



Letters

Rumblings of a ghost train

Dear Editor,

Just before Halloween, an article in the Metro newspaper caught my eye. "Spooky stories on the Tube" mentioned a "phantom steam engine that thunders along a stretch of the Northern line from East Finchley". I am a lifelong resident of East Finchley and I have heard nothing about this before.

That said, a stretch of line that now ends at Highgate Wood depot but once ran to Crouch End, Finsbury Park and King's Cross was steam worked until 1954, and steam trains ran from there to East Finchley and High Barnet until the 1940s.

An empty surface station at Highgate is reputedly used by ghost trains, so could the phantom engine be related? I would be very interested to hear from anyone who has witnessed this ghostly train.

Yours faithfully,
Jake Eiseman-Renyard,
Fortis Green, N2

Send your correspondence to: "Letters Page", The Archer, PO Box 3699, London N2 8JA or e-mail the-archer@lineone.net.

School gives pensioners a special treat

By Diana Cormack

The annual festive party for senior citizens organized by staff and Year 10 students at Bishop Douglass RC School in Hamilton Road was a resounding success. Polite, smiling pupils greeted guests at the door and each received an individually-addressed Christmas card.

They were escorted to the festively decorated hall, then other pupils showed them to their tables where they were welcomed with a glass of wine or soft drink. The school's kitchen staff prepared a traditional Christmas dinner and dessert, which was served by the children.

Live entertainment was provided by students reciting poems they had written on the theme of Christmas. The Year 7 choir sang Christmas carols and songs for everyone to join in and, courtesy of a couple of teachers, there was a Beatles sing-along. The evening ended with a bingo session before Father Christmas, who was in attendance, gave every guest a gift. The students raised the necessary money by washing staff cars at break time and by selling food they made in Home Economics lessons. They showed the true spirit of Christmas.

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Strictly panto

By Daphne Chamberlain

Pantomime is back for another season. Well, what can we say? Amazing costumes, oodles of energy. Dodderly it was not! The Guild Players presented Aladdin as their Christmas show, and we all loved it.

This was a show in the strictly panto tradition, with all the usual over-the-top characters, evoking ecstatic grins on the faces of some small boys in my row, and the classic question overheard in the interval, "But why is he a girl?"

Keeping all ages happy

I went to the matinee, when many children were present, and the audience participation was whole-hearted. The show kept a good balance between pleasing both adults and children, and the entire cast should be congratulated on the way they drew the audience in.

This is sometimes difficult to do when the audience is very close, and when a lot of them

know the performers, but the actors were excellent. So was the three-piece band, though it seemed a shame that the actor with the most impressive voice (the villain, Abanazer) didn't have more to sing. Full marks, though, for avoiding the love duets, which usually seem so tiresome to a child.

The show built to a lively climax. In the words of their last song, they finished on top, and those costumes were fabulous.

The Guild Players rehearse and perform at Ballards Lane Methodist Church, N3. For more details about this established company, who put on several shows a year, visit www.guildplayers.org.uk.

Phoenix in January

By the Phoenix Cinema's Paul Homer

The Phoenix has plenty of wonderful films this month to keep you warm, in heart at least. We continue our popular season of live opera from the New York Met with La Rondine on 10 January and Orfeo ed Eurydice on 24 January. If you've yet to experience the brilliance of live opera in the cinema, these are two great productions to begin with.

I'm delighted to be screening the debut film from Jonas Curan, Ano Una, on Sunday 18 January in a double bill with Walter Salles' Linhade Passe. Ano Una is made up entirely of static shots of still photographs, all taken by Jonas Curan (Alfonso's son) during one year in his life. At the end of the year he took the photographs of his life and re-assembled them into a new narrative, recording dialogue and a soundtrack over them. It's a remarkable feat of filmmaking and a touching and sweet film.

We have a special event in the daytime of Wednesday 21 January called Representation of Older Women in Film. We're gathering a panel of filmmakers, academics and industry professionals to examine how older women are portrayed in films. The discussion is accompanied by a screening of Fassbinder's Fear Eats the Soul, a film as radical today with its central relationship between an older white woman and a younger black man as when it was first

released in 1974.

We continue our strand of silent cinema, Into Great Silents, with Anthony Asquith's Shooting Stars from 1927, on Sunday 25 January at 2pm. As ever, this will have live piano accompaniment from renowned musician Stephen Horne, offering a glimpse of how The Phoenix would have screened films 80 years ago.

Our box office is on 020 8444 6789 or visit www.phoenixcinema.co.uk

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A view of St Paul's Cathedral and Thames wharfs in the 19th century, one of the London views on show. Photo reproduced by permission Church Farmhouse Museum.

Historic views

A photographic exhibition highlighting the capital's Victorian past is due to go on display at Church Farmhouse Museum in Hendon, nearly 40 years after some of the vast collection on which it is based was first publicly displayed there.


The Historic Views of London exhibition contains images from former Barnet resident Bernard Howarth-Loomes's personal collection, now held by National Museums Scotland in Edinburgh.

Running until 16 March, the exhibition contains many scenes, familiar and unfamiliar, from across the capital including steam boats on the

River Thames, Euston Arch, Crystal Palace, the Kodak factory at Harrow and views of 19th century streets crowded with people and traffic.

The exhibition is based on a new book also entitled Historic Views of London edited by historian and Barnet borough resident Dr Ann Saunders, which includes more than 170 photographs.

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