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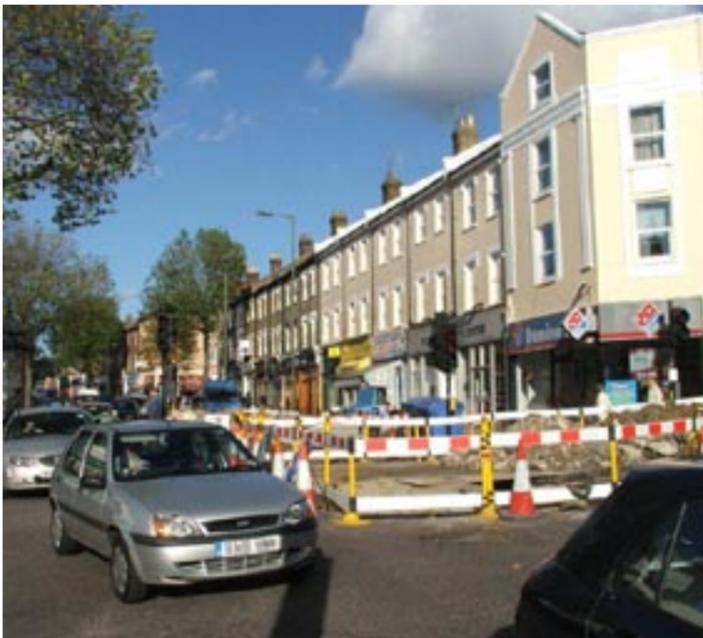


Photo by John Dearing

Up the junction

The Transco road works that occupied a good part of the High Road and Fortis Green crossroads caused major traffic congestion throughout November.

On their first morning on 7 November, south-bound traffic backed up past the North Circular, west-bound traffic most of the way to Muswell Hill and east-bound traffic past Ossulton Way. In the evening, north-bound traffic backed up to the A1.

For much of the month, motorists and bus passengers were left facing a wait as

long as 12-15 minutes to get through the lights, even out of rush hour.

And pedestrians faced the hazard of picking their way around the contractors' equipment to cross roads where the green pedestrian signal was not always clear.

The work on the underground gas pipes was scheduled to finish by the start of December.

Traders battle to keep Christmas spirit alive

By Louise Wikstrom and Tom Walker

East Finchley traders have been battling to keep Christmas alive in the High Road after Barnet Council refused to hand over their festive lights. Barnet Council claims the shopkeepers owe them £1,500 for putting up and taking down the lights for two years.

Shopkeepers in the High Road have spent five years raising the money to buy the colourful displays that bring pleasure to shoppers in every Christmas season.

Barnet Council stores the lights for the rest of the year but in November refused to hand them back to East Finchley, claiming the traders owed them two years' installation fees.

Traders weren't told

East Finchley Traders' Association spokesman Dino Loizou, of East Finchley Electricals, claimed that the shops don't have the money because they were never told about it.

He said: "The whole thing is a big joke. We have put years of effort into getting where we are, owning our own Christmas lights, and then the council tries to rip us off. We bought the lights and own them outright

– we just wanted to get our lights back."

Barnet council claims that the East Finchley shops agreed to pay £1,500 for two years. A council spokesperson said: "The traders owe £750 for last year, and unless they pay the money the lights will not be returned to them. Even if they got the lights back only the council will be allowed to put them up on Barnet's lampposts."

Similar disputes

Other places in the borough have also experienced similar problems. Burnt Oak, North Finchley, Edgware and Barnet Town have all had disputes this

year with the council over their Christmas lights.

As *THE ARCHER* went to press the future of East Finchley's lights was still uncertain - but there did seem to be hope as an intervention by Councillor Katia David persuaded the council not to charge the traders for last year's lights. However, the council was still demanding payment of this year's £750 in advance before the lights go up. Dino said: "We usually collect donations once the lights are up - and we don't have enough time now to do it in advance. But I've written to the council and I'm sure it will be all right."

Hollywood comes to Muswell Hill

By Paul Chapman

Hollywood arrived in Muswell Hill in October when a large film crew from Fox Productions encamped at the corner of Fortis Green and Midhurst Avenue.

The crew were shooting a movie based on a Zoe Heller novel, *Notes on a Scandal*, which has already been broadcast as a play for BBC radio. The novel is set

in north London so the film should include scenes with local interest.

Dame Judi Dench was among the stars on set and it was reported that she caused quite a stir when she went into the florists at the top of Collingwood Avenue to buy flowers. As well as Dame Judi, the cast includes Cate Blanchett and Bill Nighy.

The director is Richard Eyre, who also directed *Iris*, and the film is scripted by Patrick Marber, who is best known for comedy scripts. It is an intriguing tale of sex, class, and betrayal with a final psychological twist, and is planned for release next year.

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