

EVTRA NEWSLETTER

MAY 2018



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Keep a dog and bark yourself...

seems to be the Camden Council attitude to the many residents who pay for parking permits. (For anyone who is not a car owner – they permit the resident to park here, but not anyone else. So though we don't like paying out £100 and more a year, it guarantees that we have somewhere to park, rather than being pushed out by commuters, drug dealers, visitors to the Garden Centre, the Prince Albert and Camden Lock).

Now (this may get complicated for PFP and Camden Council, so we will put it in one syllable words as far as possible). **To keep strange cars out we have men and wo-men who stick bits of pa-per on their cars and fine them. EXCEPT..... we pay and they don't.**

An EVTRA resident went and asked Parking Pat why he wasn't coming round and fining the people who were parking in our streets without a permit. PP was friendly and said it wasn't on their patch – they had no instructions to deal with the main streets of the village.

So an EVTRA Committee member, female, anonymous (ECMFA) then contacted Councillor Roger Robinson (who was, as ever, helpful) and the Parking Department, who were friendly enough but gave this reply (you are not going to believe this): "No the wardens don't patrol those streets, because there would be no point"

(ECMFA: "?!!???!" Why?)

PD man: "Well they have a magic digital machine which tells them straight away if this car belongs to a resident who holds a permit" (this is why you no longer have to display a disk).

ECMFA: So?...

PD man: When they set up this system Elm Village was missed off, so they can't show the car to the magic machine, and and it doesn't even tell them to go there".

Result: CAR OWNERS, YOU ARE PAYING FOR A SERVICE YOU DO NOT GET AND WHICH AS FAR AS WE CAN SEE CAMDEN DO NOT INTEND TO RECTIFY.

This publication cannot advocate that anyone should act illegally. But we did interview some residents and can report their words (names changed to protect their privacy):

Will Trousercash : "When my next payment is due I shall refuse to pay, on the grounds that I am paying for a service I do not get"

Goinda Kickbuttock: " You are OK provided that you put the money somewhere safe and keep it. You are **not then refusing to pay**, but delaying payment until their side of the contract is met".

EVTRA suggests that you write to Cllr Robinson, (roger.robinson@camden.gov.uk)) thanking him for his support and asking him to include you among the names he has received protesting about this. (you can request him to keep it anonymous if you wish)



The **Newsletter's** own soap. The contents are genuine, but names are changed to protect anonymity.

Mrs Crapton's Diary (or - you couldn't make it up!)

Mrs Patience Crapton (rhymes with proton and moron) has been a resident on an estate run by the famous Plonkers Housing Association for thirty years. She has been trying between November 2015 and February 2016 to get important repairs done...

On 5 April Mrs Crapton asks for news, and receives a reply on 6 April. When she returns from A and E, after the minor heart attack from the surprise such haste has caused, she sees that Neighbourhood Officer (now with the title Estate Manager) Acton Nowte says: *I have chased up the Trades Supervisor*. This was clearly of no use because Mr Nowte continues *I will chase him again on Friday*.

Action finally seems to happen on 8 April. Patience is notified that an appointment has been made... for April 2 !... Fortunately this clerical error (logged by the computer as no. 30373 for the year) is corrected only two days later to 22 April. However, Mrs Crapton has to email to ask for a time as well as a day, on the grounds that she is a working woman.

Time passes...and passes...and passes. We get to 14 May. The drama grows in complexity (Agatha Christie, you should be with us now) An officer of Plonkers, Alfred Einstein, who did actually appear on the day planned, reports back: *He said the windows were rotten and need replacing and would put in a report*.

We now have three inspections, two different opinions, and yet another hurdle - (the report) that poor Patience has to surmount. The email does not mention whether there was yet another set of photos taken, though it seems likely.

It becomes clear that the hibernating creatures of Plonkerworld have now ended their winter sleep and there is a flurry of activity. 14 May: Patience again asks for a progress report - 16 May: receives apologies from Mr Nowte - 17 May: SILENCE! LIGHTS! ACTION!! Members of Britain's world-leading advanced skills workforce arrive, carrying (a) a paint brush (b) a pot of paint. Mrs Crapton writes: *the decorators have started to paint the front of the house a week early*. Simple trusting soul that she is, she continues: *I thought they were going to check for any work that needs doing before painting*.

What a silly idea! Surely it is obvious even to a mere housewife like Patience that repair work would be done by a different set of workers of advanced skill (carrying a screwdriver and hammer), and that they had been deployed on work of greater urgency, putting a new door on the coffee cupboard at Plonkers HQ. "But won't the original work have to be done again.?", she asks, puzzled. This produces an immediate result: on the same day Adrain Nowtel *told them to stop*.

