



Ain't no mountain high enough

Imagine the exhaustion of climbing the world's highest free-standing mountain: Mount Kilimanjaro, rising 6,000m above the African plains. Now imagine climbing it while suffering from crippling back pain and you have a measure of the achievement of Dr Roxana Curtis.

Roxana, who lives in Long Lane, fought against the agony of a slipped disc to conquer the mountain and raise funds for Marie Curie Cancer Care.

A fellow doctor on the trek was convinced she would only make it as far as base camp at 2,000ft but Roxana was determined to press on to the summit in memory of a friend she lost a few months ago and the many patients she has seen succumb to cancer during her 25 years in the medical profession.

"I cried and screamed in pain, especially coming down the mountain," said Roxana, "but I told myself I had to carry on. I may have pushed myself too far but it was worth it. I'd do it again. Now I've done it I feel exhausted but also very proud and lucky and blessed to have had the opportunity



of doing the trek for such an amazing cause."

Physical and emotional extremes

The climb and descent of Mount Kilimanjaro took five days. Roxana was among a group of 40 who between them raised £135,000 for the charity.

Despite having had two operations earlier this year for her back condition, she completed some gruelling training in the Brecon Beacons in Wales and closer to home on Hampstead Heath.

The African adventure was doubly hard because the group had to cope with the blistering heat of the plains followed by the freezing conditions of the mountain-top and the constant threat of altitude sickness.

"We were like one big family and became very close," said Roxana. "Everyone knew everyone else's reason for being there and each time I conquered a stage the group would cheer and applaud. It was a very emotional experience."

It is not too late to sponsor Roxana's amazing achievement. Go online and visit www.justgiving.com/roxana.



Hundreds of walkers snaked their way through Highgate Woods as they left East Finchley at the start of the annual Big Fun Walk on 25 February. Walkers were blessed with fine weather for the eight-mile yomp through north London's parks finishing at Westminster. Thousands of pounds is expected to be raised for the North London Hospice.

Hospital consults public

By Ann Bronkhorst
The Royal Free Hospital is trying to gather the views about its proposal to become a foundation trust. Leaflets outlining the scheme and asking for opinions and involvement have been distributed door-to-door, but may not have reached everyone.

The hospital would remain within the NHS but would differ in several ways from other NHS trusts. It is claimed that benefits would include more democracy, flexibility and autonomy.

For full details the consultation document can be seen online at www.royalfree.nhs.uk/foundation or obtained by post: contact 020 7830 2017 or email foundation@royalfree.nhs.uk.

The consultation period ends on 13 April, but on Wednesday 18 April, at Temple Fortune Health Centre, NW11, there is to be a public meeting: information from 020 8458 4431.

Phoenix film fans

By Kim Peat

The Phoenix Film Group has been active for just over a year now; we get together to see the early evening film screening at The Phoenix on the first Tuesday of each month, and then head up the road to a local bar to talk.

We are an informal group. People turn up on their own or with friends, all with film as the common interest. Afterwards, in the bar, there's invariably a range of views expressed ("Are you sure we both went to see the same film?") was one overheard comment in relation to French film *The Page Turner* and the talk also broadens out into film more generally and what's going on locally. It's a great way of meeting friendly locals and sharing thoughts about films.

The group is continuing to evolve and is actively supported by The Phoenix. Whilst we don't have formal lectures, we do have links to the cinema management,

and are beginning to talk about the possibility of having some input to the programme.

If you enjoy film and want to come along to meet others in a relaxed, informal, way, we'd love to see you. Just turn up (on 2 May we're seeing the Julie Christie film *Away from Her* at 6.30pm), look out for Kim and a sociable bunch of people in the foyer, buy your ticket, tell the café you're here for the Film Group in order to get your free tea or coffee to take in with you (or 50p off a glass of wine) and that's it. Make sure that we get your e-mail address so that we can keep you up-to-date on future activities. Hope to see you there.

Imagine - East Finchley

By Adam Justice-Mills
East Finchley Open, the association of 50 local artists, is planning its next event, which is a first for East Finchley.

Following on from The Archer's campaign to celebrate in words what's great about East Finchley, we're hosting a local community photo competition, 'Imagine - East Finchley', for pictures which best evoke East Finchley for you. There will be winners in two age categories and, thanks to generous sponsorship from local businesses Gemini Photographic and Phone City Direct, prizes will include a digital camera and camera phone. Anyone will be able to enter for free, just by sending in a postcard-sized (7 x 5 max) printed photo, taken in the last 12 months on a camera or camera-phone (one entry per person). All suitable entries will be exhibited at the Phoenix Cinema and artsdepot later in the year. Winning images will be sold as a set of postcards, with the proceeds going to local charity Contact.

Look out for entry forms in local shops and community venues now. Closing date is 1 May. Details of the competition are on www.eastfinchleyopen.org.uk. Our email address is enquiries@eastfinchleyopen.org.uk.

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FINCHLEY FORUM

By Daphne Chamberlain

The latest Finchley Forum was held last month at the Green Man Centre, Strawberry Vale. At Area Forums anyone can raise issues concerning their neighbourhood with councillors and council officers.

Cherry Tree Wood

The Friends of Cherry Tree Wood asked why the wood no longer had a permanent park keeper. They wanted confirmation that maintenance would not be reduced, and also asked how many times a week an official will be on site.

The Barnet Greenspaces officer said that Cherry Tree Wood doesn't have enough flowerbeds or cultivated shrubs to justify a permanent keeper, but someone will visit every day to carry out urgent tasks, such as clearing up broken glass. There will also be someone in attendance for special events.

As a result of restructuring, the park keeper service has been merged into a grounds maintenance unit, which will visit the borough's 30 or so formal open spaces on a cyclical basis. There are 10 park keepers working in partnership with about 70 grounds maintenance team members.

Telecommunications masts

An East Finchley resident protested about the number of telecommunications masts in this area, including one on East End Road which had gone up against an original Council recommendation.

She was told that masts usually come within the range of permitted development, due to Central Government legislation. However, in this case she was referred to Councillor Andrew McNeil, who will pursue the matter.

Artsdepot car park

A North Finchley resident disputed the Council's assertion that the exit from the Artsdepot underground car park into Ballards Lane is not dangerous. He insisted that there should be a barrier across the exit, as there is at the exit from the bus station. He was told that this was the responsibility of the landlord, but Councillor Kath McGuirk undertook to "get the ball rolling" to re-open discussion.