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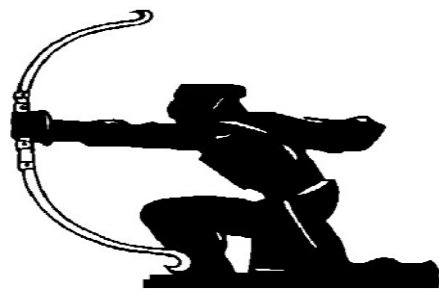
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Local News Is Our Aim

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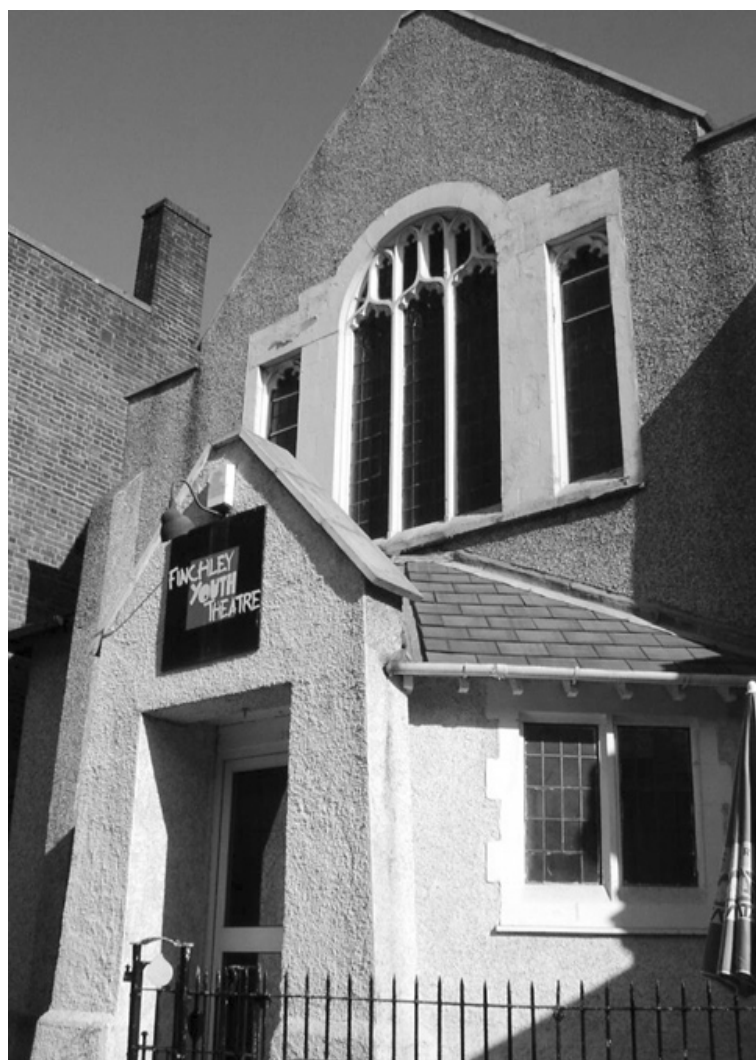


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East Finchley Youth Theatre - under threat of closure.
Photo by Alison Roberts

Youth Theatre Under Threat

By Sophie Leighton

Following a string of closures to youth clubs in Barnet, and with the future of the Wilmot Centre hanging in the balance, the council has now set its sights on youth theatre provision. At the cabinet meeting on 29 September, the merging of Finchley Youth Theatre with the new arts depot in North Finchley was proposed and a source close to the Finchley Youth Theatre was able to confirm that a feasibility study is about to be conducted.

Rationalisation

The Finchley Youth Theatre premises on the High Road, which have recently undergone extensive refurbishment as a theatrical venue, would likely be commandeered for other – as yet unspecified – purposes. The Finchley Youth Theatre is not alone in facing this threat; the plan is also to absorb the Bull Youth Theatre in Barnet into the new 'depot'. The depot, due to open in Spring 2004, is fast emerging as a form of catch-all solution for 'rationalising' valuable resources including those that serve their immediate areas for age-groups without independent transport and who are more vulnerable on public transport at night.

Local links

As well as providing a wide range of classes in drama and improvisation, dance and production skills such as sound, set and lighting for 11- to 18-years-olds, Finchley Youth Theatre has worked to develop links with local partners, including the Phoenix cinema for film and video projects. It seems that

it is precisely this work, currently facilitating creative collaboration between independent artistic centres to the benefit of all their local areas, that is at risk of being used as the pretext for an overall reduction of services in the borough.

Book Now

Bookings are now being

taken at the Finchley Youth Theatre for the spring term classes and forthcoming productions are: Dust on Monday 1 December and The Ash Girl on Wednesday 10 December to 12 December – tickets and further details are available by calling in or on 020 8883 9957.

When Closing Down Means Opening Up

By Diana Cormack

Council Victor Lyon has rescinded the Cabinet decision to close the Herbert Wilmot Centre, however the battle is not yet won: Councillor Peter Davis, Member for Community Development, will review the decision and report back to the Cabinet at a later date.

Sylvia Duthie, Chair of Holy Trinity School Governors, told *THE ARCHER* that the lack of consultation about the Wilmot Centre is unacceptable: The school would be greatly affected should any substantial redevelopment of the Stanley Road Playing Field take place.

At present the field can only be reached by a footpath which

runs behind the Wilmot Centre, alongside Holy Trinity School grounds to the narrow bridge over the Northern Line at the end of Stanley Road. The position of the Wilmot Centre is pivotal, for, should it be demolished, instant access from Eagan's Close to the Stanley Road site would be provided. So the previous decision to close the Centre as part of the Borough's youth service reorganisation plans came as no surprise to some.

Yet again, East Finchley seems to be the setting for a hidden agenda. In October *THE ARCHER* reported that Barnet has been showing interest in the Stanley Road Playing Field, obviously worth millions to any property developer. But the site is landlocked. Then we learn that the 'dilapidated' Herbert Wilmot Centre is to go.

Just as the present East Finchley library consultation does not make it clear that voting for a new library could also mean accepting the controversial Waitrose proposals, so selling off the Wilmot Centre could herald opening up the immediate area

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