



Body and Soul

By Sam Grove

The temple that youth religiously frequents in the 21st century is not the church but the gymnasium. This is no less so in Finchley, a town that hosts a plethora of temples including The David Lloyd, Fitness First, The Lido, LA Fitness and Compton Sports Centre. As part of my investigation into youth culture I set about uncovering the nature of this phenomenon.

A friend and I went undercover and pretended to be interested in joining a gym. We got a guided tour and a free workout; ample opportunity to grasp the finer points of gym life. The gym, it is clear, is not just a place to get fit. It is a concept. People go to change their state of mind as much as their body shapes. At the entrance we are greeted with the statement, 'A healthy body equals a healthy mind' Once we entered the weights room, the walls were littered with pseudo intellectual quotes. 'Adversity causes some men to break; others to break records.' Or 'For every disciplined effort there is a multiple reward.' Very good so far - but some were clearly taken completely out of context; 'Justice is a concept. Muscle is the reality.' Or actually didn't mean anything at all; 'It is scientifically proven that men who work out regularly are 65% more likely to reach their goals.' However they seemed

to inspire a certain determination in the regulars. One man I spoke to was unequivocal about his objectives "Sam - I want the TOTAL package." Which I later learned was "an excessive mass of muscular bulkage garnished with acute and [if possible] serrated definition."

Happy faces

But for every success there is anguish. Gyms are fiercely competitive places and there are many casualties. Demoralised by their relative physical ineptitude and less than perfect physiques they take sanctuary in the saunas and steam rooms - hoping that if they can't do it lifting weights they can at least shed a few pounds dehydrating themselves. Like H.G Wells' hellish vision of the future, the ugly face of gym life is largely hidden from view. There are no pictures of them on the wall. They are not mentioned in the brochures. There are no quotes that give voice to their misery. There are only happy faces at the gym...



Beauty therapy in action. Photo by Danielle Grimes

Isabel Douglas: From Top to Toe

By Danielle Grimes

Have you started another year with the same old resolution? Well how about making a resolution that you are sure to keep?

After the stresses and strains of Christmas - not to mention the cold blustery weather still creeping up on us - we all feel like a little pampering ready for the New Year. And what better place to go than the Isabel Douglas Health and Beauty Centre, 90/92 East Finchley High Road. Isabel Douglas caters for all ages, genders and ailments, with treatments from Trichology to Reflexology, all with complete privacy.

I met with a warm, friendly welcome and a peaceful, meditative atmosphere; this was not a pretentious Beauty Clinic. Isabel believes that it is paramount that each member of her team has at least ten years experience in Health and Beauty, stressing quality and professionalism.

The Isabel Douglas Salon provides products such as the organic hair colour range, understood not to be absorbed into the blood stream. Children

are provided for, through treatments such as homeopathy for asthma and acupuncture for hay fever, whilst men can benefit from private Trichology sessions. Fuelled by a desire to widen the access to alternative medicines, Isabel Douglas may soon welcome a GP onto her team and introduce further treatments such as colonic irrigation and Ajourvedic massage.

Isabel Douglas began her career in Health and Beauty at the age of sixteen when she came to London from Spain in 1956. After training in one of the top

salons, she opened her first salon in Kensington in 1970. Because of family commitments, Isabel left her work, but nine years and a Master in Biosthetition later, she reopened in Muswell Hill. Isabel is committed to promoting the importance of well-being and the understanding of alternative therapies in order to cure ailments and believes that the use of medicine should be left as the last resort. Now with her latest salon, opened in 2002, Isabel hopes to share her expertise with the community of East Finchley.

A Hit for the Older Generation?

By Sam Grove

The gymnasium does not host a monoculture, but attracts all sorts, most notably the old and middle aged. For those that are looking to get fit, or to meet new people there is a thriving community of mature gym-goers at the Compton Sports Centre on Summers Lane.

Prospective members should be warned however that (rather curiously) it is the older demographic group which is by far the most fashion conscious. While those in their 20s tend to turn up in rag t-shirts and baggy trousers, the 55+ age bracket can always be counted on to turn up in one-piece shell suits and the freshest pair of Nikes. On

one occasion I managed to get a glimpse of a Reebok badge stitched on a pensioner's sports jacket. It said 'Clothing tailored to enhance the performance of world class athletes'. As he lay on the flat of his back, a spluttering, gurgling shell of a man, (having been a bit over eager on the rowing machine) he looked dismally short of world class.

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