel will create, it could become a nightmare to drive and walk around.

Will H&F residents get any discounts for using the gym at the hotel? There is a lack of any incentive for working people to go to a gym because it is too expensive unless you have a benefit of sorts.

Janet Priddle
Via email

Junction lights change could benefit drivers

I SUGGEST that the second set of traffic lights in Fulham Palace Road at the junction with Lillie Road be turned towards each other.

This would greatly help drivers. When they pass the second light they have no way of knowing if it is safe to go forward. If the lights are turned to face as suggested, drivers could see the lights opposite.

This is how it used to be before the lights were renewed.

Chandra Emmanuel
Via email

Translators were so kind when we needed support

YOUR feature on Citas, the Hammersmith translation service (Mind your language! Ten years of top translations, January 26) was not just helpful, but an absolute godsend for me and my family.

Without going into great detail, a close relative who was in Spain fell ill last July and went into a coma from which she is now unlikely to recover. The firm bringing her back to England needed a full medical report so they knew what care she would need on the journey.

We obtained this – but soon realised it was all in Spanish and the firm insisted that it must be translated into English.

Just at that time, I saw your article on Citas and was able to visit them at Paling-swick House to see if they could help. And they were so kind and helpful.

They have now done the work so we will be able to press on with getting our relative home.

Brian Judge
Via email

My neighbour's dogs are sending us barking mad

THE writer GK Chesterton was noted for saying 'that where you have animal worship there is human sacrifice'.

After working hard for 20 years, I eventually managed to buy my home in Fulham in what I thought was a quiet street. My wife's and my enthusiasm for our new home was not even dented by the fact that we were burgled within a week of moving in.

The neighbour behind us mentioned one day 'that she might get a dog'.

She got one. It barked quite a bit and we tried to ignore it and maintain cordial



NEW LOOK: The proposed hotel scheme will keep the facade of the Shepherds Bush Pavillion

relations. Then she got a second and they both competed in the barking stakes.

We complained to the owner and the council. The owner responded by getting a further two dogs. The council encouraged her to cut back to three.

We have been tormented out of our minds. Both the police and council have stated to my wife and I that the owner 'should get rid of the dogs'.

The owner said she will not and has effectively defied reasonable guidance and it seems that provided the dogs just yap and bark intermittently, no matter how persistently, she will escape the council's sanctions.

But a young community support officer called Faisal Shabbir has now written to us. He wants my wife Sandra and I to sit down with the dog owner concerned with him as mediator. This we will do, of course.

My wife and I, and other neighbours who are also tormented by her dogs, are extremely grateful to Faisal and the interest he has taken in our situation. Let's hope we can make some progress this way.

Tom Maher
Via email

Polish cleaner polishes up our street to high standard

THANK you to the Polish man who sweeps Devonport Road in Shepherds Bush – he does a good job in all weathers and is always cheerful.

Mary Wren
Via email

Single parking zone for whole borough is better

I THINK the parking arrangements in this borough are unjustifiably inflexible and thus exorbitant for residents. Having the entire borough zoned off the way it is, is really unfair and extremely aggravating.

We are all subjected to having to pay £100 each year for a single car to park on the street and then pay up to £2.40 per hour if we venture outside our own tiny fragment of a parking zone to go and support the local economy by providing business to local companies, shops etc.

Why can't the entire borough operate in the same manner as Kensington and Chelsea, which has one zone for the entire borough, with the same cost but higher pay-and-display parking charges for non-residents? This is a much, much better idea.

I'm a really disgruntled resident and feel that we deserve better from our local authority on the parking front.

Cameron Buchanan
Via email

Roadworks along this busy stretch going on forever

WHEN, oh when, are we going to see the end of road and pavement works in Hammersmith Road, between Hammersmith and Olympia?

For the past two years the carriageway and pavements have been dug up, relaid, then dug up again. We've had water works followed almost immediately by cable works, and there are stretches of the road which now need relaying due to the uneven surfaces left by each contractor.

Is there no planning which allows work to be carried out by different contractors at the same time? Bus stops have been suspended, and on one occasion there was no bus stop between Charles House and Hammersmith. It is not good enough.

David Smith
Via email

WHAT DO YOU THINK?
Email: handfnews@lbhf.gov.uk

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Fulham South.....020 7386 6000
Hammersmith South.....020 8753 4427
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.....events@lbhf.gov.uk
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Shepherds Bush advice centre.....020 8753 5913
H&F Citizens Advice Bureau.....0845 4582515