



Photo by John Dearing

With a Song in Their Hearts

By Daphne Chamberlain

It was song and dance time in October at Fairacres Apartments for Jewish Blind and Disabled. The celebration was for the 16th anniversary of the social club that "brings the building to life every Monday".

That accolade came from Jason Oizin, Executive Director of the Jewish Blind and Disabled Association. MPRudi Vis said it gave him great pleasure to be at the club's birthday party once a year. Twice a year would make him even happier. "Let's go on from there", said Reuby Hyams, who runs the club with his wife, Rene.

Rene and Reuby both paid tribute to their team of helpers, and Rene took the plunge and made her first public speech. ("You should hear her rattle on at home," remarked her husband.)

Referring to the recent One World Week, Rudi Vis said that this area had much to be proud

of in the field of religious integration. Other guests adding their good wishes included the President of the League of Jewish Women, the editor of *In Contact*, and local councillor Kathy McGuirk.

The Monday Club has a varied programme of events, and you don't have to live at Fairacres to attend. For this birthday party the entertainer was Tony Arnold, who wowed his audience with his repertoire of songs, dances, high kicks and jokes. He had a word for everyone, and left them a suggested theme song for Fairacres - "It's just that little street where my old friends meet."

Café Delay

By Diana Cormack

The new café in Cherry Tree Wood remains closed despite the original operator, Eileen Cannon, being ready and willing to open up for business from the end of October. This is because Barnet Council has put the lease for the kiosk/café out for tender, though Eileen has been asked to submit her name along with any others.

While there may be good reasons for this, such as questions involving contracts and being seen to act fairly, it again makes a mockery of Barnet's claim to be "Putting the community first." If that were so, couldn't this have all been sorted out during the past year? Park users who have been waiting for a café to replace the one burned down by vandals in November 2002 face at least another 2-4 months without this particular amenity.

It's off

The plan to create a café out of the old pavilion opposite the children's playground has failed to materialise yet again, since the latest party to show an interest has pulled out. This has become such a regular occurrence that Barnet Council needs to be asking whether or not it is a feasible idea. The building is deteriorating - will it be left until it becomes so dangerous to the public that it has to be demolished? A few weeks ago a Barnet employee walking past the pavilion was heard to say, "That would be an ideal spot for a youth centre." Hollow laughter from the Herbert Wilmot Centre!

Park House: No Plans, therefore No Consultation!

At the Council meeting on 18 November, Leader of the Council Victor Lyon defended the library consultation.

Asked by Cllr Alison Moore whether the money would not have been better spent on a "full and open consultation", he said that it had been very full. The project, he said, had been mooted by the previous administration, and this Council had honoured its commitment to consult on library provision, "whether on the same site as it is, or - if the opportunity presented itself - in a different library".

The cost of the consultation was given as £16,423 - including delivery of questionnaires, analysis of response, and questioning of focus groups, schools and hard-to-reach groups.

Park Road site

It was reported that several companies have shown interest in acquiring the site, but not as a result of any marketing, and

their expressions of interest were not being considered at present. Marketing had been delayed because of other disposals, but various agents had been asked for quotes and had recently submitted them.

Informed choice denied

Cllr Moore said that East Finchley residents want to make an informed choice about the use of the site. That choice has been denied by setting up a "flawed and limited consultation".

Cllr Lyon replied that there could be no consultation on use of land until a planning application has been received.

HGS Institute

The Institute has made an application for change of use for Park House. A short-term let to them can not be progressed until planning permission for this has been obtained.

Cherry Tree Wood AGM

The Friends of CTW AGM was attended by Noel Lynch from the GLA, local councillors Alison Moore and Colin Rogers, with Suresh Patel from Barnet Green Spaces plus Park Keeper Chris Ward, 10 members and seven of the committee.

The secretary presented her review and, with the assistance of Rachel Keen of Countryside Management Service, reported that Year 2 of the 5 Year plan had progressed well with some new trees planted and coppicing reintroduced to open up the woodland floor to more light thus enhancing regeneration. A charcoal burner may be brought in to help to reprocess some of the old wood. A volunteer Litter Pick Day in the summer

had been very successful and the millennium bench had only suffered a small amount of graffiti. An application for changing the bungalow into a 2-storey house with terrace had been withdrawn. There was also mention of the new *Walking for Life* venture (See page 10).

Question time issues included improvements to the children's playground, better rubbish bins and the erratic locking of the Wood's gates.

Light Fantastic

By John Dearing

In last month's edition we announced this year's Festive Lights in the High Road, courtesy of the local retailers and Barnet Council, and we are all looking forward to them bringing the festive spirit to East Finchley.

However, we were originally advised that the Council required them to be installed and switched on by 24 October, in time for Diwali, the Hindu festival of light, which is celebrated by many in the borough. Our initial announcement reflected this.

Just before going to press, we were informed that this was no longer the case, the lights would not be switched on until the end of November and our article had to be amended accordingly. Subsequently we learnt that the same had happened in Finchley town centre, except that they had

already started installing their lights, and they had to be taken down again.

Councillor Brian Coleman told us that when he had taken over responsibility for festive lights around the borough, he had learnt that a previous instruction to council officers regarding festive lights for Diwali had been misinterpreted as meaning that all participating town centres should switch on their Christmas lights towards the end of October. He felt that this was inappropriate and reorganised the provision of festive lights; as not all town centres are involved, it proved possible to provide lights specifically for Diwali in Burnt Oak Broadway. Elsewhere, Christmas lights would first be lit at the beginning of Advent, as is normally the case.

THE ARCHER is relieved to hear that Barnet Council has now got a grip on the situation.

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