

## St John's Society Annual Report 2020 -2021

Progress over 2020 has been good despite the pandemic. Committee members have worked hard pursuing their respective responsibilities especially with regard to specific campaigns or projects where consistent messaging and lobbying can be time consuming. All Committee meetings during Lockdown and beyond, are carried out on Zoom.

The website [www.st-johns-soc.org](http://www.st-johns-soc.org) is being actively used and committee members are asked for content particularly about local history, events, photos or anything of interest to the community. Rosie (RG) and Nick (NB) have attended meetings with Zoe (ZN) to learn how to add and amend content to the Website.

The Facebook page and Twitter account has been useful in promoting free local events, information and surveys that might be of interest to the people of St Johns. This has been a particularly good way to connect with locals during the lockdowns. Surveys for the mural, conservation, new name for the park and improving the area generally have been worked on by John (JW) and Rosie to help the Society decide on future focus in the area. Social Distance Dancing was started up during Lockdown 1 by a local resident, Judith, who sadly has now moved away. Even an escaped baby African Grey parrot who turned up at our local pub was re-homed after advertising on our Facebook page! Currently, 'likes' stand at 310 and 337 followers. A doubling of numbers, since last year. Twitter currently has 150 following.

A Whatsapp was created for the Committee to stay even more in touch. This led to ideas about creating Whatsapp groups for each street in the St John's area to stay in contact, particularly in an emergency, with neighbours during the pandemic and beyond. Lind St residents are currently trialling this. If you think that you could run such a group in your street - please let us know.

Revisions of the Constitution were circulated and was approved at an Extra-Ordinary meeting on the 18<sup>th</sup> May 2020. Thank you, Syd (SB) and Gordon (GB), for your hard work to make this happen.

Funding for a mural on the bridge at St John's Station was acquired by RG from Network Rail (early 2020). The design was by local resident Alma Tischler-Wood and painted onto the bridge by Lionel Stanhope. This was a huge success and judging by the positive response from local residents, was much needed during this strange time. Following on from this, more funding was secured from NR for the painting of the opposite side, as a good-will gesture for all the rail works planned in the locality for the Christmas and new-year period. We hope this to be completed by Spring 2021.

In September, SJS took part in the Brockley Front Garden Sale. It raised our profile in the locality, and beyond, and raised over £50 funds for us. Thank you, Liz (LD) and Rosie for organising.

The Greening Fund which we were successful in obtaining (2019) to improve the small garden behind the church on Cliff Terrace/St John's Vale has been gratefully received. Improvements, (delayed by Covid) has resulted in 2 new bins, 5 new benches with 1 of the old benches being renovated. We hope to hold an open day, when safe, which will include volunteers planting bulbs and possibly painting the railings.

In October, a monthly Planning Sub-committee was set up and a dedicated planning email account to be operated by Andrew (AS) and Nick [planning@st-johns-soc.org](mailto:planning@st-johns-soc.org) was created. Any response as a Society is discussed and agreed at this sub-committee meeting before we respond to any planning issues. We are also working on inclusion of a planning page on the website, in the near future.

Also, in October, an invitation to SJS to the grand opening of Kath's Place, 50 Friendly St attended by press and public. As Chair, I was asked to cut the ribbon with two of the charity's founders. This was due to SJS helping them find premises locally and putting them in touch with local schools. On opening, they started by supporting 30 families; that number is now over 5000.

The noticeboard at the station is being used more frequently to advertise local events, SJS meetings and photos of the new bridge mural. Thank you to Gordon, for renovating.

The Annual Christmas Carols singing at station was cancelled this year due to pandemic/lockdowns. This is a shame, as the carol sheets had been expanded and updated for the next carol singing gig. We hope to return Christmas 2021.

The CPZ has provided an increase in the availability of parking during the day during the hours that the CPZ is in force. However, the EV points that we were promised, at the initial consultation some years ago, are still being chased. Emails to Councillor McGeevor and LBL are beginning to get a response.

Future campaigning may include further bids for money to improve our green areas, the putting up of plaques to commemorate the 1957 crash and step-free access to the station. We recently supported Tanner's Hill Residents by advertising their 'clean-up.' After a survey of the area was conducted Joseph (JNR) and Nick, we hope to encourage more cleaning up and 'greening' of our area.

The St. John's Society understands the seriousness and urgency of the global climate and biodiversity emergency, especially for its likely future effects on the Organisation and its members. In citing these same issues, Lewisham Council's Strategic Action Plan (published March 2020) acknowledged the Council's 'obligation to future generations...and its duty to protect the most vulnerable members of our society, recognising the wide range of positive benefits a carbon neutral borough would bring to our residents and communities'. As the Plan requires appropriate collective action on many fronts, we (this Committee) pledge our commitment to supporting the spirit and the letter of Lewisham Council's Strategic Action Plan to transition to net zero carbon by 2030.

Some relevant aims:

- Campaign for better, cleaner more accessible, public transport
- Imagine a net-zero future
- Promote practical action by local people
- Propose greening projects, increasing biodiversity and improvements to our public realm, highways and open spaces
- Focus our attitudes to planning with the urgency of the climate emergency in mind

- Advocate improvements to existing buildings to improve energy efficiency and generating renewable energy
- Hold Lewisham and other authorities and organisations to their declarations and promises
- Assess the emerging Local Plan to ensure adequate measures to address the emergency are proposed, and ensuring they are followed up with action

Some of the challenges we face require radical, far reaching measures. They will require us to monitor our situation more vigilantly and to adapt ourselves to external changes when required. However, we are optimistic that, if managed imaginatively, these lifestyle changes can improve our community's health, well-being and sense of neighbourliness. We undertake to work together to meet these challenges, but they will present opportunities to improve our area, for all.

We note that there is not a Character Appraisal of the St John's conservation area and the Brookmill Road Conservation area, is in need of updating. We hope to make some suggestions in the next year.

The St Johns Society maintains a mailing list of interested parties. If you want to be included on the list please email the chair [chair@st-johns-soc.org](mailto:chair@st-johns-soc.org) or use the form on [the St John's Web Site](#).

T-towels with maps of the area were purchased for the use of prizes for online surveys that we run and to sell locally.

We liaise with local committees and societies especially where we have joint interests, whether they be local to St Johns or indeed the whole of Lewisham. Connections have now been made to Chairs of the following groups: BrocSoc, Planning – BrocSoc, Friends of Brookmill Park, BRACS, Lee Manor Society, Deptford Society, Brookmill Nature Conservation, Culverley Green Residents, Blackheath Society, Deptford Heritage Society, QWAG, Tanner's Hill Residents, including: Community PC, MP's, local councillors, Kath's Place (We Care), Celia Hammond and The Brookmill Pub.

Connections were re-established with Rev Peter Farley-Moore (St John's Church) but sadly he has now left to take up another position in Wakefield Cathedral. Prior to his leaving, SJS promoted an Advent Food Hamper to help provide hampers for the church and Kath's Place to distribute locally. Over 55 households received a Christmas meal and a hamper delivered on Christmas Eve. 40 additional gifts and hampers were given to LewCAS foodbank.

As you can see, much has been achieved over the last year. This could not have happened without the hard work and persistence of all the Committee Members. It is not always visible or obvious what these volunteers are doing behind the scenes and I thank them all. I hope that the results of our endeavours speak for themselves.

Litsa Breingan

**Chair**

**The St. John's Society 2019 –**