

ST MARY'S ISLAND

RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

November 2013

Who we are and why you should join us:

The St. Mary's Island Residents' Association Ltd. (SMIRA) is a Limited Company with a Board of volunteer Directors all resident on SMI. We hold regular meetings throughout the year with an AGM this year in late November.

It is important that as many residents as possible become members so that we better reflect their needs and wishes. Membership costs nothing and by joining you will regularly receive the minutes of our meetings and therefore better understand and, if you wish, be involved in the improvements that we strive for and the issues that we try to resolve or combat.

There is always strength in numbers so please download an application form from our website, www.smira/info and join us in our endeavours to make Chatham Maritime and SMI a better place to live, work, play and bring up our children. **David Taylor, Chair**

Chairman's Voice:

Our AGM is almost upon us again and with it the publication of this annual Newsletter, which I hope you will find both informative and enjoyable. Much has happened in the last twelve months, I believe mainly for the better, and this is in no small way due to the influence of SMIRA, the voice of the majority of residents on SMI, and the hard work of its volunteer officers.

Ring road and secondary road adoption:

This has been an important part of our activities this year and I am pleased to confirm that our ring road is finally formally adopted and work has now commenced on the estate roads in the Barratts and Countryside Sectors. These adoptions are for the roads and pavements only and so SMIRA continue to strive to incorporate and ensure the long term maintenance of our lovely roadside landscaping that we all enjoy and bought into. SMIRA are grateful for the cooperation and drive of Medway Council in bringing all the parties together and helping to deliver this common objective.

Masterplan Final Phase "Build-Out" of SMI:

The Master Plan application has been submitted to the Council by Countryside Properties and you will have received copies of this through your letterboxes by now. SMIRA were invited to the initial meeting where presentations from a selected number of architects were considered and a final scheme chosen. This has been a long process and, again, SMIRA were active in helping to evolve the

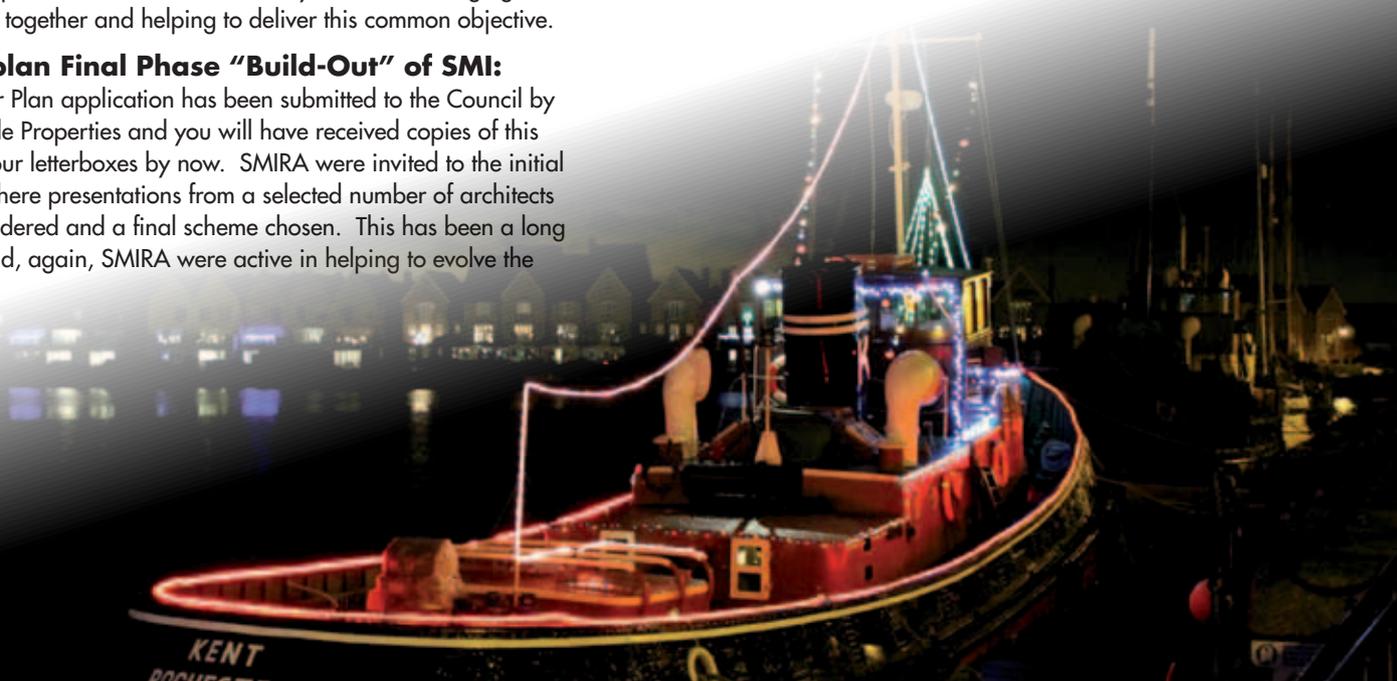
scheme into what you see today. Although it is still at the application stage, the developer has put in a lot of hard work and consideration following the initial consultation process and, if accepted and approved in its current form, much of what SMIRA asked for such as the elderly assisted housing block, the balance of affordable housing to be shared equity, more visitor parking, more residents parking, drop off and pick up parking spaces near to the school and better access to our lovely river walk is included. We have also requested that any residents gardens falling within key areas of public realm be maintained under a management charge arrangement. It is hoped that this should prevent some of the problems that we experience where, unfortunately, residents do not maintain their gardens to a satisfactory "street scene" standard, for example, along Central Walk.

