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Letters to the editor

Stop this idiotic behaviour

Dear Editor,

Following my initial complaint a few months ago (Soapbox, THE ARCHER, February 2009), I am heartened to see many like-minded people prepared to write in and voice their concerns, too. I am also somewhat bemused at those who maintain that feeding pigeons is quite acceptable and that they pose no risk to our health. Let's be clear about this: pigeon mess is harmful. It contains germs that can lead to serious illnesses. In fact, there are over 40 diseases that can be passed from the feral pigeon to humans. Feral pigeons don't need to be fed; they are perfectly capable of finding food in the wild. If people feel so strongly that they want to feed birds, they should do so within the confines of their own property. The dumping of food in any public space is an offence. It's also worth noting that since my initial article, a man was apprehended and warned by Barnet's street enforcement officer for depositing large amounts of bread for the pigeons and told he will be fined if he re-offends. Sadly, there are still other offenders, but with continued vigilance and the support of the council and community police, we can put a stop to this idiotic behaviour.

Yours faithfully, Chris Paul, Address supplied

We're no fools

Dear Editor,

Knowing The Archer's penchant for classy April Fool spoofs, I was on the watch for one when reading the April issue. I thought I had found it when I saw the headline "New Mayor supports better bus service".

Yours faithfully, Noel Lynch Green Party, Elmhurst Crescent, N2.

Ghostly tunnel

Dear Editor,

I read with interest your recent correspondence about 'ghost trains' (THE ARCHER, January 2009). Until recently, I lived within the Parkland Walk at the Highgate end and can certainly certify that, in the wee small hours of the morning, trains can be heard running along it.

In reality, it's probably the tube lines starting up but it sounds for all the world like a train running along the old tracks.

Local anecdote has it that on the inaugural run of the line a man was killed in one of the tunnels at Highgate. I walked through one tunnel once - once only! I wouldn't do it again. There was an extremely eerie atmosphere and a distinct feeling of being watched.

It was so strange, so weird, that rather than go back through I climbed over the fence at Highgate underground station to get out.

Yours faithfully, J Burnett, 23 Keynes Close, N2.

Eyes to the skies

Dear Editor,

East Finchley is under a main flight path from Heathrow and experiences heavy air traffic. I was especially worried, therefore, to hear of a proposal that would have re-routed many flight paths over the borough of Barnet (THE ARCHER, April 2009).

Also considered was 'runway sharing', planes landing and taking off from the same runways, that many consider unsafe. Combine this with the increased noise and air pollution, and storm clouds of suburban mismanagement would have been left in the wake of this flying bombshell.

Boris Johnson has proposed a new airport in the Thames estuary, a fragile environmental area, difficult to build transport links to and from London, and with a high risk of 'birdstrike' as there are many wild birds there.

But what can we do about it? Perhaps a local 'Skywatch' group could be started to monitor and limit air traffic, like the Buswatch campaign for better bus services. Many people depend on travelling abroad, in and out of London, but I believe better high-speed rail is a more plausible option, as it can easily be carbon neutral.

Most other European countries, which the British government wants to keep up with, already do this, so it seems more logical than airport expansion.

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

Plaque removal

Dear Editor,

Following Diana Cormack's article 'Raising the flag for Cherry Tree Wood' in the April issue, I must congratulate the Friends of Cherry Tree Wood and Barnet Council on the improvements to the Wood, apparent even on the dull damp days we have had over the Easter Bank holiday.

A major improvement has been the installation of metal seats replacing the wooden ones which have been susceptible to the vagaries of the elements and a temptation to vandals. However, I am disappointed to see that many of the replacement seats fail to carry the dedications which were on the old wooden ones, many of which were paid for in memory of local residents who, because they enjoyed the Wood while they were alive, wanted to leave a lasting memory and contribution to the Wood's facilities for future generations.

One such was a Miss Ferguson or Fergie to all who knew her, who lived in Summerlee Avenue; there are still residents who will remember her. Fergie's seat was near the Summerlee Avenue entrance to the Wood but the replacement seat there bears a dedication to someone else.

What has happened to the plaques on the old seats? Cannot they be salvaged or rescued, and installed on the new seats so that their contribution to the Wood can continue?

Yours faithfully, Joyce Arram, Summerlee Gardens, N2.

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.



Scoop your poop

By Mary Williams

I am very fortunate living only a stone's throw from Coldfall Wood, a pocket of ancient woodland in the middle of suburbia. It is a lovely place to walk and a haven for birdlife.

Recently there have been considerable improvements to the wood, including work at the pond, cleaning the stream, construction of bridges, and coppicing, which lets in more light. Much of this work has been done by volunteers, who have given hours of time.

But - and it's a big but - the wood is really spoilt by the amount of dog faeces all over it, despite the red bins at the entrances to the wood. I have even seen several piles of dog excrement just inside the gate to the wood, a few yards from the bins.

There have been many articles in the press about the serious health hazard presented by the toxocara worms commonly found in dog faeces. These can damage the human nervous system or vision. Dog faeces can also carry other parasites and bacteria such as Campylobacter and E.coli, which can cause serious illnesses to both humans and other dogs.

Dog owners who don't clear their dog's excrement in public places are breaking the law. There must be many dog walkers using the wood, however, who think it is fine to leave their dog's mess on the ground. Surely they must know that the wood is a public place; and surely they must realise no-one relishes the stench of dog excrement on their footwear or carpets?

So I am puzzled. Why is anyone leaving their dog's excrement to cause problems for others? I have asked Haringey Council to put up notices in the wood reminding dog owners to poop scoop and to provide additional poop bins. I have also asked for regular visits by uniformed parks officers and environmental health officers to check for dog owners who are not picking up and disposing of dog faeces.

Dog owners, remember please: it's not OK just to walk away.



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Pigeon pie

Dear Editor,

Another letter of support for Chris Paul and his opposition to the pavement pigeon feeders. I am originally from a farming background and I know that for every fluffy, cooing pigeon you see pecking away at the plentiful food supplies so generously dumped all over our pavements there will be at least one rat lurking nearby to gobble up the residue.

Pigeon droppings, rat droppings, pavements, children, food retailers are a most unsavoury combination, perpetrated by one or two misguided individuals.

Chris also poses the wider question of what to do with those same wide, under-used spaces in the centre of East Finchley, so here's my suggestion. Although I enjoy seeing and using the French Market that occasionally visits us on the High Road, I was disappointed that the more practical Farmers' Market never took off.

The reason, I think, was that it was not well publicised and just too far away up at the Martin School playground. If such a Farmers' Market were to be held on a regular basis right in the centre, on the very pavements currently under scrutiny, it would be much more attractive, accessible and popular.

At the same time it would make good use of these under utilised spaces and help displace the avian menace. If we can do it for the French Market then why not for a Farmers' Market? Then we might be able to say: goodbye pigeons, hello pigeon pie. I know which I would prefer.

Yours faithfully, David Holt Leslie Road, N2.