



Petition for better bus service rejected

Transport for London has rejected a petition signed by more than 400 people for a new bus route from North Finchley via East Finchley to the Royal Free Hospital, on the grounds that the route would require a subsidy estimated at more than £800,000 a year.

Barnet Green Party, which raised the petition, has put forward a modified proposal to run hourly journeys on the existing 603 route between Muswell Hill and Swiss Cottage and to modify the route slightly to take it past the Royal Free.

603 potential

The daytime journeys would help people to reach the Royal Free while the evening buses would be popular with people wanting to attend social events along the route, which goes via East Finchley, Highgate village, Kenwood, The Spaniards Inn and Hampstead village. The 603 currently operates only four journeys each way from Monday to Friday, two in the morning and two in the afternoon, mainly to serve north London schools.

TfL figures queried

Responding to the petition, David Brown, TfL's managing director for surface transport, said that a North Finchley to Royal Free route would not attract enough passengers to justify the estimated subsidy. But Andrew Newby, of the Green Party's East Finchley group, said:

"TfL bases its rejection of a new route on its estimate that there would be around 700 passenger trips per day if a 20 minute service was provided. People in East Finchley know that far more people than that would use it, reducing the amount of subsidy the route would require. 'More and more Finchley people are being referred to the Royal Free Hospital. At the moment people have to take two buses and it usually takes them over an hour to get from East Finchley to the Royal Free.'"

Other ideas dismissed

Transport for London has also rejected other ideas for improving bus routes between East and North Finchley, linked only by the 263. According to TfL's calculations, extending route 17 to North Finchley would cost around £1.2 million, while diverting some 134 buses via East Finchley would deprive the existing route of sufficient capacity at peak times.

Acting up

By Lucy Chamberlin

East Finchley has long had a reputation as a hotbed of artistic and literary talent, and now our neighbourhood can welcome another actor into its midst. Having lived in Muswell Hill since 1959, last October Heronimo Sehmi and his family made the small (but significant) move to Deansway in N2.

Heronimo has a vast array of bit parts as well as more significant roles under his belt, and in 2009 played Mr Seppish, a headmaster and chief werewolf in horror film *Nuryan*, an all-British affair that employed a pioneering 'split-screen' method.

As a schoolboy, Heronimo knew he wanted to act, and he landed his first professional roles as a teenager. "I love portraying other people's lives," he says. "Acting gives you the confidence to do things you never thought you would. It's a hugely

positive thing, especially for young people."

In his time, Heronimo has run workshops for young people at the Africa centre in Covent Garden, not to mention schools in Haringey and Barnet. On his days off, he busies himself horse riding, painting, pot making and playing his guitar. But his first love is the stage, and he reminisces about acting at The Globe "when it was only a tent", in a Brecht musical directed by Sam Wanamaker.

Heronimo himself has done a fair bit of directing, one highlight being *Deathwatch* in 2005.



He is keen to pass on his talents to his two daughters, aged 20 and 16. The elder wants to be a playwright, and the younger is already an artist.

Green Party in town

The Green Party is hosting its spring conference at artsdepot in North Finchley from 18-21 February. The party says it is its first-ever national conference in north London and possibly the first conference of a national party to be held in the area.

KALASHNIKOV KULTUR

By Ricky Savage, the voice of social irresponsibility

St Florist's Day

After the white Christmas and the wrong type of snow it's time to emerge into the frozen wasteland of February and realise that things are still weird. And, after saying it with snow drifts, now we've got to say it with flowers. Yes, folks, it's St Florist's Day again. Once a year florists wake up, smell the coffee and put up the prices. No wilting roses from the petrol station for five quid; on St Florist's Day it's five quid a rose as the world pays tribute to one of the world's least known saints.

Very little is known about St Florist, but according to one story he was a flower seller in first century Rome who fell in love with a Vestal Virgin. Forbidden to speak to her on pain of death he gave her a red rose each day until, on the twelfth day, he was spotted by a high priest and arrested. Demonstrating their highly developed sense of humour, the Romans drowned him in rose petals. His last words were 'a rose for my rose'. Which should have been the end of it but for two things: firstly, the 12 roses he had given to the temple virgin never faded and secondly, roses grew on his grave, flowering every 14 February, the anniversary of his death.

This tragic tale of unrequited love was forgotten for nearly 2,000 years until a rose grower rediscovered it in the 20th century. And now, on the anniversary of St Florist's death, men everywhere pay tribute by giving their beloved 12 roses. Well, that's what the bloke outside the tube station who charged me 30 quid for a dozen roses told me.

Not everyone says it with flowers. The Japanese do it with chocolates, but over there it's the women who do the giving, the men have to wait another month to return the compliment on White Day. Must make life interesting.

But why stop with flowers and chocolates? The Anglo Saxons called February Mud Month and in the Ukraine it's the month of ice. Better still, go back to the old Welsh tradition and give your lover a wooden spoon. It's more useful than a bunch of wilting roses bought from the petrol station.

Nudity and torpedoes

An exhibition documenting the 175 year history of the Welsh Harp Reservoir has opened at the Church Farmhouse Museum in Hendon.

The free exhibition, which runs until February 14, documents the fascinating history of the reservoir on the boundary of the boroughs of Barnet and Brent. Built to replenish water supplies lost by the many locks on the Regent's and Grand Union Canals, the reservoir opened in 1835. Originally used for swimming and fishing, the area became a popular recreational spot in the 1860s thanks to skating, shooting and horse racing introduced by William Perkins Warner, the landlord of the now-demolished Welsh Harp pub, from which it takes its name.

Over the years, the Welsh Harp has also seen the testing of torpedoes in the 1870s and tanks during the First and Second World Wars as well as some more unusual events including the Hendon Nudist Riots during the hot summer of 1930, which saw fighting between some 200 Hendon residents and nude sunbathers. The Church Farmhouse Museum in Greyhound Hill, NW4, is open Monday to Thursday, and Saturday from 10am to 1pm and 2pm to 5pm, and on Sunday from 2pm to 5.30pm.

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