



Threat to Whittington Hospital A&E

By David Melsome

Concern is growing that Whittington Hospital's accident and emergency department could be closed as part of a huge reorganisation of NHS hospital services in north London. A campaign is underway to save the casualty unit.

Around 240 people use the Whittington A&E every day. Campaigners against the closure say it is not feasible to send those patients to the already-busy Royal Free Hospital in Hampstead or University College Hospital in Euston.

Local impact

For East Finchley residents, any loss of casualty services at the Whittington would leave them with a choice of travelling to Barnet Hospital or the Royal Free. Claims that Barnet Hospital might also lose its A&E department have been denied.

Worried readers have contacted *THE ARCHER* to express their concerns. Geoffrey Ferris said: "A neighbour who works there told me that they were proposing to amalgamate Whittington with the Royal Free. This clearly indicates that other valuable services will also be transferred, again

disadvantaging patients who live in Muswell Hill and East Finchley."

Leaked memo

The reorganisation plans came to light in a leaked memo from Rachel Tyndall, chief executive for North London NHS. It set out several options, including the downgrading of the Whittington to 'local hospital' status, involving the closure of its A&E and other changes. Ms Tyndall told a public meeting in December that the service needed to save money. Full consultation on the plans is due to start in the autumn.

MPs and patient groups across Haringey and Islington have started a campaign to halt the proposal. Hornsey and Wood Green MP Lynne Featherstone has an online petition at <http://bit.ly/SaveOurAandE> and Islington MP Jeremy Corbyn has an online petition at www.savethewhittington.org.uk.

Allotment fight goes on

By Sheila Armstrong

Campaigners at Fortis Green Allotments have persuaded landowners Thames Water to sell part of the land to them for £30,000. This is the part of the site that includes the allotments but does not include the adjoining copse.

The Fortis Green Allotments Trust wanted to buy the entire site but the water company surprised negotiators by withdrawing the copse land from sale.

"It's a great step forward, only possible because of the commitment of our supporters," said Trust spokesman Rupert Lancaster. "But it still leaves us with two big tasks on our hands: raising the money by 31 March this year and securing the long-term future of the copse which forms the remainder of this beautiful site."

The Trust was created to save the allotments when Thames Water announced its intention to sell the land last summer for building development.

Help needed

"Even though Thames Water tell us they have no plans to develop the copse 'for the foreseeable future', we remain concerned," said Rupert. "As soon as we are confident the allotment land is secure we will turn our efforts towards ensuring

that the copse - a vital part of the local eco-system - is also safe in perpetuity."

Anyone wanting to support the campaign, donate money or help with fundraising should go to its website at www.savefortisgreenallotments.com.

Lazooli closes

Retro, vintage and new fashion store Lazooli closed its doors on 31 January after four years of business.

Owner Gaynor Spry said: "Sadly, the recession has finally taken its toll. I would like to take this opportunity to thank every single one of you who has been a regular customer for your support over the last four years. It has been great fun getting to know you all and I do hope we will bump into each other in the High Road."

Man dies after fire at sheltered housing

By Janet Maitland

A man has died after being taken to hospital suffering from smoke inhalation and burns when a fire broke out on 19 December in a flat in Paul Byrne House in Helen Close. The fire started at about 8.30am in a ground floor flat of the sheltered housing scheme managed by Servite Houses.

