



Welcome to the Spring edition of the Formosa Newsletter after a bit of a hiatus! The Winter seems to have been exceptionally wet & horrible but with the clocks having just gone forward it's time to look ahead to the warmer weather & the start of the annual social calendar. So far we can confirm our participation in the **Open Gardens weekend on Sunday June 7th** & this year's **Wine-tasting** event is currently pencilled in for the end of the Summer. (Keep an eye on my blog for confirmation of the date). Once more it will be run by our favourite off-licence, The Winery in Clifton Road & as is the much-appreciated custom, residents will again be entitled to free vouchers to sample the fine wines on offer.

Looking further ahead to the Autumn we are delighted to say that the traditional **Bonfire Night** celebrations will be going ahead on **Saturday**

November 7th with the same award-winning supplier we enjoyed last year.

However, by contrast the future of the annual **Summer Party** is far from assured. At the risk of sounding like a stuck record if we cannot find volunteers for this event it simply **WILL NOT HAPPEN**. A couple of members of the Garden Committee can offer a few hours to help out but what we need is a couple of willing souls to take the lead. If you feel you have the time & inclination to get involved then please do contact our Managing Agents.

More generally the Committee is looking to build up a pool of volunteers with event organisation, digital &/or legal experience to ensure that our skills base is as broad as possible. If this rings any bells with you, please do think of stepping up to the mark!

DOG RULES TOUGHENED TO TARGET OFFENDERS



As dog-owners will be now be aware, tough new rules have been introduced to combat increasingly anti-social behaviour by a couple of outliers who have been spoiling the enjoyment of the Garden for everyone else. In particular the limited increase in the amount of time dogs were allowed off-lead in the Winter months was systematically flouted & the amount of dog poo has also been on the rise, while loud & persistent barking by some animals has continued unabated. There have also been reports of one dog attacking another & of other dogs even biting residents.

From April 13th all breaches of the rules will incur an immediate fine of £200 which will be levied on the relevant freehold property, while any further breaches & any attacks on other animals or on residents will result in an immediate & permanent ban on the dog responsible.

Formosa is not the only communal Garden locally to be facing such challenges & others have responded either by requiring pets to be on a lead at all times (Crescent Garden) or by banning them altogether (Triangle & Winston Gardens). Nobody wants to see that here so PLEASE check out the rules on the Formosa website & STICK TO THEM!

DEPARTURE FROM THE BOARD

Sadly for the Garden, Susan Wright stepped down as a Director at the end of last year. Board member Peter Cross said residents owed her a huge debt of gratitude: "Her enormous contribution to the garden, particularly in terms of our digital communication and general organisation cannot be overstated." I personally can

bear witness to this since as well as revitalising the Formosa website she introduced me to the art of blogging and generally helped me overcome many of my Luddite tendencies.

ALL CHANGE FOR GARDEN GATE FOBs



Following the replacement of the defective mechanism on the Castellain Road gate all fobs need to be re-issued. This is due to happen very shortly, so keep an eye on my blog for the time & date & point of collection.

The Board plans to use the exercise to update its records which means that all residents will need to complete a form before the new fob can be handed over. The form will include the following:

- Names and email addresses of all occupants of the freehold
- Confirmation of communication preferences by freehold including (optional but highly recommended) a sign-up for the Formosa Newsletter & blogs
- Name and contact details of the Managing Agent for the freehold
- Name and up-to-date photograph of any dogs at the property which will all need to be re-registered (as we know that some unregistered dogs are now using the garden)

As soon as the new fobs are ready the current entry code for the keypad will no longer work.

RENT CHARGE: IT'S MORE THAN TIME TO PAY UP!

The Board has been notified by our Managing Agents that a very small number of free-holders are now extremely overdue on the payment of the rent charge despite being chased & subject to legal proceedings numerous times. Free-holders are reminded that failure to pay will result in penalties including denial of fobs to access the Garden.

