

Neighbourhood Events in Severn Street Jennifer Leahy

Severn Street residents got together recently for two street events. The first was an organised Halloween night where all households were invited to either participate or prepare for the visit of the children from the street.

One of the organisers, Andrea said "The event has just developed over the years amongst friends and we decided to formalise it this year by inviting all the street. It was a great way to meet the neighbours and a good warm-up to the neighbourhood week event. The decorated houses and children were just amazing!"

We applied to the City Council to run another Neighbourhood Week event and received a small contribution towards running a get-together of neighbours. We decided to hold an afternoon tea and organised several activities for people to get to meet other neighbours.

Luckily Martin of Kidd's Cakes lives in the street, so he put together a great



afternoon tea for us, which we enjoyed at St. Albans School.

Afterwards the children of the street (pictured) played team games –the odd street numbers versus the "evens"!!

Both events were well supported with

about thirty children and accompanying adults at the Halloween event and approximately forty Severn Street residents at the Street party.

Cont pg 2

The Origins of Christmas by Dafyd

The holiday we now call Christmas (Christ's Mass) is a mix of a pagan Roman feast and northern European harvest festival, the antics of a Turkish holy man, an American poem and a cartoon.

Saint Nicholas of Myra in Italy was an ascetic bishop who lived in the 4th century and used to deliver his generous gifts to the poor in the dead of the night. He was eventually discovered, and after his death was made a saint by the church. His bones were stolen and transported to Bari in southern Italy where a basilica was constructed in 1087 to house them. The area became a pilgrimage site and Saint Nicholas became revered by many as the

patron saint of seamen, merchants, archers, children, prostitutes, pharmacists, lawyers, pawnbrokers, prisoners, the city of Amsterdam and of Russia. His official saint's day is December 5.

The Saturnalia was originally an ancient Roman agricultural feast held in honor of the god of seeds and sowing, Saturn.

The Festival of Saturnalia was held in December.

In our Gregorian calendar, Saturnalia coincides with the Winter Solstice, a cosmic event of mystery and suspense. In the Julian calendar used by the Romans, the Winter Solstice or Brumalia occurred on Dec 23rd. Humans have gathered

together during these black nights to give solace and comfort to one another since prehistoric times. As the world grew cold and grey, it was once feared that the sun was approaching the end of its life. Sacrifices were often made to placate the gods and to ensure that great light of the heavens would be reborn.

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STANN is a contribution driven newsletter We need your input to offer a balanced content. Please send in contributions on local groups, activities, etc. or express your opinion. All contributions are treated equally and with respect.

STANN does not have an opinion of its own (just a strong community bias). Any opinion is that of the writer only.

STANN is published by Douceline Wardle, typeset by Tom Prebble and printed by New Century Press.

STANN is a not for profit newsletter, delivered monthly, free to over 5000 homes and businesses.

Promoting good community with accessible, honest, non-profit communication

From pg 1

New neighbours to the street, Roz and Philip found the events were great for meeting their new neighbours and especially for their children to get to know new friends who live close by. Philip was impressed as to how "scary" their new neighbours are!

I was delighted with the support for the events. It was great to share stories of house and street knowledge, to meet new neighbours and to see how much we had in common. Some neighbours even recognised each other from their Primary School days in the deep south. It was great to be able to join together with our neighbours, as it's often so hard to get to catch up with the people who live the closest to us. I'm pleased that both events were well supported and have helped to create a good neighbourhood atmosphere. •

St Albans Celebration

The SARA Committee and the people at the St Albans Community Resource Centre would like to invite you all to join them in celebrating its achievements in gathering our community together.

A FAREWELL TO DOUCELINE

Friday 9th February 2007 5:00 – 8:00 pm

**St Albans Community Resource Centre & courtyard
1047 Colombo St.**

Light Food will be provided but please bring along something to sip on.

The Community Centre has become a hub of St Albans. A place where people meet for events, classes, meetings, to use the computers, to find information, to voice an issue or just for coffee. It's a place where proactive community development is occurring and where community spirit is nourished.

It's vibrant and busy and will continue to grow with our community into the future. Sadly 2007 sees a big change for the Centre with the departure of Douceline Wardle, who has facilitated this project from conception through its wonderful 9 year journey to the present. As she moves on she leaves behind her a magnitude of exciting and necessary community initiatives that she has helped develop. Come and help us celebrate the past and future.