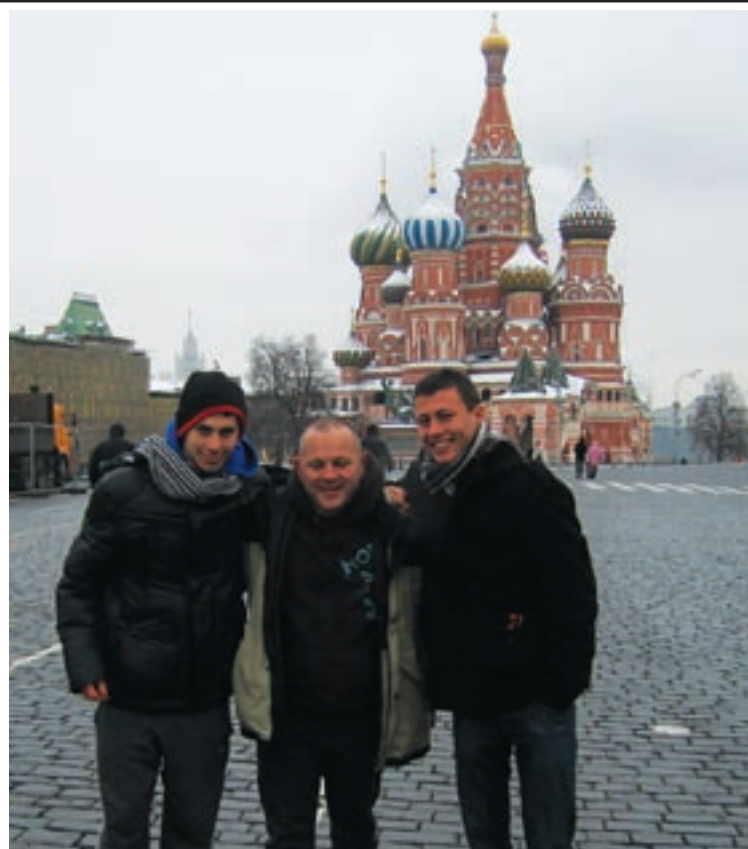
Four fire engines arrived shortly afterwards to tackle the blaze but they had difficulty gaining access to Paul Byrne House because of the snow in Helen Close. Parked cars along this narrow street added to the problem. There were also icy conditions on Thomas More Way, the access road to Helen Close.

Janice Wagner, who lives nearby, said: "All the emergency services were just brilliant, but even the ambulances couldn't get near. When the fire fighters got the injured man out, he had to be carried to East End Road to get to one."

The residents were evacuated from the building and taken in police vans to the Carmelite Friars on East End Road, who provided them with temporary refuge. Everyone was able to return later the same day, with the help of neighbours, who were asked to lend a hand by the Servite Houses scheme manager.

The man who was rescued died later in hospital. "The cause of death has not been released," said a spokesperson from Servite. "An inquest is being carried out."

At the time of going to press, Servite was awaiting a report on the cause of the blaze from the Fire and Safety Service. The police have confirmed that there were no suspicious circumstances.



To Russia with gloves: Charlie, left, Mr Wilkes and Fred brave the cold in Moscow.

Metro boys do Moscow

By John Lawrence

They conquered London, they trounced Paris and now they've triumphed over Moscow. School friends Fred Isaac and Charlie Gould have visited all 177 stations on the Moscow Metro system in just 13 hours.

Fred, of Huntingdon Road, Charlie and Andrew Wilkes, their teacher from University College School, Hampstead, covered the 292km network, famous for its art deco platforms and foyers, stopping at each station on the way.

All the money raised from their journey is going to support the Parkinson's disease society, along with their school's partner college in Uganda and a Romanian orphanage. So far they've raised nearly £3,000 but their target is £4,000.

Freezing conditions

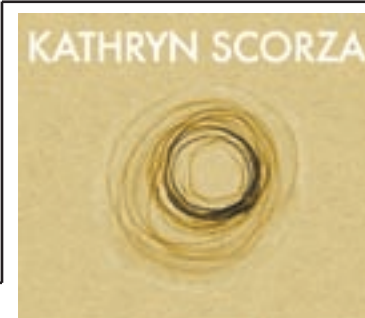
Two years ago, Fred and Charlie covered the London Underground and a year ago they visited every station in Paris. But Moscow was a very different challenge. For one thing, temperatures in December were -10C.

Fred said: "It was extremely cold. The Moscow system fans out in all directions so we got to

the end of each line and had to catch a taxi over to the start of the next. The stations are beautiful and the system is busy but very efficient. Seven million people use it every day."

Friends in Russia helped them find a bodyguard and a translator to accompany them throughout the day in case they were challenged by the police. In the end, they weren't.

You can still help Fred and Charlie get closer to their fundraising total. Visit www.justgiving.com/Fred-Isaac to make a donation and support their good causes.



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