



A New Year message from Archie



As patron of this newspaper and a familiar sight to everyone in East Finchley atop the tube station, Archie speaks about the wishes he has for each month of 2007.

- 1. My first wish is for more trees. Trees produce oxygen, absorb pollutants, cut down noise and help shade people in the heat. Two mature trees will provide all the oxygen a family of four needs for life.
- 2. The second wish I address in a very loud voice to my landlord Transport for London. Would you please smarten up the tube station forecourt! The litter bins are falling apart, there's not a green leaf in the flower beds and a proliferation of street furniture and signs really gets up my inspection plate.
- 3. For my third wish, the NHS should convert Park House into East Finchley's primary care health centre, replacing the converted houses and shops from which local doctors operate. As I am now in my sixty-seventh year, I need elbow injections to counter holding a bow and arrow for so long.
- 4. For my fourth wish, the splendid East Finchley Library should open every day from 8am to 8pm. I find the current reduced hours a right pain in the microfiche, especially when I am reading Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu*. The lunchtime closure really interrupts my reading in the original French.
- 5. Next, I wish for a new direct bus route into London. Let's have the 134A from North Finchley via the High Road, Archway and Camden Town to Tottenham Court Road station. Extra buses would redress the shortcomings of the 263 while everyone would have direct access to the West End.
- 6. My sixth wish relates to my

- favourite cinema, The Phoenix. Let's restore its outside to complement those lovely new seats in the auditorium. My lower plinth has never been right after a screening of *Gone With The Wind* during the war.
- 7. Wish number seven is about the Northern line. Improvements, please, TfL, and no excuses.
- 8. Next, I wish for an East Finchley Day each year. Like Oxford and Regent Streets, pedestrians would replace the traffic's noise and fumes on the High Road. Imagine the scene with my friend the Bald Faced Stag. Armed with egg and cress sandwiches, some Jammy Dodgers and lashings of ginger beer, we'll have the time of our lives on the benches outside Iceland.
- 9. A plaque to mark the residence of the late Peter Sellers in the High Road would be my ninth wish.
- 10. For wish number 10, could Barnet Council maintain properly the flowerbeds outside Budgens? Bindweed can be attractive but not when it is strangling your *Phormium tenax*.
- 11. My eleventh wish is to celebrate the High Road's new hip status with an oyster and champagne bar. I know when I dined at Ketners in the 1960s it was a hard choice between the Bollinger '49 and a new upstart, Krug '61.
- 12. Finally, my last wish is for my 67th birthday in July. Let us all celebrate with a jolly good knees-up and beer at 1940 prices.

Happy New Year.

Archie

Phoenix Trust comes of age

By Sheila Armstrong

It is unpleasant to imagine but there might have been flats where the Phoenix Cinema stands today. In November 1985, the building was rescued from demolition when a trust was formed to ensure its survival as an independent cinema.

It was a tense time but the Greater London Council signed its last cheque for the cinema matching the sum of £325,000 bid by the property developer who wanted to build flats on the site.

On 8 December 2006, many of those who worked so hard then celebrated the 21st anniversary of the Phoenix Cinema Trust with films, Champagne and a cinema-shaped cake.

The programme for the event was chosen by Tony Jones, an early programmer for the cinema and now running Picture House, the largest independent group of cinemas in the UK. The main feature was *Mona Lisa*, starring Bob Hoskins.

Three shorts from the last 21 years were also shown and we were given a sample of digital projection, cutting edge pictures which are the shape of things to come. This Christmas the



21st anniversary celebration at the Phoenix. Picture courtesy Phoenix Cinema Trust.

cinema was showing a digitally-reworked *Wizard of Oz*.

Paul Homer, the Trust's chief executive, thanked everyone who works at the Phoenix for their dedication and devotion to film and the cinema. He indicated that the celebrations would go on for some months

and future plans included a café bar, renovation of the façade and a second screen in the car park at the back.

In 2010, the Phoenix will be the oldest cinema in continuous use in the UK. This year, a centenary fund will be started to help fund the Phoenix's new projects.

Room at the top

By Daphne Chamberlain

"Give us a lift, and we'll see new horizons!" That's the message East Finchley Library Users Group have sent out to Barnet Council as it prepares to bid for the Big Lottery Fund's offer of up to £2million for library development.

The money must be used for a specific project, which should open up a library building to allow a broader range of activities for local people. EFLUG decided to ask for an exterior lift, to give full access to the large meeting-area on the upper floor.

Throwing open library facilities and physical space to groups who might not otherwise use them would satisfy both the Big Lottery Fund requirements and Barnet's own recently declared library reorganisation policy.

A Barnet Council Cabinet meeting at the end of November

agreed that libraries should be made as accessible as possible, and should provide the local community with what it wants.

The same cabinet meeting was told that East Finchley had rejected the modernisation of its library in a 2004 survey, voting for the status quo.

If that statement is universally accepted, then our library is in grave danger. In fact, as EFLUG's Adam Gee has already made clear, what East Finchley voted for was the retention of the library in its present building, but with improvements.

One of those improvements

has always been seen as a lift to the upper floor. Barnet Council has since declared that there is no money for capital investment in normal budgets. Also, it would be extremely difficult to install a lift inside this particular Grade 2 listed building. However, an EFLUG member reported that he himself works in a Grade 2 listed building that has had an exterior lift installed, to the satisfaction of English Heritage.

EFLUG is confident that, with full access to that upper floor, our library could establish itself as a central focal point for the community.

St Paul comes to St James

By Marian Bunzl

The latest concert by North London Chorus at St James Church, Muswell Hill, was a performance of *St Paul*, a rarely-sung oratorio by Mendelssohn. This work is usually neglected in favour of his more well-known *Elijah*. Having spent 12 interesting weeks learning it, we can't think why.

St Paul tells the dramatic story of Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus, and the chorus has a wonderful time. We had to assume the many and varied roles in the drama: a choir singing to the glory of God, Christians lamenting the death of Stephen and the departure of Paul, puzzled gentiles and, on several occasions, a howling mob baying for blood. We enjoyed learning to act as well as sing this wonderful music.

But there is always a wasp at the picnic and this particular

wasp was the need for stamina. Mendelssohn was very young when he wrote this. He was full of ideas and he didn't like to leave anything out. The choruses are many and long, so we had to find a way to get through without losing our voices and keeping the audience interested. Fortunately towards the end, Mendelssohn seemed to run out of steam, and the choruses got mercifully shorter.

For the concert we had splendid soloists – four principal singers from English

National Opera – a brilliant orchestra and our maestro took us all at an exhilarating speed (I believe there was a sweepstake – won by the second trumpet – as to how many seconds he could shave off).

He energised us into a powerful and engaging performance and, when the organ thundered in, the atmosphere was electric. We forgot to get hoarse, the audience forgot how hard the church pews were and we very much hope we have put *St Paul* on the map.

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