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THE ARCHER




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CARS & COURIERS**

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A community newspaper for East Finchley run entirely by volunteers.

Tenants circle Park House

By Janet Maitland

Another chapter in the chequered history of Park House has begun. On 13 January, Barnet Council agreed that the prime site opposite the tube station can be let for office use for a maximum of five years. The council building, which has become increasingly dilapidated since the last tenants left in August 2007, will finally produce some income.

The letting will also buy Barnet the time to consider the long-term future of Park House. Although major national companies may want to develop the site in the long term, the five-year let will allow time for smaller local organisations to bid too.

A council spokesman said: "We are looking to let the building to one of four interested parties subject to due diligence being completed."

Short lets unworkable

Council officers say the value of Park House lies in its development potential, not in the current building. However, because of the poor economic climate, it is not attracting the level of interest needed to sell it. Expressions of interest have been received but have been unacceptably low. Two-year lets have proved too short to enable prospective tenants to recoup the investment needed to improve the poor state of the building. It is hoped a five-year lease will provide enough time for the council to investigate the best development options.

Rousing local enterprise

Councillor Colin Rogers believes several competing bids are likely, from big national companies interested in developing retail or residential premises. However, he hopes a spirit of localism will be fired up. "With the talent and

organisational ability available in East Finchley, smaller organisations and community enterprises should be able to do something about the future of Park House, rather than a major national redeveloping the site."

Local resident James Elliot, who wrote to *THE ARCHER* in January complaining that Barnet was making no real effort to sell or let Park House, is still concerned. "We don't yet know who will be the tenants for the next five years. It could be a big national, putting a foot in the door by renting office space. The five-year let may be the council stalling, waiting for the big fish to come along."

Near misses

In 2005 local protests led to the withdrawal of a developer's proposal to build a superstore with parking on site, including adjoining land up to Baronsmere Road, backed up by the threat of compulsory purchase.

Later it looked as if The Institute would buy Park House, but they were unable to proceed and vacated the building when their temporary lease expired in 2007. Subsequently, development company Cathedral exchanged contracts for the site in early 2008, but decided to withdraw from the sale for legal reasons.



Artists and film-makers Denise Wyllie and Clare O Hagan pictured with David Jason at Monaco's 2010 Angel Film Festival. Full story on page 5.

Decision day on council services and charges

Barnet Council is expected to make a number of decisions on its 2011 spending plans at a cabinet meeting on 14 February. These are likely to affect many local services and amenities, including parking charges, children's centres and allotments.

Parking charges

If you live within a Controlled Parking Zone, you may see a sharp increase in charges. Barnet Council is proposing to increase the annual charge for a first car from £42 to £100 and for a second car from £75 to £125. A book of ten vouchers for visitors may rise from £10 to £48.

The cost of pay and display on-street parking is also set to rise but the situation is more complex.

Full details of the proposed changes can be found on the Council's website: (http://committeepapers.barnet.gov.uk/democracy/documents/getdoc_ext.asp?DocID=88900)

A petition against the parking charge increases can be found at www.gopetition.com/petition/41889.html.

Newstead: wait and see

As we reported last month, an announcement is anticipated resulting from the council's consultation with users of the borough's 21 children's centres. Towards the end of last year, shocked local parents and carers set up an action group when they learned that Newstead Children's Centre in Fallow's Close was under threat from budget cuts (www.savenewstead.com)

Since then two proposals have been put forward. One is to keep 13 of the centres open; the other is to retain nine centres with four satellites. Both proposals would

allow Newstead Children's Centre to survive, but as yet nothing is definite.

Allotment rents treble

There are concerns that Barnet Council is planning a steep rise in allotment rents. The cost of a standard-sized plot would go up from about £60 a year to £170 for Barnet residents and £340 for people

living outside the borough.

Last minute lobbying by allotment holders across Barnet has made the council defer the rise from this April until April 2012 but they are still angry at the size of the increase. An e-petition of protest organised by the allotment Federation can be accessed at www.barnetalotments.org.uk

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Your contributions

If you have a story for us, please contact us at the above address.

Comments to THE ARCHER may be published unless clearly marked 'Not for publication' within the text.

