



Welcome to the Summer edition of the Newsletter & it seems we're running out of superlatives to describe the current appearance of the Garden! Among the many expressions of appreciation I've heard from residents only recently have been: "Jan & his team do such an amazing job", "There's always so much colour" & "The best it's ever looked in my 25 years on Formosa". Emboldened by this kind of very positive feedback, the Board has put the Garden in for two awards, London in Bloom & the London Squares Garden competition. We'll find out in the Autumn whether this first-time gamble has paid off!

In the meantime, work has finished on improving the Formosa Street end of the garden, which now has a more fully-planted & defined flower bed & a new bench area, while the orchard is thriving to the point where we should have a good crop of apples, pears & plums this Autumn.



This is the time of year when exceptionally outsiders are able to sample the delights of private gardens like ours through the annual London Open Gardens weekend, with Formosa opening its gates on **Sunday June 7th between 2–5 pm** as we have done for many years. This year 120 gardens were slated to participate, including seven for the first time. The aim of the event, organised by the charity London Historic Parks &

Gardens, is to demonstrate the value of green spaces & raise funds for their future protection.



NEW DOG RULES: SO FAR SO GOOD!

As all dog-owners will be aware new & more stringent penalties were introduced on April 13th to combat what had been increasingly anti-social behaviour by a small minority. The Board would like to thank the dog community, most of whom have been supportive of the new initiative, for their co-operation. Complaints about issues such as dog poo, barking & dogs off-lead outside permitted hours have reduced dramatically.

IT'S NEVER LOOKED SO TIDY.....



...but that still hasn't managed to shift the Colonnade Hotel! Of recent years, passers-by have been used to seeing overturned garden furniture & rampant weeds on the patio of the property on Warrington Crescent. Since it went into administration last December there's

been a major clean-up of the outside but it doesn't appear to have done the trick – the hotel is still on the market. Its August lineage as a Grade II-listed Regency-style building & birthplace of Alan Turing has yet to cut any ice with would-be investors, not unconnected perhaps with the fact that the asking price has actually gone up from £15m to £19m.....

FORMOSA: HOW THE PARTY STARTED



Newcomers to the Garden may be surprised to learn that the history of the Formosa Summer Party, for many years known as the Family Fun Day, goes back at least a quarter of a century! Seems it grew out of a family tradition established by long-time resident Pat Graham, who moved into Warrington Crescent in the mid-nineties after travelling the world while working in the clothing business. That was a time when, as she recalls, the Garden was a very different place: "Back then there was more of a mix of residents, most of them tenants of the Church Commissioners or various Housing Associations. It was only a minority who actually owned their property, but everyone knew one another & socialised."

That meant that when Pat began organising birthday parties for her young son Jack somehow children from the entire neighbourhood started pitching in.

The first was when Jack turned five & the bouncy castle she arranged was such a success that the following year she had to order two & supplement them with a ball pond. Each subsequent year some fresh activity was added & brought new people to the party: "They started turning up whether or not they were invited. Some brought picnics – it was a real free-for-all!"

On his 10th birthday Jack asked the ice-cream seller parked outside his school gates if he would be free to come along & the rest is history -- Raimondo has been a mainstay of the Summer event ever since!



Anyway, by the time of Jack's 10th birthday Pat felt she had had enough but that was when a near-neighbour, Sara O'Neill, stepped in, going to the Garden Committee to ask whether they could maybe fund some kind of annual party instead. The event was formally christened Family Fun Day & as well as making good use of Pat's contacts list they added the donkey rides, face-painting & other features that have helped make this occasion so popular over the years. Sara ended up running it for 13 years but more recently its name was changed to the Summer Party to send out a more inclusive message that it wasn't just for families.

This year a shortage of volunteers has meant that it has not been possible to stage it on its customary scale but nevertheless:

PUT JULY 4th IN YOUR DIARY...

for a slightly more low-key version of this Summer social highlight! There will be the customary inflatables for children & legendary Raimondo the ice-cream seller on hand (as name-checked above), but otherwise people are being asked to make their own fun by bringing along family & friends & grabbing wine & pizza etc from Formosa Street. The newly re-opened Little Red Pepper (q.v.) does a mean line in take-aways, I'm told! You'll need blankets to sit on & please remember that only plastic glasses can be brought into the Garden.

For next year we're crossing our fingers that the all-singing all-dancing (yes, that could be literally) Summer Party *will* be back!

STILL A CHANCE TO RAISE A GLASS

Here's one Summer social tradition which happily has remained in safe hands. The wine-tasting has been a fixture in the Garden since our emergence from Covid back in 2021 & thanks to Board members Steff Roeg & Julia Sherman, together with newcomer Sierra Paller, it will be taking place this year in early September.



Once more, it will be run by our favourite off-licence, The Winery in Clifton Road, & residents will again be entitled to free vouchers to sample the fine wines on offer. Keep an eye on my blog on the Formosa Amenity website for the exact date when known.