Street Fuel Ltd: Application to the Environment Agency for a permit to recycle waste materials:

Many of you will be aware of the concerns that arise from this application by Street Fuel Ltd to take over and extend the scope of the existing permit granted to Nordic Recycling Ltd in Chatham Docks. Once our attention had been drawn to the application by the Environment Agency we made residents aware through our website and noticeboards and, as a result of the number of complaints received, the E.A. extended the consultation period and held two "Drop-In" sessions in the Community Centre, which were attended by over 200 concerned residents. We were also supported by our M.P. Mark Reckless and our ward councillors Andrew Mackness and Craig Mackinlay.

As a result, Street Fuel Ltd have reduced the scope of materials to be recycled within the application back to the original permit and have advised that they will be carrying out their operations inside the existing warehousing. Notwithstanding all of this, we have asked the E.A. to decline the permit or, at the very least, we have charged the E.A. to protect us by imposing rigorous operational requirements and ongoing monitoring from the effects of **dust, smell, litter, noise, fire and pest infestation**. This is still a "Work in Progress" and, although the consultation period is now at an end, it is important that residents report any incidents where they feel that this operation is **actually** affecting their peaceful and legitimate lifestyle through the EA Hotline on **0800 8070600**

I think that, once again, this demonstrates how SMIRA have been able to facilitate arrangements and co-ordinate the concerns of the residents against a real threat to our safe and peaceful existence.



Help of our Councillors:

I would like to acknowledge the help and support of our Ward Councillors and particularly that of Andrew Mackness who has been especially active on SMI issues. Andrew has been alongside us as no other Councillor before him in reinforcing our actions, facilitating access to the Council's executive officers and departments and fighting our corner with other Chatham Maritime stakeholders.

Loss of walkway over caisson under the HMS Chatham bridge:

I know that this remains a very important issue to many residents and I want you to know that the reinstatement/alternative access remains a "work in progress" for SMIRA. There are some enabling issues to be resolved before SMIRA and other key stakeholders can take this forward and I am sorry to advise you that it could still be some while before this matter is satisfactorily addressed. We will of course remain on the case and keep you informed accordingly.

Thankyou:

I would like to thank Chatham Maritime Trust for funding us and positively working with us in our common aims on Chatham Maritime in general and SMI in particular. Also PCSO Sue Kemsley, our community police officer, who is part funded by the Trust and who continues with her vigilant watch over our everyday lives and Yusuf Cinar, our Council Community Warden, who is an "unspoken hero" and always positively responds to our unsociable behaviour issues.

Finally, I would like to thank the SMIRA Directors and Officers for their hard work and support, thus enabling SMIRA to take a firm but constructive part in the resolving of issues and the continuing development of our lovely Island, which we must never take for granted.

Our AGM:

Our AGM this year takes place on Friday 29th November at our Community Centre commencing at 7:30 p.m. and **all residents, not just members, are welcome.**

The formal business is soon dealt with and this year we have presentations from:

Mark Reckless, M.P. for Rochester and Strood

David de Sousa, of PCKO. The architects responsible for the Masterplan for the "Build-Out" of SMI.

