



The willow trees in Edmunds Walk. Photo by John Dearing

The first cut is the deepest

Some people in Edmunds Walk were so shocked by the treatment meted out by Barnet Council workers to one of the three willow trees in their road that they persuaded the men to stop and go away.

The trees in question have been there for well over twenty years and no notification about their being pruned was given.

One resident, who contacted *THE ARCHER*, used words like *butchered* and *massacred* to describe the tree in question.

"Everyone who goes by looks at it in horror," she said. "It has spoiled the beauty of our little cul de sac."

Readers can judge from the photograph, taken in early October. The other two trees were pruned properly a month later.

Bus Watch visit Metroline

By Daphne Chamberlain
East Finchley Bus Watch visited Metroline's Wembley Park HQ last month. Following the group's monitoring of the 263 and 143, the routes' operators were anxious to show them their £10 million investment in bus control.

A pilot scheme in conjunction with Transport for London, the computer-run project shows HQ the position of every bus running on selected routes. HQ supervisors see at a glance

whether buses are running to time, and also the intervals between them. They communicate with the drivers by text (scroll-down for drivers).

Portions of the chart are visible in bus cabins, and the screen can also be downloaded to en-route supervisors, via mobiles.

In London, this scheme operates mainly in Central and North-West areas, although the 82 uses it. Metroline are waiting for the go-ahead from Transport for London before introducing it to other garages.

The 263 and 143 are still dependent on traditional controls, but Bus Watch were told that supervisors are allocated to varying places, "from 7am to late", and are also on duty at Potters Bar garage from 4.15am to 2.30am the following day. Bus Watch members discussed with supervisors the best way to continue their own monitoring in future.

What else can be done?

Meanwhile, as Metroline pointed out, traffic congestion in outer London continues to rise. In addition, not even the most sophisticated technology can prevent occasional breakdowns in service.

What else can be done? "Put on another bus – or re-route an existing service" is what many Bus Watch members believe. They maintain that one route along a busy main road, particularly with the rise in population on the High Road, is not enough. This is an argument that the Group will be taking to Transport for London.

Tube trains in safe hands

The future of the Underground is currently being tested on a 900-yard stretch of track in East Finchley. A new system has been fitted to a train which will take over from the driver, and control its speed, braking and accelerating automatically.

It will allow trains to travel at up to 60 mph, with the gap to the next train reduced from 700 yards to as little as 280 yards, allowing many more trains onto the same amount of track in safety. This will go a long way to reducing overcrowding on the network.

Computerised speed control

The system works by using an antenna installed on each train that detects cable loops between the tracks. With this, it accurately calculates the position of the train and relays this information to management computers located at stations. These then calculate the optimum safe speed for the trains, which run a constant distance apart, and brake if they are in any danger of encroaching on the minimum distance to the train in front. If the signal between the track and the train fails, the system will apply the emergency brakes. The driver will continue to manage the doors of the train, and cope

with emergencies. A similar system is already operating on the driverless Docklands Light Railway, although the maximum speed is much lower.

More trains in seven years' time

The system is designed by the Canadian firm Alcatel and is planned initially for the Jubilee Line in 2009 with the Northern Line following in 2011. The number of trains will be increased from 18 to 26 per hour between Camden and Finchley Central, and from 14 to 20 per hour between Finchley Central and High Barnet.

Dr. Siv Bhamra, the project manager of Tube Lines, said that the chosen system had already been installed successfully on metro networks in Hong Kong, Ankara, Vancouver and San Francisco: "We have spent £1 million building this test track and we will carry out a huge testing programme to ensure that the system is working properly before we move to passenger operations."

Shopping bus: new service

East Finchley Neighbourhood Contact has announced a development in their shopping bus scheme. Thanks to a one-year funding from Finchley Charities, they have restarted the Thursday bus, to run alongside the existing Friday service.

The Shopping Bus Scheme is a free service for elderly or disabled people who are still mobile enough to board a minibus and do their shopping, but are not able to carry heavy shopping home again or to afford a regular taxi.

Once registered, people are phoned each week by Dolores, the Contact Shopping Bus Co-ordinator, who offers places and makes sure the bus is always full. (On average, shoppers go once a fortnight.)

The Friday bus, which will concentrate on the N2 area east of East End Road, picks up shoppers from their homes between 12 noon and 12.30pm, arriving at Tesco's, Colney Hatch Lane, around 1pm. About an hour is allocated for shopping and/or having lunch.

The Thursday bus, which is intended for shoppers from East End Road and also the N3 area, runs one hour later.

For further details, please call 020 8444 1162.

Protect your car!

Car crime is often one of the easiest crimes to commit as cars are left for long periods in car parks while people commute to work. To avoid becoming a victim of car crime Barnet police are offering the following advice:

- Lock the doors and windows when you leave the car – for any length of time, no matter how brief.
- Don't leave anything on display – even a jacket can seem like an appealing target for a thief. Remove the stereo if you can. Also tuck in wing mirrors and put down the aerial to discourage vandals.
- Never store your car's documents in the car.
- A Thatcham-approved immobiliser or steering lock can help secure older vehicles.
- Think about having windows etched with the car's vehicle registration number and make a note of its chassis number.
- Keep your car keys in a safe place, even when in your house, so that someone breaking in cannot steal your car too.

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