The Formosa Garden

Newsletter – Autumn 2026



Welcome to the Autumn Newsletter which I think can fairly be described as a bumper edition. As well as the traditional picture pull-out of this Summer's events in the Garden there's a significant Board announcement about a change in our managing agents & a reminder of the equally important update of the Garden Master Plan which has already been notified to free-holders. And I can reveal that for the first time in its history the Newsletter has an actual sponsor! Read all about them inside, along with tales of pets, pedestrians & pianists...

But as ever, this Newsletter is about the Garden, which has come through spectacularly bad times & good since I last wrote in the Summer -- first of all being devastated by the prolonged period of drought but then coming through to win Silver at the London in Bloom award at the first time of asking!! We were one of 10 entries in the Small Park/Enclosed Garden category. Afterwards Gravitas guru Jan Melkenbeek described his team as "beaming & super-motivated" & planning to use their success as a springboard for their campaign for Gold in 2027!



This edition of the Formosa Garden newsletter has been produced with generous support from Strutt & Parker, experts in selling and letting homes in Little Venice.

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Our entry for the London Squares Garden competition was sadly less successful, with judging taking place just as the drought was really beginning to take hold, but there was recognition for candidates' "great efforts in tough conditions".

And some good news for all those residents who've been infuriated by the persistent whine of the leaf-blower every Friday during the leaf fall season: Gravitas have now taken possession of a new battery-operated & much quieter version, seen here being put through its paces by Formosa team leader Connor:



GARDEN MASTERPLAN REVISITED

Because three trees were cut down out of sequence in 2024, as was well-documented at the time, the original felling schedule laid out in the Masterplan drawn up in 2016 is being effectively pushed back by three years. As a result, the final cycle for felling will take place in 2054 not 2051. The revised schedule was communicated to freeholders in an email sent out on 5th October & for the future the aim is to ensure that the schedule is always published in advance.

The new plan also includes provision for the planting of new trees where older specimens fail & as the need for shade becomes more critical in light of our longer hotter Summers. Tree health reports will be commissioned more regularly to ensure we keep an eye on the health of all of them.

A full pollard will take place next February.

BONFIRE NIGHT NOW WITH ADDED SPARKLE!



This year's celebrations will take place on Saturday November 7th when as ever we can count on a fabulous display from award-winning supplier Firework Crazy. The bonfire will be lit at 6.30 pm & the fireworks will get under way at 7 pm (with the display in neighbouring Crescent Garden handily kicking off half an hour later). Guests are encouraged to be within the Garden perimeter by 6.50 pm at the latest & all spectators must keep behind the safety cordon.

Residents are not permitted to let off fireworks in the Garden or on patios but this year for the first time there will be free sparklers available for anyone who identifies as an actual child or a child at heart. They can be obtained from the two security guards on site on a first-come first-served basis, but please dispose of them in the bucket provided & not on the grass or the paths.

Keep an eye on the Formosa blog for further details closer to the date.

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LAST ORDERS AT THE WARRINGTON

The historic Warrington pub closed its doors temporarily at the beginning of October to allow for a major programme of refurbishment, meaning that with the closure of the Colonnade last December there is currently no hotel availability in the Little Venice area. The pub is hoping to re-open towards the end of March next year.

UNEXPECTED DELIVERY FOR W9….



Meet baby Mikael, who decided to make an appearance in mid-June nearly three weeks before the expected date. The labour happened so fast that his parents didn't have time to get to hospital & he had to be delivered inside their Sutherland Avenue flat by an emergency crew who arrived with just minutes to spare. Baby & parents are all doing well & as the father says the house now has a very special place in their hearts!

NEW FACE ON THE BOARD

The Formosa Board is delighted to welcome new member Erica Worth, a classically-trained concert pianist & editor of *Pianist* magazine who has lived on Warrington Crescent for over 30 years.

Working from home she says she finds a real sense of calm in the Garden & can often be seen walking round it with her black rescue cat Misty in close attendance, giving her an important opportunity to connect with others.



She recollects that the Garden provided an important refuge during Covid & feels it's time to give something back: "It's only when one joins a small but dedicated organisation like the Board that one realises how much work there actually is to do. I look forward to the challenge!"

MEET OUR NEW SPONSORS!

