



Would this bin be so full if it were in one of Barnet Council's 'Green Flag' parks? Picture by David Attfield.

Missing you already

The lack of a permanent on-site park keeper is already being noticed in Cherry Tree Wood. Most obvious is the amount of litter strewn about.

This is not always due to careless visitors. The Friends of Cherry Tree Wood's request to Barnet Council for more suitable litterbins has fallen on deaf ears over the years. To prevent scavengers such as foxes and squirrels (not to mention rats) looting the litterbins and dragging their contents all over the place they suggested providing bins with lids. They also requested bins with a larger

capacity, which would make sense as the present ones fill up quickly and need emptying often.

Another worrying feature commented on by locals is an increase in aggressive dogs and in anti-social behaviour. Cherry Tree Wood is a popular, well-used park. Whether it remains so could depend on the council listening to the people who know it best.

Opera at Manorside

By Jackie Walker

This month, children from Year 5 at Manorside School in Squires Lane will star in an opera they have written and directed. *Dropped*, a story of football and fairness, was voted the most popular of several ideas thought up by the children. Three experts from the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, have helped get the show on the road, as part of their "Write an Opera" scheme.

Benefiting enormously from this advice, the children have been involved in every aspect of the production, including writing, directing, composing music, public relations, set design, costume, make-up and lighting.

Having set up Manorside Opera Company, each pupil had to apply for the job they wanted, writing applications and attending interviews run by their teachers.

Elaine Wilson, Deputy Head and Hannah Malhotra, Music Teacher both attended the Write an Opera course run by the Royal Opera House. Ms Wilson said: "It is the process leading up to this that is the most

valuable; the performance will be the icing on the cake."

Mark William, musical director (and Year 5 pupil) said: "It has been really hard work, but we've done well," while Veesha Patel, company manager, added: "It's going to be absolutely fantastic!"

Miss Walker, the Year 5 teacher, is very excited about the opera and the effect it has had on her class: "The creativity that this project has brought out of the children is amazing!"

Performances take place on 8, 9 and 10 May and there are some tickets available to the public. Contact the school on 020 8346 4847.

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Time to shut the bonnet

By David Melsome

When a customer of Baker's Autos moved away from East Finchley to Spain, he saw no reason to change his garage. Every time he returned to the UK he'd contact the family firm in Lewis Gardens and bring his car with him for a service.

There can be no greater tribute to the trust and loyalty that Dick and Jean Baker, and their son Tony, have built up with their customers over 26 years.

But time catches up with everyone and now Dick, aged 83, and Jean, aged 75, have decided to retire. For almost three decades they have left their home in Redbourn, Hertfordshire, at 7am each morning and not returned until after 7pm so it is time for a change of pace.

"I love my job and I'll really miss the customers we've had," says Jean. "In the time we've been in East Finchley, I've seen customers bring in their babies and now those babies are grown up and are bringing in their cars."

Dick began working as a mechanic at the long-gone Leaver, Hembling and Perry in the High Road in 1958. In 1980, he, Jean and Tony opened their family business on the site between Bedford Road and Hertford Road that is now Mulberry Court. Ten years later, they moved the business to its current home in Lewis Gardens.



Tony, Jean and Dick Baker are saying farewell to their family firm after 26 years.

Strange tales

A little-known temple to a fertility goddess and the strange tale of a woman who encouraged her husband to shoot the servants will be uncovered in a talk to the Finchley Society.

Mike Watts will reveal the stories as part of a talk on the 13 National Trust properties in London. It takes place in Avenue House, East End Road, on Thursday 31 May at 8pm. All are welcome.

Dick says: "One thing I know is that in all those years working and living together, Jean and Tony and I have never had a squabble. I enjoy working but the time has come to retire. I've got a garden and a greenhouse to keep me busy at home."

Tony, who's been with the family firm since leaving school, will move on to a new job in the auto trade. Baker's Autos is expected to be taken on

by new management and may even keep its name.

He says: "Between them, Mum and Dad have served four generations in East Finchley. It won't be easy for them to leave that behind."

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