Andrew Mackness, One of our River Ward Councillors

This is your chance to hear and put questions to them and I would very much appreciate your attendance in support of the Board.

David Taylor Chairman

Great Progress of our Island Historic Group:

St. Mary's Island History Group started life, with the support of Chatham Maritime Trust, in February 2013. SMIRA very kindly looked after what little money we had until we had our own bank account.

We have had a varied selection of talks including "The Medway Hulks", "The Chatham Scandal : Prostitution in Victorian Medway", "Songs about the Medway Towns", "Medway Tales of a Dividing River" and a talk by the well-known author broadcaster and historian, Bob Ogle, about "Kent in the 19th Century".

We have recently joined the British Association for Local History to be part of the family of local history groups which gives us access

to many benefits, much advice, insurance and news about historical events.

Our first two research projects have uncovered valuable detail and stories about our Island. One project is finding out information about our island history leading up to the Dockyard Extension (our basins) being completed. Our other project is looking into the first steps of our island school and church. The co-operation of the Historic Dockyard Library and the detective work of our members has yielded a wealth of archive material.

We took part in the Trust's "Community Fair" in September and we will be participating in the Medway Archives and Local Studies "Open Day" in December. Displaying and raising awareness about the history of our Island will hopefully enhance and engage our community as well as inform the wider public of our importance in the history of the Medway towns, Chatham Dockyard, the Royal Engineers and the Royal Navy.

Cllrs. Andrew Mackness and Craig Mackinlay have kindly given us a River Ward Improvement Grant to support the work we do going forward, so please join us if you would like to find out more about local history. Alternatively, you may just want to come to our meetings and follow our events. Annual membership is £10 and this allows you entry to all our meetings or come to a trial meeting for just £2.

We have a website : www.stmaryislandhistorygroup.co.uk where you can see information about our island, the latest Newsletter, our future meetings and how you can get involved.

If you would like to be on our mailing list, please contact our Secretary (**Phil Sutton Jones**) on **892606** or email suttonjones@blueyonder.co.uk

Message from your Crime and Safety Team:

Community Warden for Medway Council River Ward (Yusuf Cinar) and I, your local PCSO, (Sue Kemsley) have worked in partnership together to deal with issues concerning St Mary's Island. Together we have completed dog fouling patrols, dealt with collection of stray dogs, littering, rubbish bags left out too early and General Environmental Visual Assessments on the Island. We have robustly dealt with abandoned, untaxed, obstructing and dangerous vehicles, provided school assemblies on Road Safety, one of which resulted in a school competition and signs placed around the Island and visits to the Police & Fire Station, School patrols and general partnership patrolling of the area.

We are both on the Steering Committee of SMI Youth Club and we are also involved with the local scouting groups on the Island. The Beavers were recently shown around the Police Station and Yusuf has assisted them with a litter pick at the Great Lines.

In addition to the partnership working with Yusuf, I managed to get the KFR Fire Fit Team down to do some sessions with the Youth Club earlier in the year and through Street Cops, I obtained funding for 3 events that have involved the Island community, including the "BIG LUNCH", signs for the Road Safety Competition and a Sailing Taster Session day with The Morning Star Trust.

I have attended the school to provide a Crime Scene Investigation visit and school assemblies including: respecting the environment



due to issues around local young people damaging the trees and bullying. I have provided a Police presence and reassurance with local residents and dealt with local Police issues both reactively and pro-actively.

I have undertaken joint patrols with CMT Land Management and Security personnel to increase awareness of potential security issues around the Island i.e. open windows, unlocked vehicles, sat navs on display, unlocked bikes etc.

At the most recent SMI Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinators meeting it was decided to promote NHW around the Island to fill vacant areas. If you would like to volunteer as a Co-ordinator or join your local scheme, please call me on **0777 222 6226** to discuss. Keep safe and secure this winter. With the dark nights upon us, please ensure your property and possessions are locked and secure. Don't become a victim of crime.

PCSO Sue and Warden Yusuf

Better Buses:

The dialogue with Arriva and Medway Council has continued through-out the year with much progress being made in improving our Island bus service, albeit not as quickly as one would like. Particular thanks needs to be given to Matthew Arnold (Arriva), David Bond (Medway Council) and Cllr. Andrew Mackness (River Ward) to name but a few for their support and endeavours.