Please RSVP by 2nd February by phoning 374 2465.

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We assume the owner might be living within the vicinity of Barbadoes, Geraldine and Purchas streets.

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Changes in the Air by Douceline Wardle

This month, 13 years ago, a group of us started STANN so it seems an appropriate moment to announce some changes. After nearly nine years as Community Facilitator for St Albans and as Manager of the St Albans Community Resource Centre (SACRC), I have decided to resign. Although, it has been a wonderful and interesting job, being there to help initiate and develop so many diverse projects, it is time for me to move on. Where to – I'm not sure, but the future beckons. Part of my quandary was what to do with STANN, which has always been an independent and voluntary contribution. There didn't seem to be anybody in the wings to take over the publication, yet it is too important a tool for the suburb just to be dropped, so I decided to gift STANN to SARA – the St Albans Residents Association. Before I do that, I want to remind people what STANN is about and how it relates to the "strengthening of communities" that Council is so fond of promoting at present.

Five of us started STANN, Kate Taylor, Frank Prebble, Hazel Ashton, my late husband John Wardle and I (aka Douceline Driessen). In those days Kate and Frank had a home printing business and while Kate organized the advertising, Frank did the printing, Hazel was involved in community politics, my late husband John did the typesetting and I edited. In the early issues we all interviewed people and wrote for STANN. We were of the opinion that anybody could write and that grammar and spelling were not critical – more important was to get the point across. STANN was to be non-profit, honest and open communication, where any opinion mattered. Articles in return for advertising were and still are discouraged (other newspapers allow advertorial articles in return for regular advertising). Supporting local businesses has been a regular theme because business and community is totally inter-related in St Albans. (A consultant planner with the Council told me an interesting fact about Edgeware Village; when compared with 18 other shopping centres throughout the city Edgeware scores very poorly – 15th with regard to "amenities" provided by either landlord or Council while "socially and economically" the Village scores very well – coming 3rd.)

A recent trend for newspapers, as they attempt to cut costs, has been to have more community driven articles. I came across a quote recently which stated that – a new trend – "Citizen Journalism" also known as "participatory journalism" is the act of citizens playing an active role in the process of

collecting, reporting and disseminating information for and beyond their community". Well – that's what STANN has been doing for the last 13 years!

It has become obvious that STANN has been and still is an important tool and possibly the catalyst which brings the community together – by encouraging involvement, participation and raising issues in STANN, buildings like Abberley Park Hall were saved, research into community cottages directed the development of the SACRC, consultation and input happened in developments like, Packe St Park, NeighbourNet, English Park and the Caledonian Site. The recent fight for Edgeware Pool brought people together – updates through STANN touched and involved the wider community.

Some years ago, I drew the tree on page 5. The three roots on the right are groups that individuals in the community started. The root on the left is the building that used to be the SACRC and the other two roots are the bureaucratic local institutions that a community needs to enable projects to become reasonably successful. Overseas trends show that local government has an increasingly important role to play in the strengthening of communities – it's no longer just roads, rates and rubbish!

At present, the Christchurch City Council is asking for submissions (basically that means your opinion) on what is called the Draft Community Development Strategy. The deadline for your input has been extended to 30 January 2007 and I urge you to think about what is important in your locality, grab a summary form from the SACRC and give your opinion. Council talks about the importance of strengthening communities on the one hand, but is desperate to cut costs on the other. It is important for the community to have input in where those costs are going to be cut – if you don't let them know, you can't blame them for making decisions you don't like, although, as the Edgeware Pool fight has shown, submitting doesn't always ensure input.

So, community development happens when you, the resident, have an idea that you feel would help the community. Successful projects in our area include Packe St Park, the NeighbourNet computing room, the St Albans History Group, St Albans Art Society and the St Albans Community Choir (see article on pg 4). The SACRC building, at 1047 Colombo St, is the place where the meetings occur to strengthen the community and develop the community development process;

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St Albans Community Choir by Jennifer Barry

They enter the hall in ones and twos, greeting each other, some setting out chairs in a semi-circle, others helping the conductor to get her gear sorted. Some hand over money to the treasurer who records the payments on a chart. The women settle on chairs to the left of the conductor, the men on the right. Interestingly, there are twice as many men as women. The group is called to order and warm-ups begin. A range of tonalities and voice qualities emerge and the look on the conductor's face along with the chuckles from various choir members indicates that quantity of sound is not going to make up for quality of sound. The conductor smiles wryly, the group refocuses and the exercise is repeated. There is a marked improvement and the group gets the sense they've 'got it'. The weekly rehearsal is underway.

