



Watching them watching us

By John Dearing

Following last month's official opening of the CCTV cameras in East Finchley, *THE ARCHER* was invited to visit the Barnet Council control centre to see the system in action.

The cameras started operating in November 2002, with about 30 cameras, and new locations have been added gradually. In a typical month, the centre will log around 140 incidents, a measure of its effectiveness.

The core of the facility is a darkened room with a bank of video monitors along two walls, which monitor CCTV cameras sited all over the borough. The operators can turn and zoom cameras, make video recordings, print still images, and link the police control centre to a particular camera.

Operators watch for traffic problems, criminal activity, public order issues, and anti-social behaviour, especially in known problem areas. They are trained to watch for unusual behaviour, and certain types of body language. When, for example, a fight breaks out, the operators alert the police control centre by radio.

Sometimes the police will



The CCTV camera view of The High Road. Picture courtesy LB of Barnet

request further coverage, such as the current location of a suspect, who is quite likely to have remained in the area. Police requests for evidence are coordinated by police liaison officers, who visit the centre on most days to review footage.

Many uses for the community

An equally important role for the Barnet CCTV system is to monitor graffiti and fly-tipping, which can lead to the perpetrator having to pay for the clean-up, contributing to council cost-savings. Graffiti and fly-tipping are effectively deterred by CCTV.

Other roles include watching out for missing persons, cracks in pavements, dangerously overhanging trees, and alerting the water company to leaks.

It is said that crime and anti-social behaviour simply moves away from the cameras, but in practice, after an initial drop in incidents, criminal elements become blasé about them and move back to the areas where they would normally be active.

So-called 'hoodies' who apparently seek to disguise themselves from identification will frequently be seen looking directly at a camera to see which way it is pointing!

Lupus Day

By Daphne Chamberlain
World Lupus Day occurred last month, which meant that Sippy Azizollah was collecting for Lupus UK in Budgens.



Sippy Azizollah collecting for Lupus Day in Budgens.

Photo by Daphne Chamberlain

Sippy, who suffers from this serious but largely unpublicised condition, told us: "I can't get over how generous the people of East Finchley are. They were throwing money in my bucket like there was no tomorrow. Altogether we collected £100, which was fantastic. I just want to thank everyone."

In true Sippy style, the giving was two-way. She brought along a home-baked chocolate cake to keep up shoppers' stamina, while Budgens gave away chocolates and pizza helpings.

Around the globe on the same day, fellow sufferers met

together, prayed, distributed publicity, and organised money-raising events.

Lupus is a potentially life-threatening auto-immune disease affecting more than five million people worldwide, of whom nine out of ten are women. A huge majority of these contract the illness between the ages of 15 and 44. A sufferer's immune system turns on their own body, with the

resulting inflammation causing widespread pain and fatigue. It can seriously damage vital organs, and can also interfere with the treatment of other conditions.

Lupus UK is a registered charity. To find out more about the illness or to help the work of this charity, visit www.lupusuk.com, call 01708 731251, or email headoffice@lupusuk.org.uk.

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Maureen Clemetson at the Monday Club

Youth club needs a new home

By David Melsome

A popular youth club enjoyed by up to 40 young people each week may have to close unless it can find a new home.

The Monday Club has been running at the Methodist Church Hall in the High Road since October 2005 but unfortunately its popularity means it has outgrown the premises.

Organiser Maureen Clemetson is appealing for new accommodation in the middle of East Finchley where her group of nine to 15-year-olds can meet once a week.

The club is run entirely by volunteers and plays a vital role in the community. Now the Wilmot Centre in Eagans Close has been demolished, it is one of the few places left in the area where youngsters can get together and enjoy themselves.

Maureen said: "We have a fold-away pool table, table tennis, card games and art classes. Volunteers come in to do hair and nails, which the girls love, and record mixing. We have boys and girls, black, white and Asian, and because we are on neutral ground, not

one particular turf, they all get on. To lose something like that would be terrible.

"The Church Hall is a delicate place and there are too many children to make it comfortable to meet there for much longer so we have agreed to leave by the end of October. We don't want to close the club but we do need a good-sized room that is central to East Finchley."

Maureen, who has lived on Strawberry Vale for 18 years, believes the number of young people who flock to the club each week is a sign that the area desperately needs better facilities for teenagers.

"In the short term, we want to keep the club going wherever we can," she said, "but in the long term the council really needs to replace the Wilmot Centre and give young people somewhere to go."

If you can help Maureen find suitable accommodation for the Monday Club, call her on 07931 586740

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