However, Mrs Crapton's hope and belief that at least the need for the work had been agreed was dashed on 29 May, since Mr Nowte writes to her to say that: *I have now heard back from our repairs team regarding their inspection and they say that the property has been inspected twice [as we have seen, it was three times!] and that the outcome is that the windows are not in a bad enough state to be replaced as woodwork repairs will be carried out by the external contractor carrying out the redecorations.....*

[to be continued...]



BIKE SHEDS A growing number of people (well, young people at least!) now choose to use a bicycle to get about. But this has its problems too. Each year large numbers of bikes are stolen each year or vandalised. So cyclists like to keep their bike somewhere safe. But if you live in an upstairs flat in Barker Drive that is quite a chore twice a day.

So it has been suggested by one cycling couple that there should be bike sheds in Barker Drive of the sort increasingly provided by councils. EVTRA thinks this a fair request, so the

Committee suggests that you email them through the website voicing your support for such a scheme (:

secretary@evtra.org.uk details) – head it Bike sheds (well, we can't all be original can we?) If there is sufficient demand we will make a formal request to the Council.

We get a buzz from this...(News from

the Garden Society) by Grin Gran

Our Elm Village bees have a couple of new keepers helping and sharing the joys of this quaint and exhausting hobby/pastime/duty which is contributing to environmental welfare for all. It is great to have more people involved, all are welcome.



So far the hives are doing well. They both came through a very hard winter. The weather has been atrocious and unpredictable as you all know and the bees will become more active now there is some warmth. The gardens in Elm Village, including the Garden Centre, provide wonderful forage. There is a fantastic range of flowering plants in private gardens and shared spaces all of which we all enjoy especially in spring.

The bee garden, in other words the sloping wild space at the far end of the allotment area and the flat area above, are full of wildflowers and freebies from the garden centre. **If you have any flowering plants which you don't need, they can be incorporated in this area for the benefit of us all.** Already my granddaughter has spotted 2 different butterflies and we hope there will be more. She has planted lots of insect attracting seedlings and hopes we can beat our total of 4 different ones last year.

There are 2 dog roses planted on the wall near the steps to the platform and we hope they will thrive this year and that their thorns will dissuade youngsters from climbing up into the area. They love the challenge BUT it is harder to get down!!

CAMLEY STREET – A NEW PIAZZA?

Anyone who walks down Camley Street will be aware of the huge amount of development which is going on there. We monitor this closely, and are advised that there is a longer term plan to develop at least part of the St Pancras Hospital site.

The Camley Street Neighbourhood Forum continues to take the necessary steps to redevelop our end of the road in a way which would be a significant social amenity. But progress is slow because of the enormous number of administrative steps which must be completed. However, all plans so far have been approved, so they are optimistic.

Also the proposed "green high walk" from Camden Lock to Camley street beside the Overground line seems to be increasingly likely to happen.



From our point of view, so far, it looks as if the various developments are likely to be positive for both amenity and the value of properties. We were very wary of the proposals for the student accommodation which is now there. But we did get the height reduced by a couple of stories, and we do have the attractive set of steps down to the canal, as well as the Co-op store, which seems to be a lifesaver for many residents.

OUR OWN LEANING TOWER

As often happens with PFP, there is no further news about the rebuilding of the retaining wall in Rossendale Way, which seemed likely to involve residents in considerable disruption and cost.

There is also the matter of the leaning pillar at the entrance to the alleyway between Rossendale Way and Bergholt Mews. PFP say it is fine, allegedly quoting the Leaning Tower of Pisa! Residents must judge for themselves, but it probably makes sense to be a little cautious when you are close to an erection which leans towards you...



ROSSENDALE RESIDENTS ABOUT TO SLIDE INTO THE CANAL !! No, not really, but various issues have recently been raised about the gardens leading to the canal wall. There seem to be claims and counterclaims, so we cannot report or advise definitively at present. Among the claims made are: trees and shrubs growing where they should not be, possible effects on the canal wall, possible decline in the state of railway sleepers acting as earth supports.

EVTRA have drawn the concerns to the attention of the relevant authorities (who all seem to say it is someone else's problem). We have requested a professional inspection and advice, but again there is nothing to report. We shall continue to monitor the situation closely. But we suggest that the more cautious among you should contact your property and your lease to check that all is in good order, and to decide whether there is anything to do in your own interests



IF YOU WISH TO COMPLAIN OR MAKE A REQUEST TO PFP, they insist that you go through their Preston office. Phone: 0800 432 0002 or email: contactcentre@placesforpeople.co.uk. But **make sure you get a case reference number** from them. This gets you to the right place if you need to go back – otherwise you're back to square 1!

