



The best and wurst of times

By Sheila Armstrong
Sausage tasting, beer drinking, music and good company were in abundance at East Finchley Constitutional Club's first traditional Oktoberfest on 19-21 October.

Prices were more than reasonable and the chance to sample a wide range of German beers was appreciated by most people, several from THE ARCHER.

Deputy Mayor of Barnet Richard Cornelius impressively opened the proceedings in German and a representative of the German Embassy came along.

Supported by REEF and organised by The Development Trust and The Constitutional Club under the guidance of Martin O'Donnell, the event was a great success and went on into the small hours. The big international rugby and football matches of the weekend were viewed there on big screens.

For anyone who hasn't found it yet, The Constitutional Club is on The Walks, parallel to the High Road and inhabits what must once have been a grand mansion called The Chestnuts, originally built as two houses. Find more details at www.efclub.btik.com.



Prost! Martin O'Donnell looks on as Deputy Mayor Richard Cornelius prepares to down the first pint (or should that be litre?). Photo by Diana Cornack

A great day at the Fair

By Janet Halton
The East Finchley Open Art Fair took place on Sunday 18 November at Martin Primary School and was voted a success by organisers Christine Watson and Monica Peiser.

At 10.30am precisely the first visitors appeared and transactions began. Animated faces could be seen and a number of stallholders said how much they benefit from talking with visitors. Some come every year, some were entirely new. Many expressed delight at the high standard and variety they found. "It's all hand made," some children were heard saying.

At 3pm the Grand Draw took place. Adam Justice-Mills, EFO Chair, introduced Reeta Chakrabarti, BBC political correspondent and East Finchley resident, who spoke about the background of the fair and drew the winners.

As visitors to the Fair know, it

supports neighbourhood charity Contact through voluntary donations at the door. These have always been very generous and are gratefully received in their entirety by Contact.

The success of the event depended on many people outside EFO, including the couple who make shifting of screens and tables possible with their van; the caretakers of the Institute and Martin Primary School; and headteacher Maggie Driscoll, with special mention of the Martin's catering team. They make the Arts Cafe happen on the day (income going to the school). Tasty menus and wonderful cakes were again delicious.

First film nears completion

The first feature film by Finchley-based producer Stephen Follows is in the final stages of production. *The Grind* explores the dark and sometimes explosive world of running an East End night club.

It boasts an impressive ensemble cast including Jamie Foreman (*Oliver Twist, Layer Cake*), Danny John-Jules (*Red Dwarf, Blade II*), Zoe Tapper (*Stage Beauty, Twenty Thousand Streets Under the Sky*) and Kellie Shirley (*Wimbledon, EastEnders*).

Vince is a nightclub manager and having fought his way to his dream life he is determined to stay there. When his best friend Bobby arrives owing money to Vince's crime-connected boss, his life takes a dramatic turn for the worse. Loyalties are tested and friendships are pushed to their limits.

Stephen, who lives in Templars Crescent, off East End Road, said: "From the moment I first read the script I knew that this project was one I wanted to tackle as producer. The writer/director Rishi Opel has created a well-crafted array of characters and a tense and gripping plot."

Stephen has previously produced many short films, includ-

ing *Space Chase*, which was shortlisted at Cannes Film Festival's Short Film Corner in 2006. *The Grind* will be complete in mid February 2008. International sales agents and distributors will be given a sneak preview of the film at the film market at the Berlin Film Festival before its release in cinemas in the UK in July 2008.

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"GREETINGS FOR THE FESTIVE SEASON"

All change at Finchley Choral Society

They're changing guard at Finchley Choral Society. The choir is losing George Vass, its much loved and respected conductor, and gaining the enthusiastic and charismatic Grace Rossiter, who is artistic director of the Finchley Children's Music Group.

George Vass took over at Finchley Choral Society shortly after their centenary when they were somewhat in the doldrums and has been with them for about eight years. Everyone in the choir agrees that George has been a wonderful teacher and a great musician. Under his baton the choir has come on in leaps and bounds, and is now an accomplished and dynamic group of singers.

During those eight years, George's career has also expanded. Among other major commitments, he is Artistic Director of both the Presteigne Festival in Wales and the Hampstead and Highgate Festival closer to home. In addition, he has a growing career in commissioning, conducting and recording contemporary music.

In the end something had to give and sadly it was Finchley Choral. George feels he is handing them over in good



Grace Rossiter

nick, however, and they are showing their appreciation of the years of musical growth and camaraderie by giving him a rousing send off with an elegant party and a cabaret of all the talents in the choir.

Looking forward

Grace Rossiter was the unanimous choice as his successor. The choir whittled down the 100 replies to their advert and asked four to conduct rehearsals. This process is a heady but short-lived moment of power for a choir: they get to audition the conductor. After that, it is he/she who judges them.

With Grace, it was love at first sight. They were bowled over by her enthusiasm and ideas for their future and they are now looking forward to a new era. Heartfelt thanks and best wishes to George Vass, and bon voyage to Grace Rossiter and the Finchley Choral Society.



George Vass

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