



# London guide brands us 'lifeless and dull' (but the Phoenix is ok!)

By John Lawrence

What are we all doing living round here? East Finchley and the borough of Barnet have been branded 'lifeless and dull' and 'reassuringly boring' in a new guidebook to London.

There is 'more of a Horlicks feeling around here' says the Time Out London for Londoners book, written by a team of researchers and local contributors.

East Finchley is described as having a 'homely range of shops' with an increasing number of cafes and restaurants but none is considered worthy of a name check.

The new book seeks to give an insider's low-down on every part of the capital for those who may be visiting or hoping to move house. It proclaims itself to be the ultimate handbook to living in the city.

All the more galling then that Barnet comes off so badly. High spots of the borough are its plentiful greenery and top class bagel shops; lows are the Northern line and the staidness.

'Some people like the changeless lethargy of the borough,' reports the book. "Others will find it lifeless and dull".

Estate agent David Bettis, of Bennett and Hall, at the top of Long Lane, is quoted as saying: "It's not a trendy or fashionable borough but you get a lot of house for your money if you don't mind the travel. It's reassuringly boring - there's more of a Horlicks feeling around here."

It's not all bad news for East Finchley. Our two points of interest picked out for mention are the art deco gem that is the Phoenix Cinema and Cherry Tree Woods, popular apparently with 'yummy mummies with toddlers in tow'.

East Finchley has 'more of a liberal feel' than either North Finchley or Finchley Central

because of our proximity to Muswell Hill and Highgate. The area is said to have desirable Victorian and Edwardian dwellings and to be a big draw for writers, journalists and musicians.

Kate Fuscoe, a mother-of-two from East Finchley, has contributed to the book with some generally positive comments on local schools.

Do YOU think our area is lifeless and dull? Or can you think of nowhere you'd rather live? Let us know your highs and lows of living in East Finchley. Our contact details are on page 2.

## What the guidebook says about our near-neighbours:

**Hendon:** Struggles to have much of an identity

**Hampstead Garden Suburb:** Despite its appealing veneer, there is something distinctly stand offish about the area.

**Finchley Central:** Suffers from a high volume of traffic passing through its congested High Street.

**North Finchley:** Dominated by chain stores with the desirable residences tucked away in the peaceful streets around Woodside Park.

**Friern Barnet:** Pretty drab to say the least.

**High Barnet:** Old-fashioned community feel and resolutely untrendy.

**Muswell Hill:** Full of prams and trendy young parents.

**Highgate Village:** The prime place to reside in this neck of the woods

# Art gallery first for Fortis Green

By Diana Cormack



Jana Manuelpillai, Director of The Noble Sage  
Photo by Diana Cormack

The first gallery in the UK to specialise in contemporary south Asian art has opened at 2A Fortis Green, East Finchley. Friends, family and other wellwishers packed The Noble Sage Art Gallery to bursting point for its grand opening and inauguration on the evening of 5 April.

They heard speeches by Dr Paul Spencer-Longhurst, Senior Curator, Barber Institute of Fine Arts in Birmingham and Professor RB Bhaskaran, President of the Lalit Kala Akademi (National Academy of Art), Government of India. Both these eminent men praised the skills and knowledge of the gallery's director, Jana Manuelpillai, who welcomed his guests to the first exhibition entitled *Chennai Excite: New Work from South India*.

Two of the artists had flown in from Chennai for the opening and were able to tell guests about their ideas and inspirations. As well as paintings, there were also drawings

and sculptures handpicked by Jana, a Walthamstow-born Sri Lankan now living in East Finchley.

Visitors can view the exhibition, which runs until 1 July 2006, on weekdays from 9am -6.30pm and at weekends from 10am ñ 5pm. Director's specialist tours will be taking place at 2pm on 14 and 28 May. Entry is free.

# Power cut hits rush hour

By John Lawrence

Commuters, traders and residents experienced major disruption when a three-hour power cut hit East Finchley during the morning rush hour.

Electricity supplies failed for a large part of the area north of the tube station between the High Road and the rail line from 6.13am to 9am on Tuesday 4 April.

The power cut closed East Finchley tube station, forced some High Road stores and cafes to stop serving customers, and closed Holy Trinity School for the day.

EDF Energy, responsible for electricity supplies to East Finchley, located the source of the fault and restored power swiftly, but by then the damage had been done in probably the busiest part of the day.

Commuters who arrived at East Finchley tube station were turned away and advised to make their own arrangements to get into town. Most ended up getting on to crowded buses to get to stations at Highgate or Hendon, or walking one stop down the line.

Breakfast-time trade at cafes and shops in the High Road was badly hit. Many had to stop serving while they waited for the power to come on.

Tejas Somaiya, owner of the Cochin restaurant, said: "We were setting up for the day when the power went. Luckily, we weren't open

for business but a few of our neighbours on the High Road lost all power."

Tim Bowden, head of Holy Trinity School, sent his 200 pupils home for the day as soon as they arrived at the school gates, after being informed that it could be 9.30am before electricity supplies were reinstated.

He said: "The effect of the power cut was considerable for the school. The reason for shutting was that the health and safety of all who would be potentially on site during the day was compromised without electricity. There was no heating, lighting, phone system, or cooking facilities in the kitchen."

Hundreds of homes, too, were hit by the cut, as far north as the top of East End Road. All in all, about 1,300 customers were affected.

A spokesman for EDF Energy said the fault had originated in a cable under Viceroy Court, close to Budgens.

He said: "EDF Energy engineers managed to restore supplies to the majority of customers within about two hours, with the final supplies restored by about 9.30am. We apologise for any inconvenience caused by the loss of power."

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