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Letters to the Editor

Why we need a park keeper Dear Editor,

It's not just to help keep vandalism at night to a minimum that we need a park keeper in Cherry Tree Wood. I'm sure the gates are locked properly each evening, but we need the presence of a park keeper during the day for various reasons.

I have reported a number of incidents that I have either witnessed myself or reported on behalf of members of the public in the last 18 months since occupying the kiosk. Incidents such as fires being lit in the woods, the park keeper's hut smashed up and set on fire, tiles from the roof of the hut ripped off and smashed onto the tennis court, playground equipment being damaged, an attempt to break into the kiosk, homeless people drinking cans of beer in the children's playground (whilst the kids are in there playing), threats of violence from people with mental health problems, a dog viciously turning on and attacking two people recently and a child bitten by a squirrel.

I don't mind reporting or helping out when these incidents occur, but I'm there to run the service of a café and would much rather spend my time and energy doing just that. The presence of a park keeper offers reassurance and peace of mind, knowing somebody is there caring not only about the upkeep and maintenance of the park but also the welfare and safety of the people that use it.

The government make a lot of noise about health and safety issues in public areas, so why take away the service of our park keeper, the key person that helps keep health and safety issues in order? During summer, especially on the weekends and after exceptional weather, the bins are overflowing with rubbish, making the park an eyesore and attracting vermin. On a couple of occasions the bins weren't emptied until mid-week, which is unacceptable.

If the reason for removing the park keeper was to cut costs, would calling out the fire brigade, police, ambulance and third party contractors to repair damage carried out by vandals really cost much less?

Yours faithfully, Sally-Anne Wigfield Lazy Sally Café, Cherry Tree Wood.

Train of thought

Dear Editor,

With reference to Jake Eiseman-Renyard's letter about ghostly train services in last month's issue, the facts are correct in as much as a steam railway (LNER) did once run from East Finchley to Finsbury Park and then King's Cross. This was via Highgate, Crouch End and Stroud Green, and the route is now the Parkland Walk.

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In addition, a branch line ran from Alexandra Palace to Highgate.

Then came the "new" works in the 1930s, which envisaged a much bigger Northern line by extending the tube and by electrifying the old steam lines. It also envisaged an extended line north from Mill Hill East via Edgware to Bushy Heath.

Preparatory electrification work took place, including a new surface station at Highgate, to one of Charles Holden's designs, to allow an interchange between the Ally Pally branch and the East Finchley line, all surface track.

The underground came in July 1939. East Finchley station was rebuilt and that's why there were four platforms to serve the overground and underground lines. New tube services were announced from Bushey Heath and Ally Pally running in 1940 and 1941 respectively.

The war meant that the works were put on hold and after 1945 nothing happened because of austerity. Then in 1954 the whole of the Northern line "new works" were abandoned by the Tory government as they thought traffic would not grow because the population in London would decline (and in any case, we could all go by car if we had one). Goods trains carried on using the tracks from East Finchley until 1964. As for ghost trains, I think these particular ones may be an urban myth.

Name and address supplied

Pavement paradise

Dear Editor,

I have lived in Lucas Gardens for nearly three years and I walk up and down Long Lane most days on my way to the tube or the shops. During that time, Long Lane has felt to me like a poor cousin to the other main residential roads in East Finchley.

There have always been a lot of broken paving stones, some of them quite dangerous or at least guaranteed to give your shoes a soaking if they're harbouring a puddle of water underneath. Cars that are driven across the pavements to park in front gardens and driveways were probably the cause of most of these broken stones.

Then there was the tree culling work a year or two back, which uprooted a number of the larger trees on Long Lane and replaced their stumps with unsightly squares of black tarmac.

The good news, however, is that Long Lane has recently had some of its pride restored. For some months at the end of last year, workmen went the length of the road in N2 anyway and installed brand new paving stones on both sides.

There are dropped kerbs in front of all the driveways to let the cars across and also sloping kerbs on the corners of side roads to make it easier for prams and wheelchairs to negotiate. Long Lane looks smarter and tidier

and is much easier for pedestrians to get up and down.

All this was accomplished with the minimum of disruption by the workmen, who incidentally had to do their hard labour in some pretty icy conditions. So thanks to them for getting the work done, and to Barnet Council, who get plenty of criticism in the press but deserve some praise when they get it right.

Yours faithfully, Catherine Douglas, Lucas Gardens, N2

Full up and fed up

Dear Editor,

I would like to add our misery saga to your story reported in the January issue (Recycling in a stink). Our green bins in Chandos Road have not been cleared since Christmas and they are now up to the brim, causing a health hazard.

Repeated telephone calls have been made by various neighbours and they have been fed various stories by the Refuse Collection Customer Care Service. One neighbour was told that the bins would be cleared on Saturday 10 January. When they were not, I phoned on Monday 12 January and was told that the backlog was due to Christmas and the New Year and the bins would be cleared the following Saturday.

What Barnet Council failed to appreciate was that over Christmas people's bins would be fuller than normal times, and if they had only advised us earlier that recycling would be suspended for up to four weeks, we would have bagged our green waste and put it in the regular black bins. Instead, they even advised us to put out the Christmas trees as well.

There was a positive outcome on Tuesday 13 January when operatives came later in the day and emptied our green bins at last. It was lucky that none of us had taken our bins back in on the advice of the Customer Care Service, who said they would not be collected until Saturday 17 January.

Yours faithfully, Manjula Mitra Chandos Road, N2.

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Any reader who feels strongly about any matter is invited to use this "Soapbox" column.

Please note that opinions expressed are those of the writer alone.



Pigeon pest problem threatens our health

By Chris Paul

I was shocked to discover that contact with pigeon mess can lead to salmonella, severe respiratory illnesses, skin diseases and the potentially fatal psittacosis, particularly amongst children and the elderly. Food left for pigeons also attracts rats that carry their own range of diseases.

It's for this reason that, as a resident of East Finchley near the junction of East End Road and the High Road, I am deeply concerned at the state of the pavement there. It has long been a playground for pigeons, owing to the mass of food that is dumped there for them. It's worth mentioning that the dropping of food in a public place is a criminal offence under the Environmental Protection Act, 1990.

The "Don't feed the pigeons" sign nearby is laughably small, faded and placed so high it's barely noticeable. I have posted polite notices on the wall where most of the food is dumped but they have been removed. I constantly clear away bread from the area myself but can't carry on alone.

I am therefore calling on all residents to keep an eye out for people dropping food in this area. Remind them that what they are doing is not only a health hazard but also a criminal offence.

If you know where these people live, report them to Barnet council's street enforcement officer on (020) 8359 4600. This problem is easily solved if we act as a community. If we don't, we are failing the children and elderly who are most at risk from disease and illness caused by these vermin.

Do you agree with Chris? How can Pigeon Corner be cleaned up, or perhaps the birds don't bother you? Send us your views to the-archer@lineone.net or The Archer, PO Box 3699, London N2 8JA.



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