



## Be Warned

Another con-trick is being tried in East Finchley. A woman knocks on the door claiming to live in your street. She says she needs the taxi fare to go to Chase Farm Hospital as her haemoglobin levels have dropped.

Don't be taken in by her story as, when challenged or offered other assistance or the police, she quickly moves off. This person was of medium build and height with shoulder length dark brown hair and she was wearing a dark coloured fleece. Many kind people in our area were taken in by similar stories last year.

Another increasing crime could be called burglary from a different angle. A sort of rod is put through the letterbox to obtain keys. Someone who

left their house keys behind a glass ornament eight feet from the front door was recently burgled.

Keep your keys out of sight and well away from the door they open. Don't open your door to strangers and, if possible, have a door chain fitted.

You can contact East Finchley's Community Police Officer, PC Paul Carter, at The Community Office, Golders Green Station, Tel: 020 8733 5562 or e-mail: paul.carter@met.police.uk

## Pick up a tree ... for free

LA21 has young trees in containers to give away to residents to plant in their gardens. "We hope to be planting 150 ourselves this season, on council and school land," said Colin Rogers, the group's tree officer, "and we have a wide variety we can offer to the community. We can also give advice on how to plant and care for the young trees."

The LA21 allotment nursery has small and largish trees, including fast and slow growing types. The following varieties are available and their ages range from two to six years:

alder, apple, ash, birch, cherry, field maple, horse chestnut, sweet chestnut, holly, juniper, hornbeam, oak, pine, rowan, spindle, white beam and yew.

### We can help

All the trees have been grown on the allotment nursery in pots and pails for an average

of three years. Growing the trees in containers makes them easy to transport and allows the tree to start in its new location without disturbing the root ball. In fact, most of the trees will fit into a car in one way or another. If you need help carrying and/or planting your tree, LA21 will help.

Why not pick your tree at the nursery and then you'll be able to gauge the size and shape of your tree in 20/40/60 years. All you need to do is contact Colin on 8444 7150 to arrange a visit.

## Toy Library

By Diana Cormack

With Christmas just around the corner, the thoughts of many parents will be turning to toys. Which ones do their children want, which will be suitable for them and where can they be stored? There is also the worry that, after a short time, the boredom factor might set in and the toys will be discarded. But you don't need to worry, because help is at hand.

Muswell Hill Toy Library is stacked with all manner of toys which your children can play with there and which can be borrowed and returned every two weeks (but you can renew over the phone if need be). There is plenty of choice ranging from tapes and videos, activity centres and books through to all manner of puzzles, construction toys, music makers, dressing up outfits and baby bouncers.

### Toy story

Though housed in Muswell Hill library, Haringey Council does not run the toy library. It was set up by children's librarian Liz Luxmore sixteen years ago and is a registered charity. Now retired, Liz continues to run it with a band of helpers.

There are about two hundred members who pay an annual subscription, unless they are on benefit. Special summer events are held and there are two weekly story sessions.

The library is situated at the far end of Queen's Avenue and the Toy Library is open at the following times: Mondays: 2 - 3.30pm, Wednesdays: 9.30am - 12 noon, Thursdays: 9.30am - 12 noon. For further details phone 8489 8774 or at other times phone 8444 0244

Incidentally, whatever happened to East Finchley Toy Library, which I helped to run years ago? What became of all the toys and does anyone know the whereabouts of the lovely banner?



Valerie with a copy of a painting of Valantique by Keith Jamieson, which was exhibited at the Royal Academy and is now in America. Photo by Toni Morgan

## End of an Era

By Daphne Chamberlain

East Finchley will lose one of its most distinctive shops at the end of this month. Valantique, at 9, Fortis Green, is closing after 19 years.

Owner Valerie Steel says, "Antiques are taking a back seat at the moment. The minimalist look is killing business, for young people in particular. Dealers are closing down all over the place."

Why is there this downturn, though, when so many magazines and television programmes feature antiques? Valerie believes that people are trying to track down unrealistic bargains, and there are also too many trade fairs.

### Show business

Earlier this year, she herself appeared on Gloria Hunniford's television show. She supplied furniture, china and glass for Eric Knowles to talk about, and was then delighted to have her arm twisted to discuss them with him.

She has provided stock for other programmes, often working with Amazing Grates. In the backroom of the shop is a photograph, signed "with love and kisses" from Derek Jamieson, for whose show she supplied (among other things) a ball and chain.

Fortis Green customers have included Maureen Lipman, Ron Moody and Nicholas Parsons (who collects Victorian postal weights) and many others from round the world, often attracted by Valantique features in magazines like *Period Living* and *Traditional Homes*.

The strong pound has hit the tourist trade, but Valerie says ruefully, "If I had 10p for every time someone has described the shop as an Aladdin's cave or a treasure trove, I wouldn't be going out of business".

### Half a century

The shop itself has existed under various owners for well

over 50 years. Valerie remembers using it with her mother. As a child, her parents took her rummaging around second-hand shops, which is how she began absorbing knowledge, and her late father, Mick, worked with her in Valantique for years.

However, Valerie started off as a secretary, the highlight being a six-month spell with the Beatles, which included announcing Paul and Linda's engagement to the world's press.

Valerie has loved her time in the shop, and intends to develop her existing work as an interior design consultant.

Valantique items are being sold at reduced prices until the closure and Valerie can also be approached for house clearances. Her phone number will remain 020 8883 7651.

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