



Letters to the editor

Festival should be free to try new ideas

Dear Editor

I am extremely disappointed with your article regarding this year's community festival (*THE ARCHER*, August 2006) which contained a number of inaccuracies.

The Happy Go Lucky Dance group was not abruptly cut from the programme as they had not been booked. In May they wrote requesting funding to appear and demanding a free stall. They were answered within a fortnight and the committee declined the offer.

I am also confused as to why North London Performing Arts were disappointed. We have no record of them applying to perform at the festival. I contacted NLPA after reading the article only to be told they had not applied to appear at the festival for a number of years! Before publishing this inaccurate nonsense, it would have been sensible to ask us to respond.

It is very sad that so called professional arts organisations, with teams of full time paid staff in bright shiny grant and council tax funded facilities should use *THE ARCHER* to attack a volunteer led and directed community arts group.

The festival organisers must be free to look at ways of making the festival better. Some changes may work; others may not be successful.

If your readers are interested in helping us plan next year's event (including the second stage) we would be delighted to see them at our review meeting on Thursday 21 September at the Green Man Community Centre starting at 7pm.

Yours faithfully
Martin O'Donnell
On behalf of the festival committee

Editor's reply:

THE ARCHER would like to make it clear that the original story was printed in response to complaints and comments about the booking system at the East Finchley Community Festival made to us by some of our readers. Our reporter Daphne Chamberlain contacted Mr O'Donnell several times to give him the chance to respond to the claims. The comments he gave us were reported accurately in the article.

Our festival is fantastic

Dear Editor,

I am writing to complain at the negative and carping tone used in the article published in *THE ARCHER* referring to the Community Festival.

We are extremely lucky in East Finchley to have several strong voluntary and community organisations working for the good of us all. Two of the most important are the Community Festival and *THE ARCHER*.

Having said this, for once I totally disagree with *THE ARCHER*. The festival was and is fantastic. Year after year it delivers fun amidst a valuable chance for the whole community to get together and get involved.

Sometimes the balance is too much one way; sometimes it goes a little too far the other way. But one thing is certain, it is democratically run and if you want to change any aspect of it then get involved yourself. Don't whine from the sidelines, but make a difference yourself by helping contribute to the planning of next year's festival.

As to the truth of the allegations, well I don't know myself and what's

more I'm pretty certain that neither does *THE ARCHER*! Did these organisations apply in time? Did they bother to check and confirm the arrangements; or did they perhaps just hope that all would go all right on the day and leave the work to other people?

I cannot imagine how many long hours of graft that Martin O'Donnell and his large team of unpaid volunteers put in; but I for one congratulate them on the results of the efforts - a wonderful free community festival.

Yours faithfully,
Peter Hart
Elmhurst Court, N2

Missed booking

Dear Editor,

I refer to your letter from Carolyn Pickles in last month's *ARCHER*. I feel sorry for the Dance Group that was unable to play at this year's East Finchley Festival. If the group had been 'practising their dance routine for months and months' surely Community Focus's administrators should have applied to take part in the June festival a bit earlier than May?

Apparently, 'buses, carers and rota systems had been sorted out' but not the booking of a performance slot. Now I know artistic types aren't ones for making a drama but really!

Yours faithfully,
Michelle Eldrett
Colney Hatch Lane, N10

Frightful and execrable

Dear Editor

I wonder if you knew about Lord Cooper, the proprietor of the newspaper in Evelyn Waugh's *Scoop* (1938). He lived in a "frightful mansion" in East Finchley (page 14 of the 2003 Penguin edition), which by page 215 has become "his execrable country seat at East Finchley".

What did Evelyn Waugh have against us?

Yours faithfully,
Wendy Fox
Shakespeare Gardens, N2

Tennis charges are a right racket

Dear Editor,

I have lived in East Finchley for many years and one of the best things about living in this great place was the free tennis courts at Cherry Tree Wood. Imagine my surprise when I went for a quick game the other week and was told that I had to pay £5.10 for an hour's play.

I know that the only reason we weren't being charged all that time was because there was no one to take the money, but I'd had a taste of a real public amenity and I started to think that this was a very good thing.

I spoke to Barnet Council and they merely said that "the courts need upkeep" and that "it's a good revenue earner". Quite frankly, that is something I did not want to hear. I pay council tax for amenities such as these courts (which aren't even in great condition), so I think this charge is an absolute disgrace.

The Government is continually campaigning for 'Sport-for-All' and is concerned that our children are overweight and don't do any exercise. This will just exacerbate the problem and make the sport elitist and inaccessible to those who can't afford the charges. And we wonder why we don't have a Wimbledon champion. The courts are more or less empty since the charges were introduced. Who knows, the locals might boycott

the courts completely, so then I guess it won't be the "good revenue earner" that was described to me.

By the way, why do the council charge for the courts and not the children's playground? That needs upkeep too doesn't it? Come on Barnet Council, get your stories straight.

While we're at it, why not make all of Barnet's tennis courts free, not just the ones in Cherry Tree Wood? I wonder if the council would be brave enough to agree to that.