Copy deadlines

March: 11 February
April: 11 March
May: 8 April

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Council Tax 020 8359 2608
Recycling & refuse 020 8359 4600
Primary Care Trust 020 8201 4700
Benefits Agency 020 8258 6500
Employment Service 020 8258 3900
Haringey Council 020 8489 0000

Leisure

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East Finchley Library 020 8359 3815
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Alcoholics Anonymous 0845 7697555
Barnet MENCAP 020 8203 6688
Cancer Support 020 8202 2211
Carers' Line 0808 808 7777
Drinkline 0800 917 8282
Drugs Helpline 0800 776600
MIND 020 8343 5700
NHS Direct 0845 4647

OAPs' Advice

Barnet Age Concern 020 8346 3511
Contact (N2) 020 8444 1162

Help the Aged 0808 800 6565

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Barnet Police 020 8200 1212
Mus. Hill Police Stn. 020 8345 2148
CrimeStoppers 0800 555111
Victim Support 0845 303 0900
East Finchley Safer Neighbourhood Team 020 7161 9014

Help & Advice

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E.F. Advice Service 020 8444 6265
Gingerbread 020 8445 4227
National Debt Line 0808 808 4000
NSPCC 0800 800500
Rape & Sexual Abuse 020 8683 3300
Relate 020 8447 8101
RSPCA Inspector 0300 1234 999
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❖ **Careers advice**, Green Man, Community Centre 020 8883 4916
❖ **Toy library**, Muswell Hill 020 8444 0244/ 8489 8774, www.muswellhilltoylibrary.com

Planning Applications

Barnet Council

127 Abbots Gardens, N2
Part single, part two-storey side extension.

3 Chalton Drive, N2
Creation of basement level including two associated light wells at side of dwelling and one light well to rear. Relocation of door at side elevation. Associated minor internal alterations.

101 East End Road, N2
Conversion of existing dwelling into one two-bedroom and one three-bedroom flats with associated alterations. Replacement of existing windows to uPVC windows. Installation of new timber gate to existing front wall.

83 High Road, N2
Mansard roof extension.
2 Oakview Gardens, N2
Single-storey side extension.

Colwyn House, 22 The Bishops Avenue, N2

Part single, part two-storey rear extension following demolition of existing rear conservatory. Extension to loft space including alterations to existing dormers (two front and one rear) and associated addition of one rear dormer, one side dormer and two roof lights. Alterations to front elevation including alterations to fenestration, new portico and replacement of garage door. Alterations to side and rear elevations. New roof and roof lights to existing single storey side garage. Internal alterations.

Haringey Council

28 Beech Drive, N2
Erection of single-storey rear extension, erection of dormer extension, enclosure of porch and new entrance canopy.

Festival gears up for 2011

By Roger Chapman

Even in the depths of winter work continues for the East Finchley Festival on 19 June. The Cherry Tree Wood event, which is entirely run by local people on a voluntary basis, has been going for over 30 years and it takes some six months to plan.

Already entertainment acts and equipment are being booked. We are contacting stallholders and soon advertisers will be approached for the programme which goes through each door in East Finchley. There's a whole load of work going on and a whole load more to do. If you'd like to help out - and we will find something for you to do no matter how little time you have to offer - then e-mail eastfinchleyfestival@gmail.com.

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Don't advertise your gadgets

Police are reminding people to keep their valuables safe when out and about to avoid becoming the victim of street robberies. After Christmas many people have expensive new phones and media players, or jewellery, and criminals see these items as easy cash.

When you are out, where possible try to keep your valuables hidden. Many robberies happen when people check their phones just after leaving a transport hub, or when they are distracted as they go about their regular business. Young people can also be targeted by other young people.

MPS Commander Simon Pountain said: "We are not asking

the public not to use their phones or media players in public, we are just advising them to be vigilant about where and when they use them."

For more information and crime prevention advice visit www.met.police.uk/crimeprevention or, for young people aged 11-16, visit www.safe.met.police.uk.

Voice for Barnet in youth parliament

Young people in Barnet will soon have a voice at a national level as nominations open for the borough's first ever representatives to the UK Youth Parliament (UKYP). The UKYP was established in 2000 and is run by young people for young people, giving them the opportunity to share their opinions on issues ranging from the cost of university education to job opportunities and war. Its views and recommendations are listened to by local and national government and providers of services.

