



The farmers' market in full swing. Photo by Daphne Chamberlain

Farmers Come To Whetstone

By Daphne Chamberlain

After all the disappointments and false hopes Barnet (maybe) has a farmers' market - every Friday, from 11am-5pm, for a 12-week trial period, in Whetstone High Road opposite Waitrose.

So was it worth waiting for? When I arrived at 1.30 on the first day several stalls had already sold out - notably fruit and vegetables and organic bread.

According to one of the organizers, queues for vegetables meant they had had to pitch in and help with the serving. True to tradition, there were still some cabbages on offer, but they looked excellent.

Demand, plus supply as summer comes in, should ensure that there will be much more produce available in the next few weeks - including freshly-picked strawberries and honey.

Meanwhile, gourmet cooks can buy fish just caught off the North Norfolk coast. This Blakeney fisherman's specialities are crabs, lobsters, sea-bass and grey mullet. He will take orders for crabs and lobsters, dead or alive according to preference.

Organic meat and poultry was available, including pies, burgers and sausages, but I went for organic free-range eggs from "happy hens". "They were laying at six o'clock, while I was picking the watercress," said their owner.

Taste the wares

His watercress was sold out, but the cheese stall still had some wild garlic (the plant, not the bulb), which is delicious chopped into salads. It could be sampled before buying, as could several varieties of cheese, which on that stall was

mostly made from Somerset buffaloes' milk. (This is often easier to digest than cows' milk.)

Nearby were bottles of organic fruit-juice, but not everything is organic, and not absolutely everything comes from a farm. I bought foccaccia bread, made with rosemary and sea-salt, which originated in Tottenham. Apparently this was acceptable because it was handmade and from an accredited individual supplier (also selling to Harrods).

Otherwise, this market had a genuine country accent, including poppies on the plant stalls.

It has started modestly, but by the time you read this it will have built up and organizers and stallholders were encouraged by a "very positive response". I shall certainly visit again, as will all the other shoppers that I spoke to.

The market is on the 263 and 234 bus routes and is only a short walk from Totteridge and Whetstone tube station.

Beware of cowboy workers

Residents are being warned to be on their guard against bogus workmen visiting homes in the borough claiming to be employed by the council.

The council's Neighbourhood Management Team has received several reports from High Barnet householders of people calling and offering to carry out work on driveways.

Residents should be alerted that the council does not employ any firm or individuals to call unannounced door-to-door and offer work in this way.

This type of work is usually sub-standard and over-priced and can be costly to put right if it hasn't been carried out properly. Worse still, customers are often asked for cash up front and then find the workmen never even arrive to start the job. Sometimes they will turn up but only do some of the work before asking for more money to complete it. If this is refused they will walk away leaving half the job still to be done.

To avoid being stung by rogue traders residents should beware if:

- *They insist on cash only
- *They overstress any faults
- *No paperwork is given at all
- *They seem reluctant to give a business name and address
- *They are insistent on getting the cash straight away

Anyone who is offered building work in this way is advised not to take up the offer and immediately contact Barnet Council's Trading Standards Office on 020 8359 4919 or call the dedicated hot-line number on 020 8359 4300. If at any time residents feel intimidated by callers they should ask them to leave and call the police.

Urban Acts

By Emma Seery

If you are aged between 13 and 25 and would like to know more about the Urban Acts festival which is to take place in Montrose Park on 6 July, read on.

Following the successful launch of the project at Finchley Youth Theatre (FYT) earlier this year, young people throughout Barnet have been participating in a variety of activities in preparation for the large outdoor festival. Workshops as diverse as Break Dancing, Rap, DJ with Rithmik and Singing, are running at Barnet venues throughout June.

Over recent months, budding young actors and actresses have been attending Urban Acts workshops at FYT on Tuesday evenings, led by two actors from the prestigious Scarlet Theatre.

Youth Culture

For those who are not passionate about performing but would like to contribute to

the project capacity, there are many opportunities, ranging from Stage Set and Design to Website Design. FYT has been running classes in Event Management since 29 April, (which will continue until 24 June), so there is still time to get involved. The workshop sessions focus on all aspects of co-ordinating a large-scale youth culture event.

For those prepared to travel beyond East Finchley, other participating venues include Canada Villa in Mill Hill East, the Rainbow Centre in Dollis Valley, Hendon Football Club, Grahame Park Youth Centre and Annunciation Youth Club in Edgware.

For more detailed information and workshop timetables visit the Urban Acts website at www.urban-acts.co.uk or call the information line on 020 8359 3152.

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