



Front Garden Competition in Muswell Hill

The Muswell Hill and Fortis Green Association has launched a new Front Garden Competition which is expected to play a major role in slowing down the trend to make local front gardens into parking pads, and help keep the neighbourhood beautiful. Entry forms went out with the January issue of the Association's Newsletter and are also available at the February meeting, in local libraries, some shops and, of course, on the Association's website: www.muswellhillandfortisgreenassociation.co.uk

Capital Gardens are participating in this community event, which is open only to members including, of course, those joining in order to compete.

Entries must be submitted by 17 April and preliminary judging will take place between 10 and 25 May. Final judging of the ten best gardens will be done between 31 May and 7 June by an expert from the Muswell Hill and District Horticultural Society. There will be three prizes and the top ten entries will receive one year's free membership of the horticultural society. The prizes will be presented on Sunday, 29 June.

Horticultural Highlight

There are six criteria the judges will look for: makes you want to stop; design;

planting and maintenance; overall 'feel'; does it suit the house? and is it in keeping with the street? This competition is expected to be a major highlight for the Association's activities in 2003 and follows on from previous successful competitions such as the Muswell Hill Picture Show and last year's Green Poetry competition. The competition is being organised by a sub committee chaired by Association Chairman John Hajdu (8883 8114 if you would like further details), committee members Denise Feeney and Peter Thompson and member Bill Jago.

Not Just Child's Play

By Diana Cormack

Do you have a growing collection of miscellaneous objects which you can't throw away because one day they might possibly come in useful? If so, read on, for there is a place for some such things and it's not very far away.

Barnet Play Association is housed in the Old Barn Community Centre, Tarling Road. It is a registered charity which aims to represent the play needs of children throughout the borough.

Crafty Collection

Central to this is the Scrap Project where resources for after school clubs, mother and toddler groups, refugee centres, etc. are sorted and stored. Organiser Marie Michelson showed me wonderful samples of material, fabric and buttons donated by places like Harrods, Liberty's, John Lewis, River Island and the clothing factories around Finsbury Park. There was also an assortment of paper and card from shop displays and, at this time of year, old decorations, Christmas lights and cards are well received. Birthday cards are always welcome, along with wrapping paper, used postage stamps – in fact anything which could be used creatively.

Consumables like glue, glitter and feathers along with a wide range of other craft materials are available. There is a badge maker for hire (which is popular at East Finchley's Community Festival) and kits such as candle making, jewellery and mosaics can be borrowed by members of the association for workshops of up to twelve children.

Learning to play

The centre organises training courses in craft activities and Marie herself goes into after school clubs and summer play schemes. As well as giving advice on funding, staff recruitment and support for those working in the area of play provision, within the voluntary sector or not, the association also offers play worker training courses.

At present they are the only play association in the country involved in the Inclusive Play Opportunities Project. IPOP will supply help so that disabled youngsters can participate in a club, providing inclusive play of all sorts for the children and giving their parents a regular break. Phone IPOP on 8441 0404 for further details.

For any other information ring Marie on 8371 0281.

Road Works

According to notice given last November by the borough's Highway Authority, carriage-way resurfacing is scheduled to begin along a length of Fortis Green (A 504). This covers an estimated length of 259 metres in the Barnet Borough section of the road.

At the time of writing the expected start date was 28 February 2003.

Green Giant Centre?

By Daphne Chamberlain

The Green Man Community Centre is continuing to grow in importance to East Finchley. It provides a wide range of facilities and services for us all – not just for the residents of Strawberry Vale.

Taking a selection from what is currently on offer, you could find your way around the Internet, take up Colombian dancing or Tai Chi, brush up on reading, writing and maths skills, find a job through a 'return to work' class, take advice on debt problems, receive psychotherapy for emotional troubles, and be sociable in the community café.

Courses are either free or at low cost. The Centre is a venue for Contact, East Finchley Advice Centre, Barnet College, the U3A and the Credit Union.

One community

"Pity it's right up the other end of East Finchley" is a complaint I've heard from several 'villagers'. At a time when our library might well be relocated at the opposite end, together with the Underground and most of the shops,



Martin O'Donnell at the Green Man. Photo by Daphne Chamberlain

it could be seen as keeping a balance. We are all one community, which was emphasised last year when children taking part in the carnival procession to the Festival prepared their faces and costumes at The Green Man, and started their procession from there.

A lot of the Centre's activi-

ties depend on volunteers. If that might interest you, call Martin O'Donnell on 020 8883 4916.

The Green Man Centre is just off the High Road at the top of Strawberry Vale.

Free Interview Skills Workshop

On Monday 10 March a free workshop on interview skills will be held at the Green Man Community Centre.

Run by North London Information, Advice and Guidance (the adult careers service), the course will cover varied aspects of interview technique and preparation.

Refreshment will be provided, and each participant will receive a free interview skills information pack.

Places are limited, and need to be booked in advance. Please call Dorothy Evans on 020 8446 5554, or e-mail Dorothy.evans@prospects.co.uk.

Wheelchair Fall

By Daphne Chamberlain

At about 11am on Thursday 12 December, Sippy Azizollah was passing East Finchley Underground station in her wheelchair.



Looks like too much sand in the cement mix to me... A small hole making big trouble. Photo by Sippy Azizollah

The chair caught an uneven spot around a manhole and Sippy was pitched out. It was a horrible experience, leaving her badly bruised and shaken.

Amazingly, she remembers two young men, "probably in their late 20s/early 30s", simply walking straight past her. In contrast, another passer-by and a member of the Underground staff went to her assistance. "They were very kind," she says. "Unfortunately I haven't got either of their names, but I would really like to thank them."

Sippy wonders whether Finchley is undergoing a slight landshift. She comments, "I've noticed even newly laid pavements sinking and becoming uneven lately. I know the Council can't help that, but I think they should be making more attempts to put things right. It would be in their own interests to protect themselves from being sued. If – God forbid – a pedestrian had tripped over that manhole they could have broken a leg."

Were that to happen, we can only wish them luck with the people passing by.

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