Barnet's 11-18 year olds will be able to vote for two Members of Youth Parliament (MYPs) who will represent them at national events such as the UKYP's Annual Sitting. They will also vote for two Deputy MYPs. The election process will be promoted in Barnet secondary schools and students will be encouraged to vote online in February.

Royal wedding street parties

Is anyone planning to throw a street party in celebration of the Royal wedding on 29 April? Let us know if you are and we'll give it some coverage. Our contact details are on page 2.



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Protest over artsdepot cuts plan

Protesters held a vigil outside Barnet Council offices in the North London Business Park, Oakleigh Road South, on Monday 10 January. They were protesting against Barnet's proposed cut of all core funding to artsdepot at North Finchley.

Vikki Mizon, artsdepot marketing and PR officer, told *THE ARCHER*: "Monday's flash mob was a creative response to the proposed cuts, and we were really pleased with how it went. We would like to take

this opportunity to thank everybody who came along and showed their support.

"LBB's decision to close the business park showed the impact we can have. We will be continuing with

our lobbying campaign of events, which will be advertised on our website, www.artsdepot.co.uk. Check the website for details, and help keep arts in the frame in Barnet."

Opposition to houses plan

More than 350 signatures were gathered on a petition objecting to plans to build three houses on open land in Lauradale Road, north of Fortis Green allotments. Developers want to construct three two-storey houses, one of them with two bedrooms and the others with four bedrooms.

Residents who are objecting say the development would tower over the allotments and destroy far-reaching views across to Highgate Woods for people in the area.

They claim the building plans are out of keeping with Haringey Council's criteria on development for Significant Local Open Land. There are also worries about vehicle access via a narrow pedestrian alleyway that is heavily used

by locals, including many families.

The plan is being put forward by Cilusom Holdings, an offshore development company based in Cyprus. Haringey Council has rejected the application in its current form but the objectors expect it will be amended and resubmitted.

Residents' spokesperson Livy Clover said: "We are waiting for the next round of plans to come out, when we'll

have to galvanise local opposition all over again. We suspect this will be a long road."

The original application can be viewed on the planning section of www.haringey.gov.uk. Type in reference number HGY/2010/1887. The 'Keep Fortis Green' e-petition is at www.ipetitions.com/petition/keepfortisgreen/

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Public meeting for Stanley Field

By Rob Robertson

Readers will know from recent editions of *THE ARCHER* that the Stanley Road Playing Field is effectively up for sale. Barnet Council's Cabinet Resources Committee, at its meeting on 30 November, declared the site "surplus to its requirements" and agreed that "the disposal of the freehold interest be advertised on the open market to seek details of proposed schemes and initial bids".

It is very important that local residents are kept aware of developments and have the opportunity to voice their opinions on what should now be done with this valuable asset.

The Finchley Community Development Trust (FCDT) is, therefore, very grateful to Tim Bowden, headteacher at Holy Trinity CE school, and to the school governors, for letting us use the school hall for a public meeting on the future of the site..

The meeting will take place from 7.30pm to 9pm on Thursday 17 February. The school is situated in Eagans Close, East Finchley, close to Kitchener Road and Market Place. All local residents with an interest in the playing field are welcome to attend.

Meanwhile, as ever, please feel free to contact me at the FCDT with your comments and opinions (tel: 020 8883 4916; e-mail: rob-robertson@btconnect.com).

Library announcement in March

By Daphne Chamberlain

The results of Barnet Council's consultation on the future of our libraries will probably be announced at a Council meeting on 29 March. In the meantime, "Keep visiting and using the library as much as possible" is the message from East Finchley Library Users Group.

As we reported in last month's *ARCHER*, the most recently published statistics for visiting and borrowing (for the year ending last September) showed that East Finchley performed extremely well in both categories. EFLUG's Polly Napper says: "Even popping in without actually borrowing a book will register on our branch 'visitor numbers' statistics, which are recorded by the wooden frames you walk between in the entrance".

As the 2011/2012 budget goes through on 1 March, it is possible that cuts proposed at the Council meeting on 29 March, though bound to be huge, may not be implemented until next year. Although significant changes to the libraries are not reflected within this coming year's budget that does

not, however, rule out other cuts or changes during the year.

