



### Letters to The Editor

#### Sylvester, aka Tom, aka Wildebeest

Sir, Although I left East Finchley over two years ago and now live in the sun some 2,000 miles away, I enjoy THE ARCHER still. It's good to read about old friends, neighbours and recently - cats...

Yes cats; although the story is a sad one. In a recent issue I read that a very dear old friend, the exceptionally large and fierce black and white tomcat of Lauradale Road, who had many names, had died at the grand old age of 20.

Wildebeest was my cat - well 'my' in the sense that he lived with my family in Fortis Green Avenue for a year.

One rainy day back in 1986 he presented himself to the Haringey social services department in Wood Green where my wife was working. She fed him and let him move into the office where he lived quite happily for two years sleeping on the filing cabinet marked "Displaced Persons".

But Tom, as he became known, had an attitude problem. Whenever the mood got him, he would glare and he would hiss and he would lash out a paw and let fly a spit that cracked like a rifle shot...

There were rifle shot spits too many and eventually startled staff insisted he should go. So in 1988 we brought him home to Fortis Green Avenue and, because of his wild spirit, we named him "Wildebeest".

He slowly settled in with us and our two cats. All was harmony for a time but then he disappeared when we went on holiday during September 1989. I found him sunning himself on a wall on the corner of Fortis Green Avenue and Lauradale Road.

We could not entice him back and that corner became his favourite haunt for the next 13 years. Indeed he became king of the corner. Other cats kept their distance while dogs dropped tails

and crossed the road. Once I saw a man pick up his dog and hurry past Wildebeest.

We were glad to learn that some people in Lauradale Road had given him refuge. They also gave him a new name, Sylvester. Thank you, Martin Page, for caring for him for all these years.

God rest you, Sylvester, aka Tom, aka Wildebeest, in that great happy hunting ground in the sky. I'm sure that I'll meet you again some day and when I do there will be a glare and a hiss and a lashing out of a paw and a rifle shot spit...

Yours Paul Savill, The Algarve, Portugal.

#### 'Who's counting?'

Dear Editor If Margaret Cartwright of Leicester Road (December issue) believes East Finchley is 'overloaded' with Estate Agents she should be grateful she does not live at our nearest neighbours in Muswell Hill or Finchley Central.

In East Finchley, between Creighton Avenue and the tube there are approximately just over 100 shops, of which only five are Estate Agents.

If you compare this with the roundabout alone at Muswell Hill, out of approximately 20 shops there are six Estate Agents - without the others in Muswell Hill Broadway and Fortis Green Road. Whilst in Finchley Central between only Station Road and Hendon Lane, out of 35 shops there are ten Estate Agents!

All communities need a fair balance of shops and businesses to keep the area alive and healthy and, as someone who has worked locally for 15 years, I believe that East Finchley has a balanced and far better community spirit than many other London areas.

I commend THE ARCHER and the volunteers who work on it for giving East Finchley some of that special identity.

Yours faithfully (name and address supplied)

#### Good Samaritans

Dear Editor

We hear so much in the media about the uncaring attitude of passers-by when they see anyone lying hurt in the street through accident or whatever, that perhaps my recent experience will be of interest and put this in a new light.

Just recently I had a very bad fall on the ice on the corner of Fairlawn Avenue and Fortis Green. My wife was with me and we were both overwhelmed by the help and kindness from perfect strangers, both pedestrians and passing motorists.

One stopped and called an ambulance, another covered me with a blanket and supplied a pillow for my head, another called the doctor. The ambulance arrived within 15 minutes and I was taken to hospital with head injuries.

My purpose in recording all this is to show the caring and kindness of so many people - it has given me a huge lift and restored my faith in the kindness of people around us.

Len Willcocks Park Hall Road, N2

#### Belt up

Dear Archer,

Regarding the article in the February issue, about the person who fell out of a wheelchair, suggesting that the Council is responsible and should put things right. Perhaps you should mention that wheelchairs should be safe for the user, and the user should at all times **fasten firmly their safety belt ie lap strap**. If the user is not using their lap strap, they may fall out and be responsible to injury to others. They are also advised to have insurance.

This advice is given to all clients issued with NHS wheelchairs, and in that case assessments are always made to check suitability and safety and advise on safe use. There are lots of people who privately purchase wheelchairs which may not be either safe or suitable. It is also the case that some users of privately purchased battery-operated wheelchairs are a positive hazard to themselves and others.

Sue Bentley

Any reader who feels strongly about any matter is invited to use this "Soapbox" column.

Please note that opinions expressed are those of the writer alone.



## The East Finchley Gold Rush!

By J. J. Patrick

East Finchley seems to be a magnet for Developers these days: compulsory purchase orders, demolition orders, destroying Conservation Areas, - you name it, we've got it in spades (or perhaps we should say diggers!).

Take the former Neurological Hospital, hidden away just behind East Finchley Station. Did you know that the Home and its grounds are part of a designated Conservation Area? The building itself has important historical associations, and the grounds contain many exceptionally fine trees (with tree preservation orders on them). Government planning guidance ("PPG 15") states that by law planners must pay special attention "to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area". So what happens? Developers put in an application to demolish the Home, and to build all over the site. And what do the Council Officers do? Instead of saying "You know perfectly well that this is a Conservation Area, and the point of a Conservation Area is to CONSERVE it, so NO, you can't build all over it, and don't waste your time and ours by trying it on", they actually encourage the Developers, by negotiating with them. And do these plans "preserve or enhance" the Conservation Area? You must be joking! Have a guess as to how many trees would have to come down, and how much concrete would be spread over the landscape!

Here's a suggestion: use the existing building for something of benefit to the Community that doesn't cause havoc by producing more parking (any ideas? Retirement Home? Sheltered Housing?) and preserve the lovely grounds for us all. The Council could do it; it is a CONSERVATION AREA (remember?) and they can refuse permission for anything that harms the site.

Must Barnet's planners give way to every gold-digging Developer who stakes a claim? Come on, Councillors! Put on your Sheriff's badges and stand up for the law and for East Finchley! And hustle those stray planning officers back into the corral!

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