SECURITY – DETER THE DEALERS!

First the good news...we have an EVTRA resident who reports to us on the panel meetings held between the Police and people in this area. So we can say that, despite the fact that in the Borough as a whole there are hotspots of crime (notably burglary and knife crime), the latest figures and maps show our area to be relatively crime free.

BUT... we can't be complacent. In particular residents regularly report drug dealing, especially at the entrance opposite the Garden Centre women (well, they are real men, advice is: **do not approach them unpredictable and quick to resort to violence**). Many residents feel that there is success in contacting the Police.



At times they have been quite intimidating to you know, who will take on anyone...) So the Police **do not be hostile, as they are unpleasant, violence.**

nothing they can do, not least if they have had little

But it is worth persevering. Things do get done. For example a resident dialled 101 after seeing a bag snatch and says "very quick and effective action was taken". Other residents have reported drug dealings and have sent in registration numbers of dealers' cars. The dealers weren't seen again. Our resident observer advises you to lobby the Police service. In this matter, it is also worth involving one of our Councillors, Samata Khatoon.

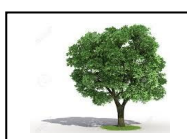
But the greatest concern of the Police is that "residents did not report incidents, or if they did so, it was not until far too long after the event".

So keep yourself safe. **First try phoning 101. If not, go on to Safer Neighbourhoods 020 8721 2810 or the local Police 020 8733 6518. For emergencies of course is, use 999.**

SPECIAL TREE SUPPLEMENT

Woodman spare that tree....

Various residents have been worried about information or rumours about threats to the trees in the village. The EVTRA Committee has discussed this, sought information and taken action. The current situation can be summarised as follows:



(1) The trees are clearly one of the attractions which visitors note when they arrive, and are also a delightful amenity to many residents, as well as improving the environment and air. **This situation will basically continue.**

(2) Most of the trees in the public areas are subject to Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs). As we understand it the TPOs also apply to some trees on private property.

If you wish to check your situation, contact the Tree Officer of Camden Councillor, who has a map. If in doubt, you should check before taking action about a tree, because if you cut one down or damage it, you can face a £1000 fine.



(3) Day to day supervision of the public trees and management matters are handled by PfP, currently through Mike Jackson.

(4) **But the Tree Officer makes the final decision about what happens to a tree, and the general principle is, as you might expect, tree preservation.**



(5) We understand that at some point PfP plan to change the nature of management of the landscaping. We are monitoring this very carefully, as we do not wish the trees (or landscape) to be "looked after by "skilled" workers of the same calibre as those who did the redecoration (has your paint peeled yet?) Fortunately, the mills of PfP grind slowly, and unlike those of the Almighty, they do not grind sure.

(6) There have been two main areas of concern recently. **One is trees and large shrubs in the back gardens adjoining the canal wall.** The question was whether these were now creating a situation which could be dangerous to passers-by and very costly to in terms of repairs. EVTRA pressed PfP, who have sent people to see and assess the situation. There seems to be goodwill on all sides, so hopefully the problems will be resolved acceptably.



(7) **The other problem is the large trees, particularly two ash trees by the Green.** Mike Jackson contacted the Tree Officer, who agreed that **they are infected with fungus, could certainly affect other trees, and could possibly become a danger to residents. They are therefore to be felled.** But PFP's mill, having ground unusually quickly, did so with strange results, including various other proposed fellings, and a body of residents protested. **The Tree Officer is currently creating a new proposal,** which will need to include the ash trees, but not necessarily any others. Residents will have the chance to consult on this.

(8) Mike Jackson has **made a proposal to replace the felled with ones which are less intrusive, and with less extensive roots, but in keeping with the village appearance.** Any proposal will be made public when it comes out.

(9) There is a further longer term question which EVTRA are currently looking into. **The current trees are in many cases forest trees.** (As we understand it, this was due to false economies at the time of planting). The trouble is that they grow, and they grow big. **This will therefore affect light, and may have other effects.**



We need therefore to get as clear a picture as possible of the current and likely future situation before getting advice on what should be done. Clearly **a balance is needed between the aesthetic and environmental benefits and possible threats to substructure. WE STRESS THAT SUCH PROBLEMS WOULD ARISE ONLY OVER YEARS, EVEN DECADES .** But we feel it is sensible to look at these matters now.

Residents are therefore invited to look at the areas around where they live and to note any difficulties, for example branches becoming a nuisance to neighbours, and pathways being forced up by roots. Just jot down your findings and send it to EVTRA via the website (: secretary@evtra.org.uk) with heading Landscape Survey. Once we have information we will report back.