



Romance is still alive!



Ben makes his feelings clear. Photo by Diana Cormack

By Diana Cormack

Ben Sassen travelled across London to prepare a unique Valentine's Day presentation for his girlfriend.

Having visited East Finchley in his youth, he knew that "cherry" featured in various place names here. Because Valentine's Day marked the eighth month of their relationship, 25-year-old Ben wrote a loving message on a card and got his mother Veronique Walsh to photograph him with it in front of eight different signs bearing the name of his girlfriend: Cherry.

Open to the community

Bishop Douglass School has opened its doors to meet the local community's need of a youth club in the area, as well as other activities for all ages. The initiative is funded by the East Finchley Development Fund and Servite Houses, estate management company for the Thomas More estate.

The following activities are held at Bishop Douglass: Youth Club, Tuesday, 6-9pm; Barnet Bull Dogs (basketball), Wednesday, 7-9.30pm; Ballroom and Latin American dancing, Wednesday, 7.15-11.15pm; Whetstone Wanderers (football), Thursday, 7-8.30pm; Salsa, Thursday, 7-11pm; Barnet Hindu Youth Association, Friday, 7-10pm; Ballroom and Latin American dancing, Friday, 7.15-11.15pm; Polish School (English and Polish studies), Saturday, 9am - 1pm; Jewish Sunday School, Sunday, 9.15am-1.15pm.

Bishop Douglass is also awaiting grant funding for employing trained staff for the fitness centre to enable members of the community to use it. It is hoped that this will be in place later this month.

Get composting this springtime

We throw away far more food and garden waste than packaging but by composting these materials we could cut down the rubbish we produce by over a third.

Composting is nature's way of recycling your garden and kitchen waste and Barnet Council is trying to make it easier for us all to do.

The council subsidises the cost of compost bins. Ring 08451 306090 or visit www.getcomposting.com/barnet to order yours.

Or you could get a wormery to compost your kitchen waste. Wormeries are great fun for children and good value for money. They are specially sealed bins housing an active colony of Tiger worms which naturally convert your kitchen waste into rich compost.

They are ideal for flats and properties with little or no garden space and can be kept either indoors or outdoors. Barnet Council subsidises the cost of wormeries as well. Order yours by calling 01884 841515 or visiting www.originalorganics.co.uk/barnet.

Get a free green bin and have your compost collected weekly from the boundary of your property. To order your free green wheeled bin call Barnet Council on 020 8359 4600 or email first.contact@barnet.gov.uk.

Composting means we send much less to landfill, which is great news for the

environment because food and garden waste produces methane, a dangerous greenhouse gas that contributes to climate change.

Composting also provides you with a completely free and extremely effective soil conditioner, benefiting both your purse and your garden!

If you don't have a garden you can use home-made compost in hanging baskets or give it to green-fingered friends.

For a free copy of *Composting: An Easy Household Guide* contact Barnet Council's recycling team on 020 8359 7400 or email recycling@barnet.gov.uk.



Composted waste will feed your garden this spring. Picture courtesy Barnet Council.

In the Arsenal hot seat

By Daphne Chamberlain

I have sat where Arsene Wenger sits, and what did I see? Huge sci-fi type machines giving the turf at the Emirates Stadium what our guide described as a sunbed treatment. The turf (apparently the most expensive in the world) looked wonderful. Arsene's chair (no 13) was very comfortable and, in spite of its size, the word for the new stadium is cosy, all ringed round in red, secure and enclosed.

We visited the directors' box too, and the enormous press room and the even bigger room where working reporters connect their laptops. We stood in the players' tunnel (shorter than I expected), peered at the luxurious bathroom and treatment room, and tried out the benches in the dressing room, where each player's place is marked by a shirt with his name on it.

"It's all very nice", said my friend, "But it doesn't feel

lived-in. It's like going round a show-flat." That, our guide told him, is because the whole Arsenal ensemble only visit there on match days. The rest of the time they are all, Monsieur Wenger and his communications unit included, out at their London Colney training ground.

The place with most atmosphere is the club museum, where trophies, photos, letters, press-cuttings, videos and souvenirs bring back the club's history. A

very friendly and knowledgeable curator was happy to chat with us about anything to do with football, and proved that I'm not the only person in the world to support both Arsenal and Spurs.

There are tours of the Emirates Stadium every day of the week, excluding match days. Booking is by phone on 020 7704 4504, or by email at tours@arsenal.co.uk. Find out more at www.arsenal.com/stadiumtours.

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Thanks for loving me

By Betti Blatman

On 12 February, a CD was released for The Jack Brown Appeal called *Thanks For Loving Me* by singer and songwriter Phil Ryan.

Five-year-old Jack, who lives in Barnet, suffers from a rare form of cancer and his parents are raising funds to make sure he gets the treatment he needs, largely in the United States. The following letter from Phil sums up why he got involved.

"In late 2006, I was asked to play at a benefit concert on a Saturday afternoon for Jack Brown, a little boy I'd never met or heard of. It was a favour to a friend so I went along and played. I met Jack and his parents. Jack played and ran around despite the fact that he was having treatments and procedures so painful that they would stop a grown man in his tracks. It was clear to me he really was a very special little boy. I spoke to his parents as he played and I mentioned that if

it would help the appeal I could write a special song and donate it to the Jack Brown Appeal.

"And so in January, I sat down and wrote the song one wintry Sunday morning. I wanted the song to be from Jack to his amazing parents and from them to their beautiful little brave boy and finally for anyone who has someone fighting their corner - mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, friends and lovers.

"It's the most difficult song I ever had to write. Although it's just a song, some chords and words, it's important. I hope you like it and buy it to give Jack and other children a chance to continue being loved the way you were and are by your parents, the way I was loved by mine."

For more information, please contact: The Jack Brown Appeal, c/o The 2Simple Trust, Enterprise House, 2 The Crest, London NW4 2HN, email: jackbrown@2simple.com or telephone 020 8732 3373. The charity number is 1113954 and the website is www.jackbrownappeal.org.