We're delighted to announce that Strutt & Parker, one of the country's longest-established estate agents with a network of more than 50 branches, have kindly agreed to sponsor our Newsletter. Between them their local team of (left to right) James Diper, Zach Madison & Sarah James, together with Hamish Gilfeather & Neville Serlui (not pictured), have over 125 years' experience of working in North West London.



Says Zach, Director of Private Clients: “We are pleased to support the Newsletter as we recognise the important role it plays in keeping the Formosa community connected and informed.”

Strutt & Parker already sponsor the Rugby Portobello Trust in Notting Hill, Cherry Trees Residents’ Amenities Association in Kensington & the annual Ten Acres Residents’ Association street party in Chelsea. For Zach it’s not just about doing business, it’s about getting involved & celebrating the area he loves: “Many of our clients have become friends & even brought us return business with their parents & siblings.”

In fact Zach has literally gone the extra mile for one client, running a marathon in support of his charity last year & raising £66,000. (As a passionate runner, he’s due to do his eleventh marathon in Valencia in December).



Zach describes today’s housing market as “more challenging”, citing the impact of the Middle East conflict & recent government volatility. His advice to people buying & selling: “Buyers are more selective & with a greater sense of value. Realistic pricing is key – if required one meaningful adjustment in the price is more effective than a succession of small ones.”

But he points out that the current situation does at least provide an opportunity for buyers to access parts of central London they couldn’t previously afford, because the good news is that the love affair with the capital shows no sign of abating – and with communal gardens in particular: “Garden flats are especially popular because of the direct access for residents– that’s a massive draw.”

And what about access for dogs?? Zach is a huge fan & pulls up a photo of his beloved bulldog Reggie to prove it: “They give you unconditional love, they’re pleased to see you & they don’t answer back. For some purchasers the ability to take their dog into a communal garden is a deal-breaker”. Which has got to be good news for Formosa!

PEDESTRIANISATION SCHEME STALLED

The proposed scheme to pedestrianise the stretch of Formosa Street between Warrington Crescent & Castellain Road has been halted following the change of political control at Westminster City Council. The scheme was supported by a clear majority who took part in a public consultation back in December & the then Labour-controlled Council was set to take things further by producing a feasibility design. However, following the Conservatives’ re-capture of Westminster in May the Cabinet member for City Management Cllr Tim Mitchell called a halt to the scheme as part of a review of all spending commitments in light of forthcoming cuts in government grants to Westminster of £100m.



Instead, Cllr Mitchell has asked officials to look at a more “light touch” version, using the temporary scheme that was implemented during Covid as the template, with a view to running a trial in the Summer of next year.

Sutherland Avenue resident John Gregson, who originally mooted the scheme, remains unimpressed. The original plan being taken forward by Labour was not simply to allow more tables on the street in the Summer as was the case during Covid, he said; rather it was to create a kind of traffic-free village square where local residents and visitors could meet, shop, enjoy the restaurants and cafés or simply spend time (see artist’s impression). He is now offering to work with Council officers on a revised & potentially lower-cost scheme that will still meet the objectives of the original.

RESIDENTS IMPROVISE FOR SOLAR ECLIPSE



The most dramatic partial eclipse of the century drew many into the Garden at around 7 pm on August 12th & while most had left it too late to invest in special glasses, they showed their initiative by bringing along colanders & sheets of A4 to act as makeshift pinhole projectors. And the reflections cast on neighbouring buildings was quite something to behold:



WINE-TASTING GOES DOWN A TREAT!

On a gorgeous evening in early September this year's wine-tasting drew over a hundred residents out into the Garden. Our special thanks go as ever to David Motion & his team at the Winery for the usual well judged selection of wines – not forgetting a glass of champagne to kick off proceedings in style. Other local businesses in Clifton Road also played their part by supplying the nibbles: baguettes & crackers from Gail's Bakery, grapes from Clifton Greens & a further selection of crackers from the Planetis Health & Nutrition shop. We thank them all for their generosity & community spirit! This hugely successful fixture in the Formosa calendar dates back to 2021 when it provided the first chance for friends & neighbours to come out & socialise after the dark days of Covid.

