



Land-owners united: plot holders at Fortis Green are all smiles now the land is under their control. Photo by Lucy Chamberlin.

Allotment holders dig for victory

By Lucy Chamberlin

A dull, soggy Saturday in October was the backdrop for the happy ending to an inspirational story. With tea, homemade cake and freshly grown produce, the newly formed Fortis Green Community Allotments Trust celebrated their victory against Thames Water and the preservation of the Fortis Green allotments for what they hope will be generations to come.

In June, a year to the day after the utility company suddenly announced that the land was to be sold to developers, the allotments were officially bought by and for the community for the sum of £30,000.

Magnificent seven

Instrumental in the purchase was a committee of seven allotment holders, who worked tirelessly to fend off the threat to their vegetables and brought professional negotiation, accountancy, fundraising, PR and website building skills to bear on Thames Water.

Not only did they obtain over 1,300 signatures, but they also mobilised Haringey councillors, London Assembly members and such celebrity heavyweights as Monty Don, Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall and Kate Humble in support.

Rupert Lancaster, who has lived in Muswell Hill for 30 years and had an allotment for 10, was one of the committee members. He said: "All of us were absolutely determined we wouldn't let the site go, and local residents were right behind us. If we'd wanted to get bodies chained to railings, we could have!"

Fortunately, the site is designated Metropolitan Open Land and was refused planning permission by Haringey Council. The Trust was then given only a few months to raise the requisite £30,000, which it did by holding an auction of promises and

selling limited edition bags.

It now manages the site next to the archery field, and has already almost doubled the number of plots. The open day celebration in October was a gesture of thanks to the community for its unstinting support, and it is hoped it will be the first of many community events at the allotments.

Competition winner

Thank you to all readers who took the time to enter our competition to win a copy of Gerry Turvey's new history of the Phoenix Cinema. And congratulations to our winner Jonathan Kerry, of Great North Road.

Phoenix through the years

The history of the Phoenix Cinema is being celebrated in a new exhibition at the Church Farmhouse Museum.

The free display tells the story of the cinema through striking photographs and historic film posters. It also includes ushers' and usherettes' uniforms from the 1920s and a recreation of a corner of a 1930s cinema café. Millions of people have seen films at the landmark venue in East Finchley, which over the years has seen many incarnations from the Picturedrome to The Coliseum and The Rex. It reopened in September after a

Gala celebration for Phoenix

By Diana Cormack and David Hobbs

Marking the 100th anniversary of the inception of the Phoenix Cinema with a major refurbishment was inevitably a cause for celebration.

At a launch party for press and critics on 21 September, leading film critic and Phoenix patron Mark Kermode said the community can feel very proud of their cinema. He attributed his chosen career to the hours he spent as a youngster in his favourite seat at the venue he first knew as the Rex.

Other speakers were Trustees Clare Diskin and Gerry Turvey, and chief executive Paul Homer. An impressive film about the life of our local cinema, by Cardiff production team On Par, was particularly moving for lovers of the Phoenix.

Supporters

and contributors thanked

The gala reopening on 23 September was the culmination of the celebrations. According to Steven Barr, Chair of the Trustees, it had been a challenging project and one that would ensure the future of the cinema as a focal point of the local community. He took the time to thank the many patrons including Dame Judi Dench, Ken Loach, Bill Patterson, Michael Palin and Maureen Lipman for their support over the years.

Most of the funding may have come from the lottery, but Steven pointed out that none of it would have been possible without individual contributions from members of the public who contributed £120,000 to the cost.

Wesley Kerr of the Heritage Lottery Fund, in an eloquent and witty speech, acknowledged the contribution that cinemas like the Phoenix make to local communities before handing over to Maureen Lipman to cut the ribbon and declare the cinema formally open.



KALASHNIKOV KULTUR

By Ricky Savage, the voice of social irresponsibility

Cats and dogs

As Anti-Catwoman faces the music for dumping Lola in a bin it's time to face up to the reality of cats. Why? Because cats are in charge. Anti-Catwoman got caught because Lola used one of her extra senses to insist on CCTV. Extra senses? We have five but cats have as many senses as lives, it's just that they're not going to tell you about the other four.

If you don't believe me remember that even if you never thought you wanted a cat one will show up somewhere between the first sighting of a mouse in the kitchen and your call to Rent-o-Kill. And it won't be any cat, it will be a highly trained professional mouser that will solve your mouse problem in return for a life in front of the radiator and plenty of cat food. (It's rumoured that some unscrupulous cats employ mice to move into houses in advance and then arrange for them to escape to the country once the cat has settled in.)

Then there's travel. Cats are great travellers, moving from supper dish to supper dish until at least two people think it has adopted them. Sometimes they get found out. Take Casper, the Plymouth bus cat. One family has a cat that goes out all day, another family has one that goes out all night. And if it hadn't been for the bus driver spotting his regular commute he'd have been fine.

It's not just travel. Fat cats have been in banking for generations. The Wall Street Crash was caused by an oversupply of tuna. The credit crunch was down to problems with the supply of double cream and caviar. Which proves that cats aren't as good at banking as they are at catching mice.

Cats believe they should be able to do what they want whether the rest of the world likes it or not. You may think this is a bad idea, but my cat doesn't. The militant wing of the local Feline Federation have it on the agenda for their next meeting (Friday night, 1am, behind the chip shop, bring own mouse). He's been on the computer all morning e-mailing his friends. You didn't know cats used the internet? Well why not, in cyberspace no one need know you're called Tiddles. Just remember: dogs have owners, cats have staff.

YOUR TIME IS PRECIOUS!

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