This is the beginning of another weekly rehearsal of the St. Alban's Community Choir in Christchurch. The choir members are passionate about their membership. It's more than a group of people who sing together once a week, it's a reflection of the community, a part of the community and a contributor to the community.

The conductor of the choir, Heather Gladstone, began the group with Margaret Stronks, responding to a need they had perceived within the community. The St. Alban's Community Choir started in 1997 with the philosophy of making music accessible to as many members of the local community as possible. It was decided the repertoire would comprise secular music with the emphasis on lighter music and folk songs. Songs were to be primarily sung in unison, with variety provided by using arrangements with women's voices only, men's voices only, and men's and women's voices together. There was a deliberate decision to avoid the traditional conductor and accompanist set-up. Heather plays the piano accordion and conducts as she plays. Heather is the driving force behind this choir. She selects and arranges the songs, taking into account melodic and rhythmic challenges, stylistic elements and lyric content.

This emphasis on the accessibility of music making continues. There is no audition to join the choir; members simply need a desire to sing with others. As a result, members come from all over Christchurch and surrounding areas, areas far beyond the immediate St. Albans neighbourhood. The only restriction to membership is that members must be over the

age of fourteen years.

Fostering community spirit is another important aspect of the choir, and this is evident in two ways: firstly, within the choir itself and secondly, how choir performances bring the local community together. The atmosphere at rehearsals is relaxed and purposeful. Suggestions and plans for performances are discussed and members are encouraged to share their expertise in various areas, such as catering, publicity, and pastoral care. Messages from former members are passed on and contact maintained with those who are absent for any reason. Members speak of the friendships developed through involvement with the choir, and the informal support and encouragement they get from other members beyond choir activities.

The second aspect of promoting community spirit is that of the choir's performances within the Christchurch community. The choir regularly performs at the Cornish Association and at the monthly concerts Heather runs for her music pupils. Performances at school galas and other local events have also featured. Each year the choir sings at the Carols in Packe Street Park event, as well as singing in the Christchurch Central Post Office for the workers. Busking at the Arts Centre has been added to the choir's activities more recently.

Another important role for the choir is that of education. Choir members enter the choir with differing levels of singing ability and confidence, from enthusiastic first timers to those with a high level of skill and experience in choral singing. Most members belong to more than one music group within the community. The choir provides an opportunity for members to improve their performance skills, their singing technique, and music reading skills. Members develop confidence to perform in the group and some have gone on to have singing lessons, study for singing exams, and sing individual items at community concerts.

Funding the choir is an ongoing concern. Providing music for the members and hall hire for the rehearsal venue are ongoing costs. When the choir began, it applied for funding from various funding groups under the umbrella of the St. Alban's Residents Association. It is now self-funding with choir members each paying a nominal weekly fee. The choir runs a barn dance bi-annually and the proceeds from this boost the coffers as well as allowing the choir to reach a different