Community resource

Cllr Alison Moore described East Finchley library as "an absolutely vital community resource that will become more, not less, important at a time of service cuts and potential hardship. It's crucial," she added, "that users and supporters have their say about the future of Barnet's libraries and fight to protect the services they value."

Although the public survey on library use ended in December, an extended consultation period was part of the original programme set out in Barnet's "Strategic Library Review" document last September. This is designed to avoid decisions being challenged in court on the grounds of lack of consultation.

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Friends say farewell to Sue

By Barbara Mullins

Residents and friends at Homefield Gardens Sheltered Housing Accommodation held a farewell buffet lunch along with live entertainment for popular member of staff Sue Cox.

Sue left in December after seven and a half years as warden/sheltered housing officer. She is pictured above with Liz Caldwell, another popular sheltered housing officer. Residents value these

two ladies highly both on and off duty.

Sue has plans for an active future. Residents and friends wish her well in her forthcoming retirement and she will be missed by all.

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The true story on grit

We all remember the awful road conditions in December and this month or next may well bring us another cold snap. When we asked in our last issue whether your road had been gritted in the snow, we got plenty of responses, all saying no. Here we print a small selection of your messages and weigh them against what Barnet Council says it can and can't do on gritting roads.

"Brim Hill was not gritted once. This made driving very difficult and in places impossible because of the three short but steep slopes along the length of the road. It was also difficult to get up from the A1 to Brim Hill because most of the side roads also remained ungritted." **Peter Blackstaffe**

"We live on Southern Road at the corner of Springcroft Road so are in Haringey. This road was not gritted, despite the fact that there are two doctors' surgeries in the road, which means numbers of vulnerable users would be on the roads. Nor was Fortis Green gritted. Both roads, not to mention other roads, were like ice rinks, with accompanying spills!" **Ros Goldfarb**

"I live in Sedgemere Avenue, off East End Road. Our road and pavements and the ones in East End Road were more like a skate rink. That also includes Park Hall Road where there is a GP surgery." **Simon Astrop**

"I live in Oak Lane and was appalled by the state of my lane and surrounding area. We have a children's clinic with pregnant women, young mothers with babies, toddlers and disabled children struggling to get there. We also have Age Concern's Ann Owens Centre for vulnerable elderly and disabled people. What a state. I pay my service charges and my council tax without fail each month and enough warning was given regarding the weather in December so why weren't they prepared?" **Aruna Bhatt**

What the council says

Barnet Council says it is responsible for 680km of roads and therefore has to use a priority system to spread its limited gritting resources and keep the main traffic arteries moving.

Priority 1 are main commuter routes and bus routes. Priority 2 are roads in the vicinity of shopping centres, railway stations, hospitals, public buildings and schools, along with cul-de-sacs with steep gradients. Priority 3 are all remaining routes.

The council says it takes its winter maintenance activities very seriously, but can only be reasonably expected to react within its available resources.

Its policy is as follows: "In times of snow, once all Priority 1 routes have been treated and found to be safe and running, treatment of the Priority 2 routes commences, subject to having sufficient resources. Priority 3 roads are only dealt with in times of heavy snow and then only when priorities 1 and 2 have been completed. Under Priority 3, one footway in each side road is also treated in times of heavy snow."

On the question of whether footways are gritted, only one in our area is marked out for special attention. The High Road leading up from the tube station to East End Road will be pre-treated before the morning rush hour if snow or ice is expected.

Pledge project to harness people power

Barnet Council is hoping that a new website will help residents to find enough volunteers to keep streets free from snow or ice or take on other tasks like painting over graffiti.

Barnet Pledgebank lets people make an online pledge to which neighbours or other residents can commit to help. They can print off flyers to publicise the pledge and encourage others to get involved.

The council says this facility is ideal for projects such as mobilising a group of neighbours to paint over graffiti, setting up computer classes in their area or helping to keep pavements in their street free from snow and ice.

Leader approves "neat" scheme

Council leader Lynne Hillan said: "I think there is a real willingness among residents to get out there and organise all sorts of projects for the good of the community. That desire has always been there but it's not always easy to turn a good idea into reality.