Yours faithfully,
Anita Rai
Ingram Road, N2

Donkey ban drives me up the pole

Dear Editor,

Readers of *THE ARCHER* doubtless have many issues about which they disagree with their local authority Barnet. Personally, as a resident of Haringey, I have observed the manifestation of madness throughout the borough, while observing several common sense measures taking place in Barnet.

I support and enjoy participating in events that encourage local communities to get together, so I'll be at the Muswell Hill Festival on Saturday 17 September selling plants and promoting the Muswell Hill Horticultural Society and the National Gardens Scheme.

The festival will take place in Cherry Tree Wood and will feature a Donkey Derby. Why, I hear you wonder, is the festival and Derby not being held in Haringey's award-winning flagship (justifiably so) Priory Park?

The answer is because Haringey considers the fundraising attraction, the Donkey Derby, to be cruelty to animals and has banned it in the borough.

If Haringey is so concerned for the well being of animals, why doesn't it do more for the two-legged kind? The suffering caused by the lack of public conveniences in Muswell Hill is notorious - how London expects to cope during the Olympics with the dearth of such vital facilities baffles me.

We do have lovely new Heritage lampposts in Muswell Hill but I think the council would slap an ASBO on me the instant I cocked my leg against one!

Yours faithfully,
Susan Bennett,
St Regis Close, N10

Join our campaign for better buses

Dear Editor,

In her letter to *THE ARCHER* (July 2006) Helen Day gives us yet another example of the poor 263 bus service which the people who travel north/south through East Finchley have to endure.

Perhaps Ms Day and your readers would like to know about our group, East Finchley Buswatch, which is recognised by Transport for London and affiliated to West Haringey Buswatch. We actively campaign for improvement in the bus routes which serve East Finchley.

Ms Day is not alone and if she would like to join us she will be very welcome; the more people who become actively involved the better. If Ms Day would like to call me on the number given below I will give her an information sheet which gives guidance on who and where to contact to make complaints.



A craftsman at Gilbert and McCarty (stained glass restorers) working on one of the three damaged windows at All Saints Church (see letter below). This firm put back the glass on Big Ben when it was last reconditioned and did restoration work at Windsor Castle after the 1992 fire. Photo: M. Bronkhorst

A stain on our lovely church

Dear Editor,

Although I don't worship at All Saints, Durham Road, I feel some affection for this late Victorian church. It is one of the most handsome buildings in East Finchley and, over the years, has served as a kind of community centre: the venue for many community occasions, the annual Arts Festival, public meetings and concerts. Remember the launch of the WOW campaign?

I was shocked to learn recently that the church and its congregation must find £3,600 for repairs to smashed and damaged stained glass windows facing Durham Road. This is because, over the years, local children have thrown stones and kicked balls in front of the church. If only their parents and neighbours would remind children that the church grounds aren't a playground. If only, when damage is done, the parents could be expected to pay.

I've made a small donation towards the restoration of the windows and hope other residents will do too. After all, we don't have to wait for the National Trust to help save our architectural heritage.

Yours faithfully,
Martin Bronkhorst
Durham Road, N2

Animal identities

Dear Editor,

With reference to your article 'How en-deering' in the August issue, the photo of a newborn muntjac deer at Golders Hill Park looks more like one of the maras that share the enclosure with deer, alpaca and birds.

Yours faithfully,
Ann Daubercies
Manor Park Road, N2

We ask all your readers who use the local bus services not to stand around grumbling at bus stops, not to give up and say "What's the use?" but get going - join us in our campaigning. The louder our voice the more clearly we'll be heard.

If any readers would like to know more about our group, or would like our information sheet, please ring 020 8444 6824 or email hazel.burnett@freeuk.com.

Yours faithfully,
Hazel Burnett
Leslie Road, N2

You'll never walk alone

Dear Editor

We are a small group of walkers who meet on the first and second Monday of each month at 10 am at Cherry Tree Wood café and we are welcoming new recruits. There is no charge and walkers vary in their mobility so that if they are unable to do the whole hour they can stop whenever they wish.

Yours faithfully
Pam Carpentir
Stokes Court, N2

Clean up begins at home

Dear Editor

I was most interested to read Diana Cormack's article, "Clean up closed down", in July's edition of *THE ARCHER*, on the community-minded volunteers who have sought to clean up graffiti in the Muswell Hill and Fortis Green areas.

How frustrating that Bill Jago and Jack Whitehead's generous efforts have been frustrated by unspecified health and safety rules. I walk along East End Road every day and wish that more private individuals would make the effort to remove graffiti from their own homes or premises, their boundary walls and the areas immediately in front of them.

What would only take one coat of paint and a few hours to fix has, in some cases, been untouched for over a year, detracting substantially from the attractiveness of the area. Barnet Council also offers to clean private property at a discounted rate, so there really is no excuse.

Name and address supplied

Send your correspondence to: "Letters Page", The Archer, PO Box 3699, London N2 8JA or e-mail the-archer@lineone.net.

Letters without verifiable contact addresses will not be reviewed or printed. Contact details can be withheld, however, at publication.