



Family support is crucial

By Linda Sansom

The sight of a naked toddler rushing across a busy road with a carving knife in his hand led to the start of a nation-wide charity that helps to put struggling families back on their feet, an annual meeting heard.

Speaking at the 10th AGM of Home-Start Barnet, the East Finchley based voluntary organisation that supports families throughout the borough, the charity's founder Margaret Harrison, explained how, as a volunteer in a Leicester community centre in 1973, she began chatting to the toddler's mother to find that she was an isolated, exhausted single parent who had no support, little money, and didn't get on with the neighbours.

Margaret began visiting the family, and others, and this led to the realisation that families having a difficult time needed someone to care, who could make the time and effort to bring a combination of fun and practical support into their lives. And so Home-Start was born, and now has 360 schemes in the United Kingdom, with 20 abroad and 40 more countries waiting to set them up.

"It's a very real pleasure to be here," she told an audience at the Old Barn Community Centre in Tarling Road, which included Barnet's Mayor, Councillor Maureen Braun, Councillor Lisa Rutter and Councillor Fiona Bulmer, Barnet's Cabinet member for education. "I was here at your launch and you are absolutely flourishing. So many families and children are benefiting from this scheme."

Model for other schemes?

The Mayor, who had also attended the scheme's anniversary dinner in October, said it was a humbling experience to have so many wonderful voluntary organisations in the borough, but Home-Start was particularly close to her heart. She could think of nothing

worse than being cut off from family and friends, or having mental health problems or other stress, and not knowing which way to go. She added: "A hundred years ago families used to help out, but do not do that any more. Home-Start is a wonderful thing, and we in Barnet are very proud of you."

Councillor Bulmer said that as education cabinet member her work involved responsibility for under-18s in the borough and that she often wondered if the borough made effective use of resources and if they were making a difference, especially to children. She told Home-Start, "You are really making a difference to children's lives and we need to find other ways of replicating your model."



The wall came off worse in its argument with a lorry and a rubbish bin. Photograph by John Dearing

Unplanned demolition of pub wall

By John Dearing

On the afternoon of 13 December, the wall next to the car park of The Bald Faced Stag was largely demolished. A lorry was seen to be pulling out of the car park at the time. It stopped by the lights and then drove off up Fortis Green, apparently oblivious to what had happened.

It would seem the lorry had turned right out of the car park, catching and dragging a large rubbish bin with it, on its near side. The bin then hit the wall and knocked a substantial part of it down.

Bill Tyler resigns over Bothy dispute

By Daphne Chamberlain

The dispute over the Bothy has brought about the resignation of Bill Tyler from his posts of President, Trustee, and planning committee member of The Finchley Society.

The Trustees say they very much regret his resignation. Insisting that this single issue should not obscure his "enormous contribution" to the society, they describe his support over many years as "outstanding".

A founder member of the Society when it was formed in 1971, and President since 1992, Bill Tyler has also been Vice-president, Chairman, Chair of the planning committee, and architectural adviser.

However, when Avenue

House Estate Trust (AHET) evicted Finchley Arts Centre Trust (FACT) from the Bothy amid intense controversy, many Finchley Society members felt that he should not at the same time be President of the Society and Chair of AHET.

Members were deeply divided in their opinions about the eviction, and his opponents accused Mr Tyler of influencing The Finchley Society not to take sides.

Although the Society's Trustees maintain that he never attempted to do so, members called a Special General Meeting in November to thrash the matter out. After a heated debate, a "no confidence" vote in Bill Tyler was won by a narrow majority. The Trustees have called on

all members to re-unite in support of The Finchley Society, to ensure that it remains a powerful force in the community.

Dedicated to Miriam

A screening of new film *In the Shadow of the Moon* raised funds for a charity set up in memory of Miriam Hyman, who was killed in the July 7 bomb attacks.

The film was made by Miriam's close friend, Chris Riley. The Miriam Hyman Memorial Fund has already raised £65,000 to support eye specialists in developing countries.

Few drinkers affected by law change

Finchley and Golders Green MP Rudi Vis says predictions of an increase in binge drinking following the introduction of flexible closing times have failed to come true.

A YouGov poll for the British Beer & Pub Association found that 78 per cent of those polled say they drink about the same amount as they did before the introduction of flexible licensing hours. 12 per cent say they now drink less while three per cent say they drink more.

Eighty three per cent say the change in the licensing law has not changed how often they go out. Eleven per cent say they now go out less and four per cent say they go out more often.

Mr Vis said the results of the survey showed that many people felt strongly about the role of the pub in the community and that, overall, the change in the law on opening hours was having a positive effect.

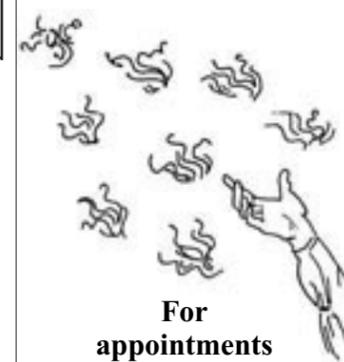
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