"Perhaps you're prepared to step up with a group of neighbours and paint a community centre near you, or to help clear snow and ice from pavements during spells of bad weather like we've experienced recently.

"Barnet Pledgebank is a really neat way of making it as easy as possible for people to get their projects off the ground."

Saving public money

The new website comes at a time when Barnet Council is looking to promote the idea of the "Big Society" and also to cut back on non-essential services in a bid to save public money.

Pledgebank has been developed in conjunction with mySociety, a not-for-profit organisation responsible for public involvement websites such as the Number 10 petition site and FixMyStreet which is already in use by Barnet residents. The website can be found at pledgebank.barnet.gov.uk.

Will you be making a pledge and what do you think of the Pledgebank website? Let us know by writing to the-archer@lineone.net or The Archer, PO Box 3699, London N2 8JA.

Turn to page 11 to read Joyce Arram's letter on gritting

Is it safe to clear pavements yourself?

By Daphne Chamberlain

Some people are still hesitant about clearing snow and ice from the pavements outside their homes. The fear persists that they could be sued if someone had an accident there. The January newsletter of the Muswell Hill and Fortis Green Association carried this advice from its "legal eagle" Peter Thompson.

"Most of the law regarding liability for personal injuries requires proof of fault and, most usually, negligence. There is nothing wrong with clearing snow off a footpath: it is a decent, neighbourly thing to do. A pedestrian who slipped on the cleared footway would not normally have a case.

"But there might be liability if the householder chose to clear the snow by pouring hot water on it, thereby turning the cleared path into an icy slide. This would be a negligent, not to say silly way of clearing the snow and exposing pedestri-

ans to risk that was not there before.

"Otherwise I adopt the general line that Government agencies are putting out: that wherever snow-clearing would benefit the public the citizen should not withhold his (or her) shovel for fear of being sued."

Meanwhile, John Hajdu, MHFGA chairman, has been meeting with Haringey's contract manager for gritting roads. Haringey readers who find that their nearby grit bins are not being refilled should contact John on 020 8883 8114 or hajdu.clarion@talk21.com.



New home for advice service

By David Miller, secretary, East Finchley Advice Service
After nearly 30 years working from 42 Church Lane, East Finchley Advice Service has now relocated to the Green Man Community Centre in Strawberry Vale. Barnet Council's lease on the Church Lane building has expired and we have been forced to find other premises.

Although records for the early period are incomplete, we reckon we have probably had over 50,000 client visits and interviews at Church Lane, tackling welfare benefits, debt, housing and other problems.

Opening times to change

The move represents new challenges to the staff and volunteers who work for EFAS. One likely change is that we will have to restrict the opening times for client visits, largely due to the significant reduction in funding for the centre from Barnet and other sources.

Shortage of funds is affecting many local charities, but we are determined to continue providing a quality service from our new office, which is still fairly close to Church Lane and also near a fair number of our existing clients. We will continue to look for new sources of funding to ensure our survival in the future.

Calling for volunteers

Although we have a loyal and dedicated team of advisers, we would welcome additional volunteers to advise on welfare and debt issues in particular, for which training would be provided. In addition, we operate regular legal sessions run by qualified solicitors and, again, extra volunteers would be very useful.

If any readers are interested in the possibility of working with us, or in receiving information about our work, please contact Ruby Joseph (telephone number 020 8444 6265) or email help@efas.org.uk

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Local film-makers scoop awards at Monaco festival

By Sheila Armstrong

Artists and film-makers Denise Wyllie and Clare O'Hagan won two awards at Monaco's 2010 Angel Film Festival for their film *First Darkness*. The Angel Film Festival promotes non-violent films.

In the Short Film category they won Best Art Film and Best Original Music. "It's great to know that our work is appreciated on the international film festival scene," the East Finchley duo told *THE ARCHER*. The film will now be shown on the festival circuit for the next year.

First Darkness is a jewel of a film. It charts the progress of someone's grief through the seasons, starting in winter with its sombre landscape and feelings. Gradually a lifting of the spirits comes as the seasons move through spring to summer.

Denise and Clare use a unique combination of film and painted images, based on Denise's paintings of Dollis Brook and Cherry Tree Wood. The sympathetic musical score by Simon Wilkinson heightens the mood of this unusual and innovative film.

