



## Neighbourhood charity merges to survive

By Daphne Chamberlain

As we reported in our July issue, East Finchley Neighbourhood Contact has merged with Age Concern Barnet. The move went ahead officially on 17 July, in a mood of optimism on both sides. Karin Share, Chair of Contact, acknowledged that Contact had had fears it might not survive the coming economic cuts.

She said: "Joining forces with Age Concern Barnet seemed to be the obvious choice, because our work is so similar." She made it clear that Contact will continue all its services for older people, including befriending, the shopping bus, gardening and lunch clubs. The Contact management committee will form a sub-committee within Age Concern to oversee these services.

### Ann Owens Centre is new HQ

Julia Hines, Chair of Age Concern Barnet, said that they wanted to retain Contact's neighbourhood feel, while also introducing people to services offered by Age Concern. She mentioned the welfare benefits advisor, handyperson scheme, nail-cutting service, exercise classes, personal grants, day

trips, and all the activities at the Ann Owens Centre, like tea dances, bridge, computer access and art groups.

She thanked MP Mike Freer, East Finchley Councillor Alison Moore, and Caroline Chant and Heather Bates from Barnet Adult Social Services Department for their help during the merger.

Contact has now closed its office in Long Lane, and both services are operating from the Ann Owens Centre in Oak Lane. This means that personal callers will have disabled access for the first time.

Telephone callers now have a choice of two numbers: the original Contact number at 020 8441 1162, or 020 8203 5040. Contact hope that all their generous donors and volunteers will continue to support their work through Age Concern Barnet.



Asghar Shaikh in top form. Photo by Diana Cormack

## Dry cleaners tops 25 years

By Diana Cormack

On 22 July Asghar Shaikh invited customers to join him in celebrating 25 years in business at Tops Dry Cleaners. Born and bred in the East End, Asghar has travelled to East Finchley daily by public transport from Forest Gate since he took over the shop in 1985. Dry cleaning, clothing repairs and alterations have been done at 3 Fortis Green since 1964 and Asghar was happy to welcome the original owner to the celebrations.

Over the years he has got to know many of his customers well. Some who have left the area or even the country come to visit him when they are around. His satisfied clientele includes a number of media stars and there are signed photos of some displayed in the shop.

Asghar told *THE ARCHER*: "I really appreciate all my lovely customers", and he has taken many individual photos of them to mark this special occasion. Judging by the comments and presents he has received, they really appreciate him too.

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The full Wingate and Finchley FC line up for the coming season.

Photo by Martin Addison

## A chaperone to future stars

By Marian Bunzl  
Sonia Singham is fast becoming chaperone to the stars of the future. Last time it was two young boys in an opera in Amsterdam, as reported in *THE ARCHER*. This year it was a month in Paris to look after Celeste de Veasey, the talented 15-year-old daughter of international opera star Janis Kelly.

In Stephen Sondheim's musical *A Little Night Music*, at the Chatelet Theatre, Celeste played the granddaughter of Leslie Caron's glamorous grande dame who presides over a series of interlocking love triangles set in a grand country house. Sonia and Celeste were housed nearby in an elegantly furnished, high ceilinged apartment, rather like living on the stage set of the show.

### Minding Celeste

Sonia's duties entailed supervising GCSE revision (at least three hours a day). Fortunately, Celeste was very disciplined, so there was no need to nag. Then there was shopping and cooking. Celeste is a vegetarian, but Sonia has a veggie son, and speaks French, so Parisian vegetables were no problem.

In supervising her free time, the amount of freedom allowed had been discussed with Mum and Celeste was a sensible girl, so Sonia's worst problem was restraining herself from commenting on her outfits.

And, of course, theatre life: sitting through endless rehearsals, helping Celeste with the director's notes on improving her performance and occasionally taking Fifi, Leslie Caron's Tibetan terrier, for walkies. The cast were very protective of Celeste, as she was by far the youngest member, and on her first professional engagement.

Sonia and Celeste got on splendidly, and Sonia treasures the beautiful thank-you card from her charge. The show was a great success; Celeste was praised in all the reviews. And in Sonia's few spare moments, she discovered that Paris shops were on sales. As a result, she now has an air of genuine Parisian chic!

## New ticket prices for football club

Wingate & Finchley FC, based in Summers Lane, N3, has restructured its ticket prices for the 2010/11 season in a move to encourage more fans to come through the gates.

Under 16s are now allowed in for free and concessions, which have been extended to students and the unemployed, are reduced to £3.50. The club has also announced a new season ticket price plan, which offers further savings.

"As a community-focused club, it is our intention to reach out to all fans in the area, especially those who may have found the previous pricing structure prohibitive," said commercial manager Mike

Bayly.

"For those living on a tight budget, we need to make our club as attractive as possible. More importantly, we need to ensure young people in the area have a place they can come to with their friends and enjoy a good afternoon of football, without having to worry about the cost. Young supporters are the future of this club, so we need to look after them and make them part of the Wingate & Finchley family."



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