FORMOSA PEDESTRIANISATION MOVES STEP CLOSER



Residents will remember that at the turn of the year there was a month-long public consultation on proposals for either a full or partial closure of the stretch of Formosa Street between Castellain Road & Warrington Crescent. The results have now been published by Westminster City Council which show that of the 425 people who replied 80% supported the idea of full closure (Option 1), with around 50% favouring a timed closure (Option 2) which would restrict entries for deliveries combined with a permanent one-way traffic arrangement.

The Council will now produce a feasibility design based on Option 1 which will be subject in due course to a further round of consultation.

The move has been welcomed by Sutherland Avenue resident John Gregson, who got the ball rolling with a petition calling for pedestrianisation back in 2024. He commented: "Local residents now have the prospect of a safe, car-free and attractive space for people to walk, shop, and socialise, thereby enhancing an already valuable community asset."

For those interested in learning more detail, the full consultation report can be found on Westminster's

website at

<https://formasastreetpublicrealm.commonplace.is/en-GB/proposals/v3/consultation-report?step=step1>.

COULD THIS BE AN AWARD-WINNER?



As Spring gets underway our garden is looking as lovely as ever thanks to the ministrations of Jan & his team, so this year for the first time we have decided to enter it for not one but two garden awards – London in Bloom & the London Squares Garden competition. The field is wide we know & some Gardens have been entering regularly for years, but we are feeling confident enough to at least give it a go!

And here are some of the reasons:

- The new orchard means we should have a good crop of apples & pears this year. The avocado tree has also recovered after being moved (no sign of any fruit yet tho'!) & the appearance of the ancient olive tree in the Med bed has been much improved after a spot of drastic pruning.
- Terracotta pots are being ordered for the Med bed to go with the much-admired new circular bench, & we've also been gifted a few small new trees which will be incorporated into those beds which still have some gaps.
- Watch out for the new species of tulips which we were planted last Winter to add a lot more colour to areas that were deemed to need a bit of brightening up.

- The grass is greener than it's ever been thanks to all the work done last Summer to treat & fertilise it. The constant rain at the beginning of the year can only have helped!

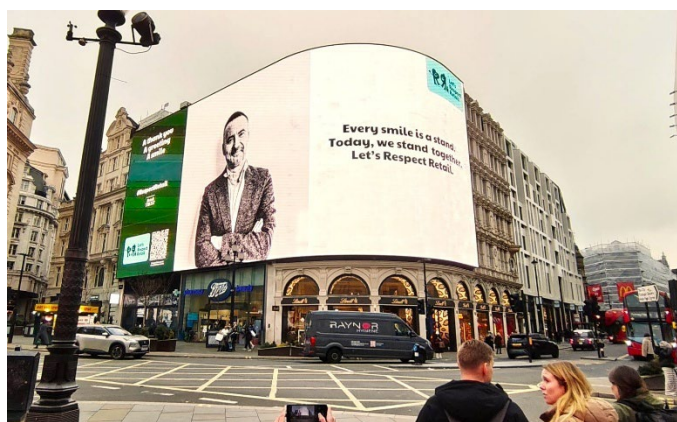


- An increasing number of residents appear to be making use of the fresh herbs sited in the Med bed & the intention is to add in some chives later in the year.
- A plan has been approved to lavish a little more love on the area at the Formosa Street end of the Garden, including a more fully-planted & defined bed, new bench area & stonework.
- And of course we've had a delightful variety of flowers from quite early on in the year, some of them captured here on the right by Gravitass boss Jan Melkenbeek, for whom gardening is obviously not his only talent! We hope to feature more of his photos in further editions.

Polite reminder: an increasing number of private pots, toys, balls, chairs & the like are being found on the garden paths which do need to be kept completely clear. The gardeners have been instructed to return anything they find to individuals' private gardens or to dispose of them.



LOCAL MAN MAKES IT BIG!



Who's was that face looking down benignly on Christmas shoppers from a giant billboard in Piccadilly Circus? Yes, none other than our very own Peter Cross, ex-Formosa Board Chairman & noted consumer champion, advertising the work of the UK charity Let's Respect Retail which campaigns to halt abuse against retail workers. Peter is Ambassador to the charity & of course author of *"Start with the Customer"*, hailed since its publication last Autumn as the definitive text on delivering world-class customer service.