Encouragement from David Jason

While at the film festival they were delighted to meet another Barnet star, David Jason, who was making his directorial debut with his short film *All The Way Up*. The TV actor, who started acting with the local Incognito Theatre group in the 1950s, was also in Monaco to receive a lifetime achievement award but he made time to talk with and encourage Clare and Denise. (See our picture on page 1.)

Veterans of short films, Denise and Clare's work has been screened at film festivals internationally, (check them out on www.youtube.com/wyllieohagan). Both are well-known painters and have worked on commissions and residencies here and abroad.

Find out more at www.wyllieohagan.com, where you can also see an interview with David Jason about his winning film, and view RivieraLife TV's rundown on the festival.

Kinks make a comeback to The Clissold

By Angela Anderson

Kinks songwriter Ray Davies and drummer Mick Avory made a return trip to The Clissold Arms in Fortis Green in December to celebrate the naming of the Kinks Room.

The pub has long been a magnet for loyal Kinks fans making the pilgrimage to north London to see the first venue the group played. But in recent years much of the memorabilia of the stars has disappeared from view.

The new room puts that right. On display is a signed copy of the Kinks' first single, which was a cover of Little Richard's Long Tall Sally; a guitar; a wall of photographs; and a small brass plaque that reads: "Site of 1957 performing debut of Ray and Dave Davies, founding members of the Kinks."

TV documentary

The opening evening linked to the BBC1 documentary *Imaginary Man*, in which Alan Yentob interviewed Ray Davies about his career and visited various north London spots associated with The Kinks, including the Clissold Arms.

Ray and Mick watched the programme in the pub alongside their fans. The music (Kinks' songs, naturally) was

provided by Simeon Perlin.

A life in music

In the programme Ray talked about his school days, forming the group with brother Dave and early gigs in and around their home in Muswell Hill before reaching international stardom with hit singles *You Really Got Me*, *Waterloo Sunset* and *Lola* along with many other songs now regarded as classics.

Ray was interviewed at his school, now known as Fortismere, and there were photos of him and Dave with their siblings as children. They grew up with a variety of music being played in the house, that of their parents' generation as well as the jazz and early rock and roll enjoyed by their older sisters.

In 1990, their first year of eligibility, the original four members of The Kinks were inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame as well as the UK Music Hall of Fame in November 2005. It was good to see their beginnings celebrated where it all started.



Anum in her swimming kit representing Pakistan.

Teenage swimmer competes in Dubai

Barnet Cophall Swimming Club has another international swimmer. Thirteen-year-old Anum Bandey, who lives in the High Road, was selected to represent Pakistan in the World Short Course Championships in Dubai.

British-born Anum, a pupil at Fortismere School, whose father is a dual national, competed in eight events over the five-day championship in December: 50m, 100m and 200m breast stroke; 200m and 400m freestyle, and 100m, 200m and 400m individual medley. Among her times were 38:13 seconds for the 50m and 1 min 13.65 seconds for the 100m individual medley.

Head coach Rhys Gormley

commented: "It is every sports person's dream to represent their country. Anum, at just 13, has already achieved that goal. This opportunity to compete on the international stage can only aid her continued development into an even more accomplished swimmer."



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Domestic violence campaign

By Janet Maitland

One in four violent crimes in Barnet happens in the home, behind closed doors. This is the stark message of a poster campaign to tackle domestic violence launched at the end of last year by Barnet Council and the police.

Domestic violence offences reported to police in Barnet in 2009/10 were down to 1,415, a drop of 10.2% on the previous 12 months. However, many victims do not report offences for fear of reprisals from the perpetrator.

Figures from the British Crime Survey 2008/09 show that six per cent of women will be a victim of domestic violence in their lifetime.

Barnet Sanctuary Scheme provides security measures for the homes of victims, should the perpetrator live elsewhere, and the council provides a range of advice and advocacy services.

Chief Superintendent Neil Basu, head of Barnet Borough police, said that the police are committed to supporting the victims of domestic violence. As well as having a dedicated domestic violence team, the police work closely with the Domestic Violence Support Service, an independent charity that helps high-risk victims.

