



Roger the official Bomber Command Memorial Bear

By Diana Cormack

Close to 67 years since the end of the Second World War, the Queen is to unveil a memorial to honour a special group of young men who gave their lives for this country. It is the culmination of a project launched in 2008 by the Heritage Foundation and supported by RAF Bomber Command, who lost so many during the Second World War. Their losses were greater than any other service, with 55,573 of their aircrew making the ultimate sacrifice.

Bomber Command was the only British fighting force which took the war directly to Germany, destroying vital infrastructure and supply lines, shortening the war to liberate both British and German people as pointed out by Robin Gibb of the Bee Gees, who spearheaded the project.

The £6 million cost of the memorial in Green Park, which will be officially dedicated on 28 June, has been met by major donors along with funding from the public. However, £50,000 per year will still be needed for its upkeep. To this end one resident of East Finchley has hit upon a novel idea.

A very special bear

Last year Dennis Gimes came across a teddy bear called Roger. Roger was created by The Great British Teddy Bear Company exclusively for the RAF Bomber Command Association to commemorate the heroism of those brave airmen. The 36cm bear wears an RAF issue shirt and tie, plus a leatherette replica of an original sheepskin Irvine jacket and the distinctive flying helmet of Bomber Command.

Dennis decided he could raise awareness of the cause if he asked well known people to be photographed with Roger. So far these include Dame Vera Lynn, Ray Winstone, Vicki Michelle (from 'Allo, 'Allo) Derek Martin (*Eastenders*), James May (*Top Gear*) and other show business personalities, Earl Spencer, Jaki Assheton (Bomber Harris's daughter) and

the Mayor of Coventry (which suffered badly from enemy bombing) not forgetting Barnet's own mayor and our local MP.

Sixty per cent from the sale of each bear will be donated to the Bomber Command Memorial Fund. Visit the Great British Teddy Bear Company website for full details. For the Bomber Command Memorial



Dennis Gimes introduced Roger the Bear to Mayor of Barnet Councillor Lisa Rutter. Photo by Nick Young

and Maintenance Appeal visit www.armedforcesart.co.uk

New future for the Suburb community library

By Daphne Chamberlain

Last month, Speak Up For Libraries organised a lobby of Parliament. Speaking up were professional associations, unions, organisations, and members of the public. Throughout the UK local authorities are closing their libraries or handing them to community groups.

Following Barnet's decision to withdraw funding from Hampstead Garden Suburb library, the local residents' association applied to take it over. A council spokesperson told *THE ARCHER*: "Following very constructive talks, we are working towards a transfer by the end of April".

Under terms made public so far, the Suburb library will continue in its small premises in Hill Rise, just off Market Place, for which Barnet will pay rent and business rates until 2016. Existing equipment and furniture will remain, but the staff will be HGSRA volunteers.

Meeting expectations

Last year's Strategic Library Review identified what the Council expects from community libraries. Put in a nutshell, they should provide better local services for less money. The community library proc-

ess, which includes the Friern Barnet area, was expected to save £1,055,000 over the next three years, with support grants capped at £10,000 a year.

The council said in February that the bid from Hampstead Garden Suburb Residents' Association did not deliver enough savings, but talks continued as they are an established group with over 2,000 members, and an organisation meeting the Council's requirements. A bid by the Friends of Hampstead Garden Suburb was not considered viable.

In Friern Barnet, a community application was judged to be continuing the status quo with the addition of volunteer workers. It would also have lost Barnet market rent on their building, and so the Friern Barnet and North Finchley branches will be combined in a new "landmark" library at artsdepot.

Mixed signals on road safety campaign

By Emily Burnham

WALKSAFE N2 presented their case for improving pedestrian and cyclists' safety to Barnet Council on 29 February. Impressive supporting documentation from parents and other residents, local schools, churches and community organisations received a promising response.

However, the campaigners are worried that the existing signal-controlled pedestrian crossing outside Martin School is to be assessed for possible replacement with a zebra crossing as part of a borough-wide

review. They are also angry because safety guard rails outside the school had been removed without the school being informed.

Guard rail vanishes

Jayne Lobley, a mother of

two children at Martin School, said: "We use these roads and crossings up to six times a day with our children and we must be a part of the whole process. Barnet Council has just removed the guard rail on the High Road in front of the school. This is incredibly dangerous, particularly because of the layout of the school exits.

"Obviously the Highways Department wasn't aware of these detailed issues and they didn't bother to inform us or the school that they were about to take them away. And this is in the middle of a road safety campaign centred on this area."

Karen Pepper, a mother of two from Holy Trinity School, said WALKSAFE N2 was expecting the introduction of a zebra crossing on Creighton Avenue, near the junction with the High Road, additional signs for Martin Primary School and, it is hoped, a vehicle-activated sign on Church Lane that notifies drivers of their speed.

There were promises of consultation on the remaining issues of a three-way traffic light and a 20mph speed limit on Church Lane but that had not materialised as we went to press.

Martin School guard rails, see Letters page 11.



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