GUESTS LEFT STRANDED BY COLONNADE COLLAPSE



It's old news that the Colonnade has gone into administration & is currently on the market (for a cool

£15m+) but what's only now emerging is the number of would-be guests who were shockingly left in the lurch from mid-December when they arrived at the hotel with a confirmed booking only to find it all shuttered up. Locals who noticed groups of people standing outside the entrance in bewilderment tried to help, among them Scott Morris who works in the Real Drinks beer & wine shop on Formosa Street.

As he recalled: "The first people I saw were on Xmas Eve, quite late – around 10.30 pm. There was no sign on the door & they didn't know what was going on. They were a couple, Italian I think, & didn't speak much English so I brought them back to the wine bar & talked to them via Google Translate. In the end I took them to Paddington on the tube because there are no other hotels around here."



Scott said others kept arriving over the next couple of weeks, mostly from Italy & Spain -- "though there was one old guy from Mexico who arrived I think on New Year's Eve. He spoke almost no English so he got me to call his son in Mexico who tried to sort out some accommodation for him from down there. But on NYE it wasn't going to be easy!"

Eventually a – typically tatty -- sign went up on the door of the hotel but that was misleading in itself, claiming the hotel was, not “under administration” but “under *new* administration”, which is not at all the same thing.

Overall, Scott estimates that “dozens & dozens” of people will have turned up there since the closure: “If I saw them outside with suitcases, staring at their phones, I would invite them in & set them up with Wi-Fi. The whole thing has been an absolute scandal – not least the agents who’ve kept on taking bookings.”

Incidentally the hotel’s own website is still out there, still boasting of its mythical four stars & notionally taking bookings itself, although needless to say whatever dates you put in you are told that “nothing is available” & to try alternative ones!

SHAKESPEARE’S BACK IN THE GARDENS....THO’ NOT THIS ONE!



The ever-popular touring company Shakespeare in the Squares will be back this Summer at a record-breaking 35 locations, including the Crescent Garden on **Saturday July 4th**. For their 10th anniversary production they will be staging “*Love’s Labour’s Lost*”, tho’ perhaps, as is their calling card, not entirely as Shakespeare intended – we are promised rock & pop classics from the 1960s & ‘70s for a start! Tickets are currently on sale at shakespeareinthesquares.co.uk. Hopefully the company can return to the Formosa Garden next year.

NEWS IN BRIEF

- Westminster Council has now committed £3m to the Warwick Avenue refurbishment scheme allowing for a “hybrid” design based on public feedback. The aim is to enhance the area around the tube station & cabmen’s shelter & improve street lighting & pedestrian safety. The next steps include further refinement of the design which will inform the final construction plans.
- The Council has also earmarked £352,000 for the introduction of cycling contra-flow routes (where cyclists are allowed to ride against the flow of traffic) & given the green light to nine of them across the Borough. However, it plans to amend the design for the Castellain Road route, which would run from the junction with Formosa Street to the junction with Lauderdale Road, to address concerns about cyclist safety. The revised proposal will then go out to public consultation once more.
- With the warmer weather on the way please refresh your memory as to what is & isn’t allowed in the Garden! For example, ball games are only permissible for children under 10 & for parties of more than 10 people you need to get prior permission from the Managing Agents. It’s all set out on the website at formasagarden.co.uk/garden-rules. SSSSSS

Dates for the Diary 2026

- London Open Gardens Weekend – Sunday 7th June
- Shakespeare in the Squares – Saturday 4th July
- Wine-tasting - TBC
- Bonfire Night - Saturday 7th November

The Summer Newsletter is due to be published at the beginning of June, so please feel free to send any articles, letters or other contributions to me at vivvy.robins@gmail.com by May 18th. That doesn’t often happen but it’s great when it does as it’s as much your Newsletter as mine!