So what are the positives?

1. A TRIAL Saturday Bus service is now operating, courtesy of Medway Council on the proviso - **Use It or Lose IT** All Islanders please note: It is **NOT** being well used at the moment.
2. A new bus stand has been installed at Tappen Drive.
3. A new bus shelter has been erected at The Stones Roundabout.
4. Telemetry will be installed shortly at Goldcrest and The Stones Roundabout bus stops.
5. Revised "Off Peak" timetables to be implemented from 26 January 2014 to coincide with the fast train connection to London Victoria.
6. Also with effect from the 26 January 2014 the buses will not circumnavigate the Island twice with passengers on board.

And what are the not so positives?

1. Regarding the above we did not appreciate how long everything would take and the various commercial channels and protocols involved - that said we are definitely in a better position than last year.
2. We are more than aware that there are still issues regarding the School Bus Service. All Residents are reminded that there is an Arriva Hotline which Arriva are committed to respond to if you have an issue or complaint.

0844 800 44 11 or www.arrivabus.co.uk/south-east

Work in progress:

1. To review the bus route on and off the Island.

Finally - Please! Please! Please! support YOUR newly won Saturday Service. **Keith Robinson**

Youth Club: 'Castaways'

Our Island Youth Club is now in its fifth year and meets weekly at the Community Centre on Friday evenings between 7:00 and 9:00. Children entering Year 6 at SMI junior School are recruited annually and join existing members in a relaxed and active environment which includes table tennis, snooker, football,

Wii, computers, craft and, whenever possible, some structured activities. The ages of the members range between 10 and 14 years and new members of this age range who live on SMI are welcome to join.

The Club is run entirely by unpaid volunteers and, due to attendance numbers, we need a minimum of four volunteers at any evening to stay safe. Many of our volunteers are parents of our members and we are always looking to increase our volunteer numbers. If you feel that you could give some of your time, say once a month, or even just one night, we would very much like to hear from you. Please call **David Taylor** on **893447** or call in on one of our Friday evenings to view the Club and see what is involved. Without volunteers we cannot survive!

Stop Press 'Pyjamas and Onesies'
We have just raised £160 for Children in Need.

Residents' New Year's Eve Party:

This very popular event is on again this year. Subject to numbers, residents can again enjoy a great night of dancing and celebration to welcome in 2014. Bring your own food and drink. Tickets are available from the 29th November at 7:00 p.m. before the SMIRA AGM at the Community Centre and will be limited by numbers. Cost £6.50 for adults and £3.50 for children over two years of age.

Call **Martine** on **07976 575914** or **Cara** on **07885 410313**.

The party is open to all residents, family and friends and any profit this year will be donated to The Wisdom Hospice.

Active Retirement Association: 'SaintARA'

SaintARA is now enjoying its sixth year and remains a great social focus for residents over fifty years of age who are retired or semi-retired. There are regular monthly meetings at the Community Centre every third Wednesday of the month as well as many other social and active events which members can 'cherry pick' to suit their needs and availability.

Current membership exceeds 200 and, if you would like to know more, please call **Barbara Drysdale** on **714640**

What a lovely Island we live on:

Despite a poor and very wet spring giving rise to a late start to the summer the flora and fauna seem to have welcomed the heavy downpours and the delay. I know that in my garden this year I have had plants reappear, echinacea and nerines, that I haven't seen for the past two years.

My first 'wow' of the year was in March with the sighting of 17 waxwings in a tree on the central bund. The flock looked like starlings at first and it is easy to dismiss them as such, but the lovely crests soon distinguish them apart. However, neighbours in Foxtail Close had sighted waxwings in December and were fortunate enough to have them settle in their garden tree.

A sighting of a porpoise at Darnet Ness was a significant report in April and there was also quite a number of blackcap sightings in the Island gardens around the same time. By mid April it was a relief to see the swallows back by the HMS Chatham Bridge as it was to hear the skylarks singing again on the undeveloped land opposite Upnor Castle.

