



603 – a Route to Follow

By Daphne Chamberlain

The latest bus route through (part of) East Finchley is very much a limited blessing. The 603, “an accessible, low floor double-decker” runs from Muswell Hill to Swiss Cottage – but only at school times.

It runs along Fortis Green to East Finchley station, up North Hill to Highgate Village, along Hampstead Lane past Kenwood to Hampstead station, and down Fitzjohns Avenue to Swiss Cottage. Stifling the cheers, look at its timetable: 7.30 and 7.50am and 2.40 and 3.10 pm from Muswell Hill, and 8.30 and 8.50am and 3.40 and 4.10 pm from Swiss Cottage.

The bus is not exclusively for schoolchildren. Anyone can use it, but Ken Livingstone says, “I hope this link will introduce a new generation of schoolchildren to public transport, and reduce car journeys in the area. I wish it every success.”

Most of us would echo that sentiment, only adding, “Why stop at schoolchildren?”

Esther Singer, from the Muswell Hill and Highgate Pensioners’ Action Group, contacted THE ARCHER to protest. She says that her friends have stopped going to Hampstead because of awkward public

transport and difficult and expensive parking. If a bus can run at school times, why not throughout the day and evening, when other people need it?

Bus Watch meeting

She is not the only one to complain. When I rang Transport for London to check details, I was told that other callers, including one just before me, had registered the same criticism.

Transport for London will review the service in six months, but before that Bus Watch West Haringey and the Muswell Hill and Fortis Green Association will hold a joint public meeting to do the same. The principal speaker will be Lynne Featherstone, Chair of the GLA Transport Committee. The meeting will be at 7.45pm on Wednesday 17 March, at the Friends’ Meeting House, Church Crescent, Muswell Hill (just off Muswell Hill Road). East Finchley residents will be particularly welcome.



Holy Trinity Choir sing at the Ofsted conference. Photo by John Dearing.

An Inspector Calls

By Diana Cormack

Among the lasting impressions which David Bell, Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector for Schools, took with him from his visit to Holy Trinity CE Primary School in December was the quality of the children’s singing. So he asked head teacher Duncan Mills to allow them to be the first ever to take part in an annual event, the Conference of Senior OFSTED Inspectors.

This took place in mid January in a large hotel in Hammersmith. Transport by

coach plus drinks and biscuits at the venue were laid on for the pupils, who performed to an audience which included Margaret Hodge, Minister for Children, and well over four hundred inspectors from all parts of the United Kingdom. In his introduction, David Bell explained that he had invited Holy Trinity School to perform because of their excellent singing. What is notable is the fact that this was not a school choir. Any class could have been chosen and would have performed equally well, but Years 4 and 6 represented the school on this occasion.

Though they had not sung together since David Bell’s visit, except for a quick run through on the morning of the event, they still delighted the audience with their five songs. Credit for this must go to singing teacher Neil Bell, who came to the school in Eagans Close a couple of years ago. At that time Barnet Singing Project had been launched using visiting teachers to bring more singing into primary schools. So successful was Neil that, when the project ended, Holy Trinity undertook the funding for his expertise. His contribution has added even more to the school’s motto of High Standards Together.

Right On, LondOn

By Tony Roberts

I was determined not to have to pay this latest round of London Transport price rises. So I decided to brave the technology and ‘shell out’ for an oyster prepay card.

I gave the man at East Finchley Station a twenty-pound note plus registration fee of £3 and in return he tapped in my details and handed me a light blue plastic card and matching wallet.

Goodbye to loose change

It was a Saturday when I nervously tapped my wallet on the yellow disk at the ticket barrier for the first time. There was a bleep and a green light and the display flashed up 20 and Enter, which I did. After the same procedure (to exit) at Leicester Square and on the return journey, the indicator at East Finchley flashed up 16.40 and Exit, showing I had £16.40 left on the card.

Hampstead for a pound.

The journey to the West End and back at the weekend had cost me just £3.60, which is a pound less than it would have done even last year. The



The Tube’s your Oyster. Photo by Tony Roberts

journey to Hampstead would have cost £1, a saving of 30 pence each way, and less than it would normally cost by bus. The idea of variable single fare pricing dependent on time of travel raises all sorts of possibilities, perhaps there’ll be special offers next.

Clapping my card to the yellow pad on the touch

screen ticket machine meant that I could see the details of each of my journeys, the fare deducted and the balance on my card.

Congratulations to London Transport for an imaginative ticketing scheme. Mind you, I’ll keep some loose change with me until the system has proved itself to be reliable!

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