Getting help

The posters encourage victims of domestic abuse, or anyone who knows of someone suffering, to contact the

National Domestic Violence Helpline on 0808 2000 247, which provides confidential support to women and children, including access to a place of safety in a refuge. Calls are free and interpreters are available for non-English speaking callers.

For information about the Sanctuary Scheme, call Barnet Homeseekers on 020 8359 4797.

Questions

A poem for Valentine's Day by Dennis Evans

Will you walk with me,
talk with me?

Will you plant with me,
chant with me?

Will you work with me,
shirk with me?

Will you play with me,
lie with me?

Will you climb with me,
rhyme with me?

Will you...
will you be my Valentine?

First published in Bubbles for Peace by Celebration Press 2005

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From hedge funds to hedges

Continuing our occasional series on career changes, Catherine Johnson of Ashburnham Designs tells how she left a well-paid job in financial IT to become a garden designer.

After 20 years in an increasingly "dog eat dog" environment, with frequent trips abroad working 12 hour days, I dreaded going into the office. I spent hours trying to unwind at the end of each day, and was constantly angry about anything and everything. Enough was enough when internal politics prevented me from doing the job I'd been employed to do.

My parents are enthusiastic gardeners and as a child I grew my own apple tree from a pip. Later, as a flat-dweller I was roped in to help with my church garden, and some years ago I did a short taster course in garden design at the English Gardening School. So, in August 2009 I left the City and spent a year studying for a professional diploma at the Pickard School of Garden Design.

Reactions from friends and family ranged from encouraging, congratulatory, even envious, to concern from those who thought me totally mad. Surprising how many thought me brave. I didn't feel it!

Challenging and creative

I've now set up my own practice in East Finchley, using new skills and those acquired in my former career as a business analyst and project manager. I love the creative aspect, and the challenge of producing designs to complement my client's

lifestyles, needs and dreams. A design doesn't have to start from scratch, it doesn't have to incorporate the whole garden, and it doesn't have to be done all at once. A designer simply helps their client to understand what they are trying to create and why, eliminating costly impulse buys along the way.

No regrets

Was I brave? Yes and no. Ultimately the decision was easy, but at times my self-belief wavered, particularly when mastering technical drawing, and when my brain seemed incapable of absorbing yet more information. The journey has been a huge learning curve, but do I regret it? Absolutely not. Friends now remark on how much more relaxed I am, and I'm excited about the future.

Catherine can be contacted on 020 8444 3484 or at catherinejohnson9@gmail.com



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The day I tried a car club

By Adam Justice-Mills

Many drivers are realising there is a greener alternative to owning their own car: opt into a car club, and save loads of money while saving the planet. Car owners could save more than £300 a month by renting a new, low CO₂ emission car (or van) just for the time they need it.

StreetCar is one of several commercial schemes in London. I'm writing about them because they have a car on Twyford Avenue and because they offered me a free trial. The annual joining fee includes fully comprehensive insurance and national recovery, servicing and regular cleaning, as well as a smart card that opens the car. It covers the congestion charge but *not* parking fines. City Car is similar. WhipCar uses people's own cars, which they hire out to "steady drivers".

Getting StreetCar wise

I got my ID and password emailed to me and checked online for cars nearby. I booked the BMW from Pages Lane for an hour, getting an immediate text confirmation. The hire rate includes free fuel up to a reasonable mileage allowance (30 miles for up to a day, rising to 200 miles per day). After that, fuel is 23p per mile.

When I arrived at the bay, the car wasn't there! I rang customer services who contacted the driver immediately, confirming a 15-minute delay. I was entitled to £40 credit (to be paid by the late driver), but waived it as my hire was free.

The car arrived and the driver turned out to be a new neighbour. Kevin works in the city so uses StreetCar just for short, local journeys. He locked the car with his smart card and I promptly re-opened it with mine.

There was a guide to the car in the glove compartment and I'd checked the car for damage. I did some shopping, extended my booking by text with "Extend 0.5" for another half hour, returned to the bay in time, then walked home.

Verdict

It was quite like any hire car, but closer to home and I *really* liked not having to worry about the car once I'd left it in the bay. Would I buy another car if mine was written off? I'd certainly consider using a car club. It makes sense.