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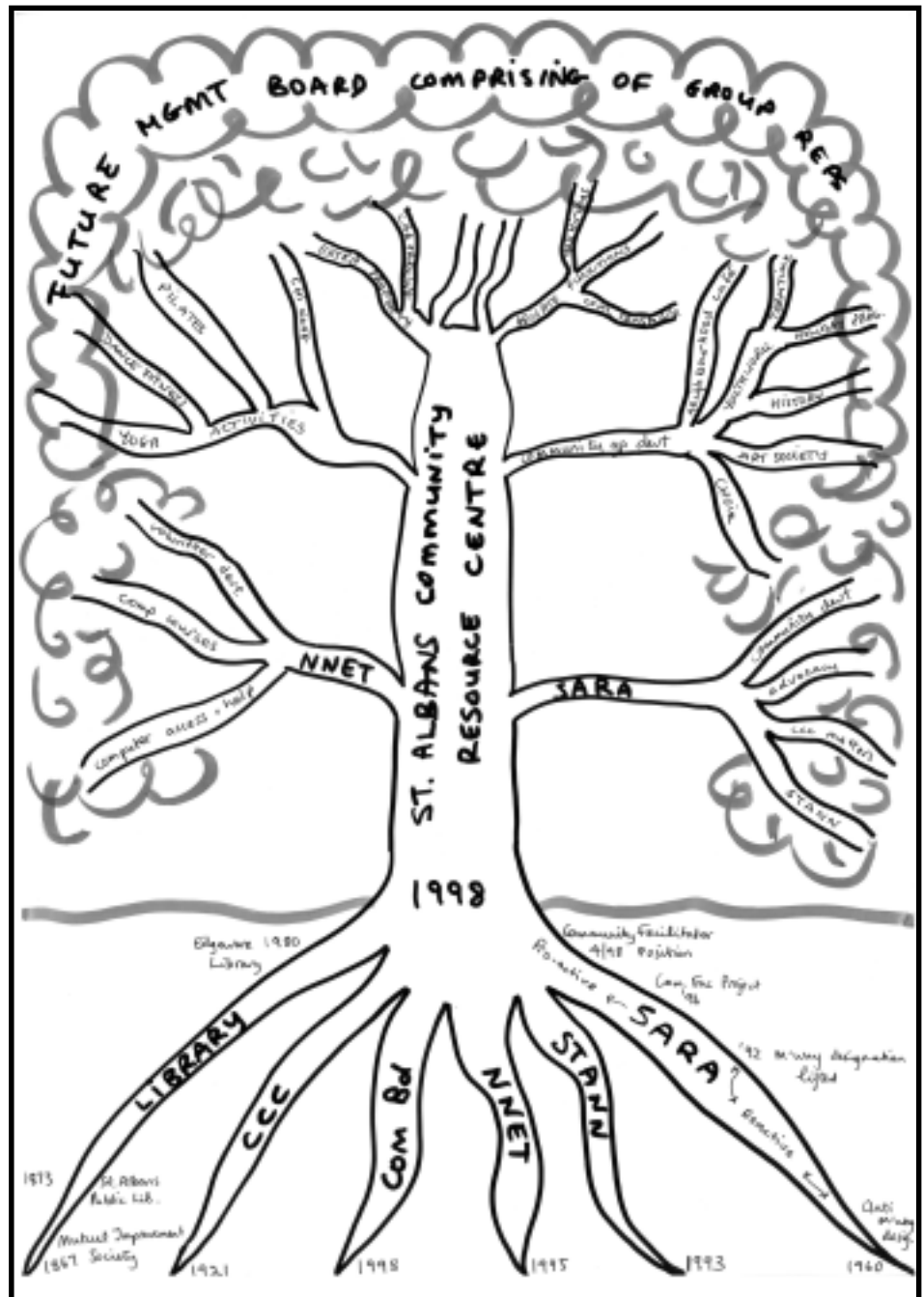
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part of the community and have a bit of fun.

This is a successful, thriving choir with a sense of vitality and community. At the core of its success is Heather and her philosophy of accessibility and caring. Members are welcomed and the personal and collective accomplishments are celebrated. Many members speak of times when they were discouraged from singing as children, of times when they have been intimidated by the audition process to join choirs, and then tell of the joy and sense of accomplishment and belonging they have experienced with this choir.

Community choirs form for a variety of reasons, and to meet a variety of needs. Each reflects the philosophy of its conductor and members, but the real reason people get together to sing is because they have a desire to sing with others. Social and educational benefits are secondary to this. The St Albans Community Choir welcomes people who just want to sing. One member described it as an 'entry-level choir that allows anyone to get started singing.' Involvement in music-making activities is something music educators strive for and the members of this choir are proof that shared music making can be vital and enjoyable at any age. •

Originally published in Menza Magazine October 2006; republished with kind permission from Jennifer Barry.



Cont from pg 1

In the old Roman calendar, the tenth month marked the end of the Roman agricultural year. By mid-December, the harvest had been stored, the seeds for next year's crop had been planted and, the wine vinted. The time had come for the people of Rome to have a much deserved rest, joyous celebration and reverent thanksgiving. Initially, the feast of Saturn was once a one day celebration. However, the official length of the holiday changed several times gradually expanding to seven days, despite political attempts to constrain the festival.

Many Saturnalia traditions are survived in our 21st century winter celebrations. For example, the Romans decorated their homes and communities with glowing candles, greenery swags and wreaths of holly, cypress and laurel, much as we do today. They held huge public banquets for all the people of Rome, not unlike the many charities that open their doors during our winter holiday season. The Roman also exchanged personal gifts and greetings of good will at this time.

