



A smashing time at The Black Bess

By Mark Littlefield

The Black Bess closed about 1964-5, when I was 10 years old. I remember going in with my grandfather to the main café, but not to the tea-rooms adjacent to it. On a mischievous note though, my friends and I had great fun smashing the crockery when it closed.

The owners had left it outside when they went – all plain white plates and cups, etc. It was left on the ground on the south side of Hertford Road, about 20 yards from the High Road, which was where the Black Bess property extended to.

Not on film

Just before this boundary was a fence and two film boards, about five foot square, which advertised the Rex (now the Phoenix) and the Odeon at Muswell Hill. Lorry drivers going in to the Black Bess used to park by these film boards. It wasn't an issue, as Hertford Road had about 15 car owners

then, with a maximum of three or four parked during the day.

Super balls

In school holidays we would play ball in the road. I remember buying our 'super balls', which were sold as seconds, from Conrad – a foam and rubber shop at the north side of the junction of the High Road and Beresford Road. These were 6d (two and a half pence), against five shillings (25p) from a toyshop.

These things really bounced. One holiday, one went astray up Hertford Road when a car was coming down, and the ball went through the car's headlights. What a shot!

Supporting Lupus

This year the ARCHER team decided that they would donate the proceeds of their stall at the East Finchley Festival to Lupus. Sippy Azizollah, an ARCHER team member who unfortunately suffers from Lupus, is seen here accepting the cheque from Sue Holliday. Sippy said that the North London Lupus Group were more than grateful and the moneys would be put to very good use.



Sippy Azizolla accepting the cheque from Sue Holliday

Lupus UK is a support group set up to help people suffering with lupus. They have a very wide network of groups all over the country, plus a worldwide connection too. They raise money to help with research, which is being carried out by specialist medical teams at St Thomas' hospital, which has a special lupus unit under the watchful eye of Dr Graham Hughs. Other hospitals around the country also monitor lupus patients, who are often given the Lupus UK address and phone number for information for ways to help inform themselves of various ways to make life easier. Informa-

tion is also available online, but the local groups also have help lines for people who need one-to-one assistance.

The research so far has proved that this condition is dormant in everyone, but they are now trying to find out what triggers it. Lupus is much more common in women, but there are many male sufferers of this debilitating illness. Lupus Awareness month is this October where all the groups do what they can to inform others of this condition, and to raise funds for further research. Hopefully one day there will be a cure, but help is needed to raise the funds to find one.

East Finchley's religious heritage

Part 6 – The North London Jamatkhana

By Ann Bronkhorst

150 years ago where Budgens now stands there was a stonemason's yard, and a field. Later, from the 1870s until its demolition in 1965, the imposing Congregational church commanded the cross-roads. Two very different places of worship have, in turn, replaced it.

The United Reform Church

The Congregationalists, who had become part of the United Reform Church (URC), built a less ornate church. It was shared with the Elim Pentecostal Church and also hosted groups such as Cubs, Guides and ballet classes. Freda Hancock, then Guide Captain, remembers, "It had a warmth about it." But the building had problems, including a flood, and was too large for its remaining congregation. In 1989 it was bought by the Ismaili Muslim community and, as the North London Jamatkhana, had its civic opening in 1996 after extensive remodelling.

Blending in

The Ismaili community, led by His Highness the Aga Khan, has been established in this country for over half a century. Their main Jamatkhana (place of gathering) is in South Kensington, opposite the V & A. The South London centre opened in 2000, in Croydon, within some carefully restored Victorian buildings. Architecture of



The North London Jamatkhana (place of gathering)

Photo by Ann Bronkhorst

high quality, in harmony with the neighbourhood, is always their aim. In East Finchley, some of the URC building's structure has been retained and its 'footprint' has been used. Externally, however, the building has been redesigned to be in sympathy with the surrounding area, shown particularly in the windows, tiling and brickwork.

Space and calm

"The overall theme is simplicity," I was told when I visited the centre. Inside, my first impression was of spaciousness

and light. A fountain close to the entrance provides the gentle sound of flowing water, a characteristic Islamic feature. Upstairs in the prayer room an expanse of uncluttered carpet and cool, muted colours create a peaceful setting. Intricately carved wooden screens, ceiling panels and grilles – 'jali' work – contrast interestingly with the plainer surfaces.

A busy community

The Jamatkhana is used for cultural, educational and social activities as well as for worship. There are play and study facilities for children and young people are encouraged to support the centre in practical ways. From the tending of flowerbeds outdoors to the collection of shoes indoors, the whole centre runs through the commitment of volunteers. The Ismailis, the most recent faith community to come to East Finchley, have this in common with the Victorian Congregationalists who once worshipped on this site.

The Summerlee Soldiers

Mr. T.E. Mathews, writing about the history of East Finchley in the News Adviser of December 1974, described a reference in Holy Trinity's church records to a soldiers' Convalescent Home at East Finchley.

'After much digging I discovered that two large houses in Fortis Green Road were made into a Convalescent Home for Soldiers during World War One, under the name of Summerlee. It housed nearly two hundred wounded, and continued until about 1922. When it closed, its bedding was given to the cottage Hospital for Summerlee Ward.'

Dorothy Ditcham, 99 year-old East Finchley resident,

remembers seeing the convalescent soldiers sitting outside the nursing-home. She says they wore bright blue trousers and jackets, possibly with red ties.

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