Pictures of this year's event can be enjoyed in our special summer supplement

IT TOOK A COMMUNITY TO FIND A CAT

By Gavin Brazg

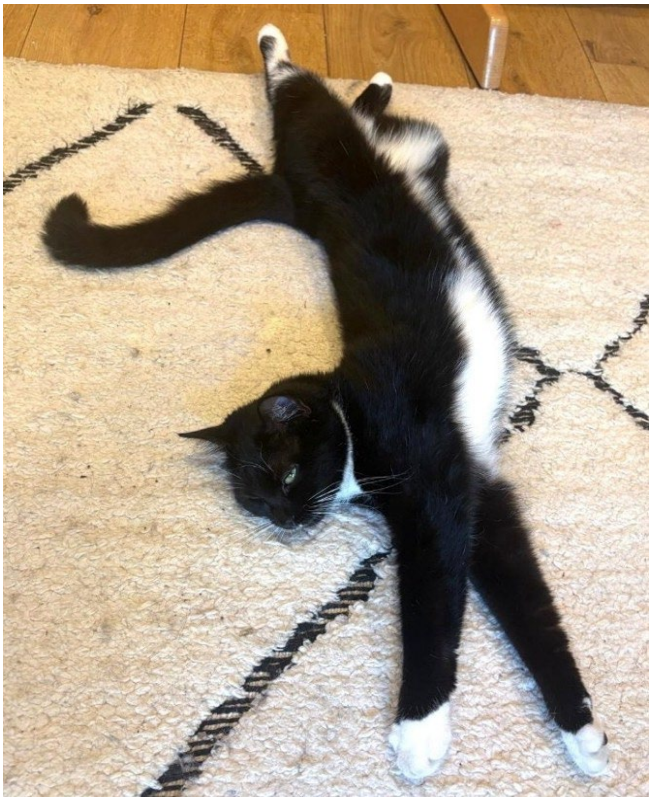
It's a while ago now, but some of you may remember the posters, the torch-lit figures shuffling around the flowerbeds at dawn and the plaintive rattle of a treat bag echoing across the Garden in mid-August. That was us. But it was all Coco's fault.

Coco is 13 months' old and a devoted homebody who doesn't roam, so when she vanished around midday one Monday, we knew something was wrong and our imaginations got busy. Had she squeezed under the gate and out into the wilds of W9? Been cat-napped by an admirer? Had a run-in with the fox? Every theory got darker as the days went on.

What followed was several days of the full missing-cat play book: those posters, dusk patrols, knocking on doors, calling into the dark. Nothing.

Then, at half past six one morning, the text that changed everything: Coco was safe, tucked away in a neighbour's downstairs cupboard, having apparently decided it was the perfect spot to let the drama unfold around her.

Back at home, Coco remains entirely unrepentant & is now on day release, fully tagged & trackable.



But the real story is all of you. Our heartfelt thanks to everyone who joined in the search & for every shared post & every bit of advice & encouragement we received. We've always been told this is a special community & now we know just how true that is.

NEWS IN BRIEF

- There's been yet another burglary locally, this time in Warrington Crescent, where scaffolding was potentially used to gain access through an open window. Residents are encouraged to take extra care securing windows & doors, particularly those that may be accessible from the Garden side or from scaffolding.

- The Board has had numerous complaints about anti-social behaviour & breaches of the Formosa Rules over the Summer, including noisy children (frequently unsupervised), regular football games involving children over 10 & even adults & parties which are not always authorised & sometimes include the use of loudspeakers & the playing of music out in the open – all strictly forbidden!

  When it comes to enjoying our wonderful Garden co-operation, restraint & mutual respect remain the watchwords.

- The traditional Little Venice Christmas tree will be lit in Warwick Avenue (next to the cabmen's shelter) on Monday November 30th at 5.30 pm.



Among those taking part in the ceremony will be the Lord Mayor of Westminster, Cllr Karen Scarborough, Little Venice's three Conservative Councillors & choirs from local schools. There will be refreshments afterwards at nearby Clifton Nurseries.

Dates for the Diary 2027

One date for next year's diary: the annual London Open Gardens weekend will be on **5th—6th June 2027**; more details to follow when known.

The next Newsletter will appear in the New Year so please send any material – articles, letters or other contributions all welcome! – to reach me at vivvy.robins@gmail.com by January 11th 2027.