The Church of Rome began to encourage the tradition of celebrating the birth of Christ to compete against the pagan celebration of Saturn. The early Christians wanted to keep the birthday of their Christ child a solemn and religious holiday, not one of cheer and merriment as was the pagan Saturnalia. But as Christianity spread they were alarmed by the continuing celebration of pagan customs and Saturnalia among their converts. At first the Church forbade this kind of celebration but it was to no avail. Eventually it was decided that the celebration would be 'tamed' and made into a celebration fit for the Christian Son of God. The Church eventually was

successful in taking the merriment, lights, and gifts from the Saturnalia festival and bringing them to the celebration of Christmas.

Santa Claus seemingly became canon after the publication of the poem "A Visit from St. Nicholas" (better known today as "The Night Before Christmas") in the New York, Sentinel on December 23, 1823. In this poem Santa is established as a heavyset individual with eight reindeer (who are named for the first time). Santa Claus later appeared in various colored costumes as he gradually became amalgamated with the figure of Father Christmas, but red soon became popular after he appeared wearing such on an 1885 Christmas card. Still, one of the first artists to capture Santa Claus's image as we know him today was Thomas Nast, an American cartoonist of the 19th century. In 1863, a picture of Santa illustrated by Nast appeared in Harper's Weekly. Another popularization was The Life and Adventures of Santa Claus, a 1902 biography (of sorts) from youth to old age by L. Frank Baum, author of The Wonderful Wizard of Oz.

Images of Santa Claus were further cemented through Haddon Sundblom's depiction of him for The Coca-Cola Company's Christmas advertising. The popularity of the image spawned urban legends that Santa Claus was in fact invented by Coca-Cola. Nevertheless, Santa Claus and Coca-Cola have been closely associated, and Coca-Cola's annual Christmas ad campaigns on the back cover of Life and other magazines established Santa's coat colors as red and white in American popular culture. The image of Santa Claus as a benevolent character became reinforced with its association with charity and philanthropy, particularly organizations such as the Salvation Army. Volunteers dressed as Santa Claus typically became part of fundraising drives to aid needy families at Christmas time.

Some suspect that the depiction of Santa at the North Pole reflected popular opinion about industry at the time. In some images of the early 20th century, Santa was depicted as personally making his toys by hand in a small workshop like a craftsman. Eventually, the idea emerged that he had numerous elves responsible for making the toys, but the toys were still handmade by each individual elf working in the traditional manner. Other modern additions to the "mythology" of Santa include Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer, the ninth and lead reindeer immortalized in a Gene Autry song. •



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Are you still in touch with family and friends that have used or worked here at OSCAR over the last 20 years? Please tell them about the event and invite them along and /or tell us their contact details. Do you have something to say about OSCAR? The children of OSCAR are filming a presentation to be viewed on the day. Please contact a Rachel Palmer or Joseph here at OSCAR.

If you would like to be involved in any way, please contact Rachel Palmer on 355 4918 or email oscarsa@extra.co.nz. Address:

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community development workers or facilitators like myself help develop the idea and a communication tool like STANN reports on it. YOUR idea could also become a valuable project –there is help out there to implement it.

It has been my absolute pleasure to keep STANN going for the last years and over the next few issues I will help with the transition. As facilitator, it was reasonably easy for me to source the articles over the years. Despite any potential future changes that SARA may wish to make, STANN is and remains a participatory newspaper –your newspaper. SARA will need your contributions to keep it going – so please, continue to send in those articles and notices.

I would like to thank all the volunteers over the years – Joan (accounting), Alison (deliveries), the many writers and folders when we still did it in Abberley Park Hall of whom sadly Mary, Len and Ken have passed away. Some say that the folding was an enjoyable and important process whereby ideas were discussed and gossip exchanged –maybe SARA will bring it back.

Finally, I would like to thank those businesses who advertised on a regular basis from the very early issues – John Radley - mechanical repairs; Off the Track – second hand curtains, St Albans Vet and the Norton's summer veges shop. Without the support of the business community, STANN would have folded long ago. May your support continue through the years.

My apologies for not printing the second Treaty of Waitangi article in this issue as we just ran out of room. The other articles all just seem to tie together beautifully in this “Strengthening Communities” issue. Try and get a copy of the submission form and tell CCC your thoughts.

My very best wishes for the future –Douceline •

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