Reports of bats back on the Island in July and August were pleasing as I had not seen them around for a while. Residents in apartments in the Fishing Village gave me the first report and I was



fortunate to see bats flying over my garden in late August. I can only hazard a guess they are the small Pipistrelle bats. I did receive a report of a cat catching one – he must have very quick reactions!

Despite gloom and doom reports regarding the effect of the rain on the butterfly population this year, the later wonderful summer conditions seem to have encouraged our usual garden visitors.

The Southern Hawker dragonflies were back again this September, much to my cat's annoyance.

I have been puzzled by the fact that although I am seeing several

chiff-chaff in the garden I do not hear their distinctive, yet monotonous, call. I can only conclude they are on the island foraging for food rather than staking their territory and announcing their presence to other birds. I was watching three chiff-chaff amongst my shrubs only this October.

There was a wonderful display of cowslips on the Docks side of the bund this year, however, the main area of concern by several residents has been the poor state of the designated wild flower area on Finsborough Down. Meetings with the Chief Executive from Kent Wildlife Trust and personnel from both the Trust and SMIRA have been held in order to seek advice on the best way to manage this sward. Managing a wildflower area is not an easy task as it requires regular attention and it is not just a case of scattering wildflower seeds willy-nilly. Invasive weeds need combating and a balance restored. The solution is still a "work in progress" so, watch this space...

Janet Adkin

Regular SMIRA meetings through 2014:

We hold regular Residents Meetings throughout the year at the Island Community Centre commencing at 7:00 p.m. The meetings are open to all and the dates in 2014 are arranged for: 14th January, 25th February, 8th April, 20th May, 1st July, 12th August, 23rd September and 4th November. Our A.G.M. next year is arranged for 5th December. At these meetings issues concerning the residents of the island are discussed with other interested parties who include representatives from Chatham Maritime Trust and our local councillors. It gives residents the opportunity to raise issues and ask questions of those people who influence life on the island.

SMIRA has a website, www.smira.info, where residents will find the latest news about the area, relevant contact information and minutes from the SMIRA meetings. It is also where you will find information regarding the final phases of the Island build-out, as this is not available online elsewhere. Join SMIRA by filling in the membership form and join our email list by filling in our online form: <http://www.smira.info/register.html>

Please use the e-mail: admin@smira.info to make enquiries or express your concerns about SMI issues and we will do our best to respond and help if at all possible.

Estate Regulations:

The following are the current adopted Estate Regulations and are intended to promote the enjoyment and good management of St. Mary's Island. Residents are asked to strictly adhere to these regulations in the courteous interest and well being of others.

- Dogs shall be kept on a lead at all times in the Amenity and other public areas of the Estate. The designated dog run area on Finsborough Down is the only area of public space where dogs should be let off their lead.

The following activities are prohibited:

- Horse riding on any part of the Estate
- The launching of boats, jet skis and other similar watercraft from the Estate into the river.
- The landing of aircraft and hot air balloons on any part of the Estate.
- Fishing in the River Medway from the Estate and in the Dock Basins.
- Swimming from the foreshore within the Estate and in the Dock Basins.
- The trapping or killing of wildlife on the Estate (save as part of a proper pest control operation).
- The flying of model aircraft and the sailing of model boats from the foreshore within the Estate and in the Dock Basins.
- The lighting of fires and barbecues on the Amenity Areas.

Useful Numbers and Contacts

- PCSO: Sue Kemsley: **07772 226226**

Sue will answer only when on duty.

Police: **999** (Crime in action)

Police: **101** (Report a crime)

- Council Community Officer for River Ward: Yusuf Cinar.

338163 Yusuf.cinar@medway.gov.uk

- C.M.T Security and Land Management: **890292**. This number should be used to report any incidents on the public open spaces on SMI or the Chatham Maritime Estate.

- C.M.T Office: **891888**

- River Ward Councillors :

Andrew Mackness. Telephone **07970 734105**.

andrewmackness@live.co.uk. [Twitter@andrewmackness](https://twitter.com/andrewmackness).

Craig Mackinlay. Telephone **07973 123614** or **01634**

841108. craig@riverward.co.uk.

- Island Doctor: **890712**

- Island Pharmacy: **891207**

- Community Centre: **890072**

- Environment Agency Hotline: **0800 8070600**

- Failure of street lighting on adopted roads: **331404**

- SMIRA Website: www.smira.info/

- SMIRA E-mail: admin@smira.info

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