*Note for your diary: The traditional **Bonfire Night** celebrations will be taking place on **Saturday November 7th** with the same award-winning supplier we've enjoyed for the last couple of years. Keep an eye on the Formosa website for up-dates.*

THE RED PEPPER IS RE-BORN

.....though with a slight tweak to its name! It's now known as Little Red Pepper, in a nod to its Little Venice location. When the previous owner died last September it looked to be the end of the line for this family-run business which had been a fixture on Formosa Street since the mid-1990s, when it was widely held to be purveyor of the best pizza in London (courtesy it was said of a wood-burning oven specially imported from Italy).



Relatives didn't have the heart to carry on & were set to surrender the lease, but along came fashion designer Lilly Zar who, despite having zero experience of the restaurant business, decided to give it a try in partnership with fellow local resident & lawyer Reza Farsa. Said Reza: "I've been a loyal customer for around 15 years & couldn't face the thought of it staying closed. I didn't want to lose out on my pizza!"

Lilly made good use of her artistic talents to oversee a complete re-design aimed, she said, "to create a gallery feeling, light & airy". The restaurant, which re-opened formally on May 15th, was not without its teething troubles, she confessed, "but there was such warmth & support from the community".



GARDEN PLAN REVISION IN HAND

By Arabella van Niekerk



Well-documented events of recent years have meant that the Board is being extremely careful to ensure that the next stages of the Masterplan are well-communicated and delivered in a way which meets the expectations of our whole community. In advance of next year's felling schedule, a comprehensive tree health report has been commissioned which will be reviewed by our experts and next steps communicated once this group has reached its conclusions. All next steps will be of course only taken with the full and final permission of Westminster Council.

Editor's note: Full details of the genesis of the Garden Masterplan are to be found on the Formosa website. It's also the subject of a glossy two-page spread in the Spring edition of that bible of London's communal gardens, Garden Square News – another sign perhaps of our increasing ascendancy up the league table of London squares!

SUN SHINES ON MAY CAVALCADE



There was a bumper turn-out for this year's Canal Cavalcade over the three days of the early May Bank Holiday, with more food & craft stalls than ever together with live music & children's entertainment. That's not to mention the real stars of the show: more than one hundred boats, decked out brightly in bunting, which the whole event is designed to celebrate! The Little Venice Cavalcade has been going for an epic 43 years now, having first been staged in 1983!

GOOD THING THE PAVEMENT IS WIDE



Could this be a record -- no fewer than three e-bikes recently seen abandoned within a few yards of each other on Sutherland Avenue? These were operated by Lime, with Forrest being another persistent offender. However, last November Westminster Council brought in a policy of £100 fixed penalty fines charged to the operators & it's calculated that at the current rate they could reach £1 million within a year, with all proceeds re-invested in local road safety projects, assuming the

scheme is continued by the new Tory administration. Meanwhile residents can always report badly parked e-bikes using the [Council's Report It app](#).

GREEN IS NOT THE ONLY COLOUR



We're used to seeing the flock of parakeets that grace Formosa regularly, but how's this for a brand-new burst of colour? This canary has been spotted by various residents of recent weeks & is photographed here on the lilac tree in Cheryl Prax's garden on Castellain Road within handy distance of the niger seed in the bird feeder.

FOB EXCHANGE NOW COMPLETE!

....with thanks in particular to Board member Julia Sherman, who heroically oversaw the hand-over outside the Prince Alfred pub for an entire afternoon back in mid-April. All freeholders now have renewed access to the Castellain Road gate without resorting to the keypad. While collecting their fobs they were also asked to fill in their contact details to enable the Board to update its records & in the process many kindly ticked the box to indicate an interest in volunteering. Once our Managing Agents have collated all the names the Board will be back in touch!

GOOD TO KNOW THE MET HAVE GOT OUR BACKS!



This sign seen on a Westminster street caused some hilarity recently. They obviously didn't employ a proof-reader....

NEWS IN BRIEF

- The Conservatives' re-capture of Westminster Council in last month's local elections means that various planning schemes partly processed by the outgoing Labour administration have been paused, among them the proposed pedestrianisation of a section of Formosa Street & a major re-vamp of the run-down area around Warwick Ave tube. These projects will now be reviewed by the Cabinet member responsible, Cllr. Tim Mitchell.
- Freeholders will be notified shortly of the date of this year's **AGM** when as well as financial & budgetary matters there will be up-dates on the Garden & forthcoming social events, together with the chance to put questions to the Board *via* our Managing Agents.
- With the approach of summer please remember to adhere to the rules that make the Garden a peaceful & pleasant place for all, as detailed on the Formosa website at formasagarden.co.uk/garden-rules.

There's been a spike in complaints recently about adults playing ball games (only permitted in company with children under 10) & some residents dragging garden benches from their paved bases onto the grass. If you want to sit out on the grass to enjoy the sun, please bring your own lightweight folding chairs!



Dates for the Diary 2026

- London Open Gardens Weekend – Sunday 7th June
- Shakespeare in the Squares – **N.B. Crescent Garden**, Saturday 4th July
- Summer Social Gathering -- Saturday 4th July
- AGM date TBC
- Wine-tasting date TBCs
- Bonfire Night – Saturday 7th November

The Autumn Newsletter is due to be published in mid-October, so please send any articles, letters or other contributions to me at vivvy.robins@gmail.com by October 5th. Meanwhile a happy Summer to all!