



Change is coming to the Playing Fields

By Ann Bronkhorst

Ramped seating for an amphitheatre, fruit trees, floodlit basketball and a football cage: a few of the wackier suggestions from last September's Area Assembly, at the start of a public consultation about improving Muswell Hill Playing Fields.

A follow-up questionnaire delivered to all Haringey households within 400m of the field and available on the Council's website produced overwhelming support (80%) for keeping the sports pitches and for providing a new park pavilion with changing facilities and other public amenities (60%).

Dog walkers, who make up 38% of the field's users, a significant percentage compared with 5% in other Haringey parks, were lukewarm about extra facilities for children and a new pavilion or shelter. Of the respondents who do not use the field at present, however, 94% were in favour of additional children's facilities.

75% of all respondents thought a parks staff presence would be essential. In comments accompanying their replies, many people feared that new facilities would be vandalised, citing existing problems.

Wide-ranging comments

Comments ranged from the particular (drainage, litter

bins, benches) to the general. One respondent remembered the field in the 1950s as a council rubbish tip; another advised "toxicology tests on soil and air" for the field and the landfill beneath. A few people wanted it to remain "open, free space...an oasis of green" but several nursed hopes for a "mini-Kenwood" or "something similar to Highgate Woods". There was much concern about long-term funding to ensure that a new park would not "fall into a state of disrepair in a couple of years."

Next stage

A Master Plan, based on the residents' survey and on the views of interest groups and local young people, with a supporting business plan, will lead to a decision by Haringey Council in April. A key objective, apparently, will be to increase and broaden the number of local people visiting the field, coming more often and staying longer. The days of a quiet, empty open space may be numbered.

Health food store closes

Loyal customers of The Natural Choice will have been sad to see that the health food shop has closed its doors permanently. The High Road store failed to reopen after the Christmas break.

A notice posted on the door from owner Siobhan stated: "It is with regret and a great deal of sadness that I have to inform you that The Natural Choice has had to close its doors. I would like to thank all my wonderful customers that have made my shop a worthwhile place to be and work over the last six years."

Bank building occupied

Chartered surveyors Jon Christopher have moved into the ground floor of the former Barclays Bank building on the corner of Fortis Green and the High Road.

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Charlie the cat safely back home with Rosie, Brent and India.

Shock comeback by disappearing Charlie

By Rosie Smith

An amazing story has happened to our family. My husband Brent and I have lived in Manor Park Road for the past 11 years. We have had our much-loved cat Charlie from a kitten and he has always been adventurous and outgoing, spending most of the day on the street to be petted by passers by and local school children. Consequently, Charlie was very well known and became a street character. Even the post woman knew him by name.

Then on a cold February morning in 2007 he vanished without trace. That day, Charlie had insisted on being let out of the front door as usual, the cat flap to the garden being beneath him.

He skipped after some schoolchildren and was never seen again.

The search...

It seems everyone on the street got involved in the search for him. Posters were put up and all his usual haunts were investigated. Even people we didn't know started to ask: "Have you seen Charlie?"

After three months, we feared the worst and assumed that he'd been run over and thrown into one of the skips that are always around. We

entertained the thought he had been stolen because he was so friendly, which was more comforting, but he always liked to come home and no one had seen him with anyone strange.

...and the find

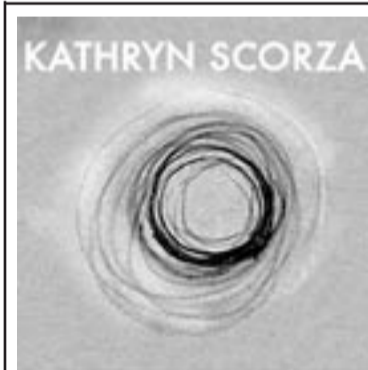
Then, 20 months later, on 13 October last year, we received a telephone call out of the blue from All Creatures Veterinary surgery in Dagenham, Essex. The lady told us that they had our cat, Charlie, there with them, 15 miles away from home.

Shocked and stunned, we thought she was going to tell us that he was dead but he was very much alive, although very skinny and suffering malnutrition.

So, after a rather expensive

makeover at the local vet, he's back home and reasserting his position in our household with our other two cats. He has really taken to his human baby sister, India Elizabeth, who was born while he was away.

Although back to patrolling Manor Park Road with gusto, he never ventures too far from the front door.



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