



(L-R) Florist team Barbro, Barry, Kathy, Jane, Julie and Alison (Natalie is absent). Photo by Erini Rodis.

Business Blossoms in Church Lane

By Erini Rodis

Church Lane flower shop Jennie Mann was re-launched in a flurry of celebrations in September, after being transformed into a designer flower shop.

"The flowers are the same," explain owners Kathy and Barry Stewart, "but the packaging is altered; romantic hand-ties are wrapped in tissue and glassware and vases are imported from Germany, Belgium and Poland which is renowned for its hand-cut crystal."

Standards

A loyal team of florists works behind the scenes, to standards high enough to keep a regular clientele from Hampstead Garden Suburb, Highgate and Muswell Hill; so what's the secret of their success? The fact that a buyer goes to Covent Garden every day for fresh supplies of *amarillus*, *bella donna* and exotic *orchids* probably helps: "We're not all carnations and daffodils," reminds Kathy, "anything that's different, we go for!"

Traditional bouquets of roses are displayed alongside semi-edible arrangements (including berries, lemons, apples and pineapples), outdoor patio tubs of peppers, ornamental cabbages, heather and cyclamen dressed with feathers and roses made of balsa wood...

The *piece de resistance*, however, is the double-walled, square wax candle arrange-

ment, with fresh roses filling the watery cavity. It is a simple, but deliciously visual concept.

Growing success

Kathy's career began in Wigmore Street as a teenager in the sixties, before moving on to *Beryl Williams* in Hampstead, where she met and worked with the original owner of the store. Jennie Mann herself has been

in East Finchley for 14 years and sold the shop to Barry and Kathy upon her retirement last year.

The wonderful thing is that whether you're a scientist, an incurable romantic or an artistic in search of a muse, there is something for you in this little shop. Just pop along or give Kathy a call on 8365 2284.

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East Finchley: Birthplace of the National Trust?

By Ann Bronkhorst

On 28 September a dozen enthusiasts from the Finchley Society and the Octavia Hill Society explored a lost rural Finchley, retracing the footsteps of a remarkable Victorian who was Henrietta Barnett's friend; she coined the term 'Green Belt', campaigned for housing reform; and founded the National Trust.

"The idea of Finchley... it all rises up so very bright" wrote Octavia Hill. She'd grown up in East Finchley, loving its meadows and woods. Later, living in central London, she longed "to be in the midst of beauty" so in October 1853 she walked from Tottenham Court Road to Finchley and on to Mill Hill, revisiting her childhood haunts.

Air and joy

The commemorative walk began at the site of *Brownswells*, the family home, between Oak Lane and Sylvester Road. One day the Long Lane pasture nearby may be dedicated to Octavia's memory. In the 1840s, when the A1000 was still a dirt track, she played on Finchley Common, jumping over Strawberry Vale brook. The Common - or The Waste - was a swathe of recently deforested land rich in streams and ponds. Today the Glebelands Nature Reserve preserves some of that landscape. Guided through it by Dr. Natelson we could understand Octavia's

conviction that open spaces bring "the healthy gift of air and joy of plants and flowers" into urban lives.

Few of the farms she knew have survived. At 70 Queen's Avenue a plaque commemorates Cobley's Farm where Dickens, a family friend, stayed. Courthouse Farm where Octavia paused for breakfast has gone though Courthouse Road remains. Burtonhole Lane (and Farm) still exist but without "the deep cart ruts" she describes.

The 'Finchley marathon' ended at Avenue House, home of the Finchley Society, which, like other civic amenity societies, originated in Octavia's environmental campaigning. Organisers Peter Clayton, founder of the Octavia Hill Society, Oliver Natelson and Betty and Norman Burgess had devised a fascinating 150th anniversary tribute to a woman whose ideas still influence our lives.

For further information visit www.octaviahillmuseum.org or telephone 01945 476 358.

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