StreetCar can be contacted through www.streetcar.co.uk. Here are links to other car clubs operating in London: www.citycarclub.co.uk, www.zipcar.com, www.connectbyhertz.com; www.quadrigacars.com; and www.carplus.org.uk



How do you want the Old Barn to be used?

We reported in our last issue that the future of the Old Barn Centre in Tarling Road is in the balance. Now there is a chance for you to put your views on how you would like the centre to be used.

The Old Barn Action Group would like to hear from anyone interested in bringing the building back into local control for the benefit of local people. The group is holding meetings at the Green Man Community Centre, Strawberry Vale, on 10 and 24 February at 10am for people to give their ideas.

The centre was previously a hub for youth groups, including the popular Monday Club but they moved out after the management of the centre was taken on by the Old Barn Youth and Community Association (OBYCA), whose director is Reverend Geoffrey Muhoro.

Lack of publicity

Rev Muhoro was the sole representative of OBYCA at

a meeting to discuss the centre on 8 January. Five members of the action group attended but no one else. They claimed local residents had not received any leaflets announcing the meeting.

William Hudson, of the action group, said Rev Muhoro informed them that he was negotiating with a company from east London to provide a range of services.

The action group hopes to hold an open day on Sunday 13 March somewhere near the Old Barn for all young people and local residents who want to bring the building back to life. In the meantime, the ideas meetings will be held at the Green Man Centre on the dates above.

Nursery open morning

Holy Trinity Nursery is holding an open morning on Wednesday 28 March for all parents and carers, together with children.

The nursery offers 52 places in total, 26 places in the morning session (8.50am to 11.50am) and 26 places in the afternoon session (12.30pm to 3.30pm). Nursery children can extend their day using breakfast and after school clubs run by the school in the main building.

Approval

Holy Trinity says that last year's open morning received great feedback from visitors who thought the nursery was well run, well organised

and friendly. When OfSTED visited in October 2009, they noted that 'activities are interesting and exciting and the children enjoy all they do'.

More details on admissions criteria are included in the school prospectus at www.holytrinityschool.org.uk.

Applications for admission to nursery for children born between 1 September 2008 and 31 August 2009 close on 6 May 2011. Forms are available at the open morning and from the website above.

Coronation fun and games

By Daphne Chamberlain
1937 was Coronation year for George VI, whose struggle against stammering is the story of the Oscar-tipped film *The King's Speech*.

On 13 May that year, Finchley Schools held a Coronation Sports Day. The Finchley Society has the programme, with competitors listed by school. Did you, or anyone you know, take part? If so, The Finchley Society

would love to know.

The Society is also looking for anyone who has memories of "The Sleeping Shepherd", a pageant in the grounds of Avenue House on 13 and 15 May 1937. An advertisement of the time describes it as "a charming pastoral of 1850 in an old world setting - dancing and singing, laughter and gaiety".

If you can help fill in details for either of these events, please contact localhistory@finchleysociety.org.uk or tell us at *THE ARCHER*, and we will pass it on.

Winter wood work

The sun shone down on the Friends of Cherry Tree Wood when they gathered in the wood on 12 December for another volunteering day. About two-dozen volunteers, including young children and grandparents, spent the day building deadwood fencing, picking litter, cutting back hazel and hornbeam trees to encourage new growth, and planting over 100 new tree saplings.



Friends building fences. Photo courtesy Friends of Cherry Tree Wood

The trees were donated by the Woodland Trust and include elder, crab apple, hazel, blackthorn and dog rose. All have edible fruits and flowers that can be used in a variety of ways (for example, crab apple jelly, elderflower cordial, rosehip jam and sloe gin), providing a very useful

additional amenity in the wood in the years to come. Working enthusiastically to dig through the frozen soil, or to hammer in fence posts, the volunteers certainly didn't feel the cold. Charles Parkes, who once again planned the day and led the team, made sure even the novices could contribute, teaching how to coppice a tree or weave the felled branches into deadwood fencing that will protect the areas of new saplings until they are fully established. The day was rounded off with warm mince pies in the orchard.

Shoppers dig deep

By Sippy Azizollah
On Christmas Eve I had the great pleasure of holding a fundraiser in aid of the North London Hospice at Budgens. I had a table set with chocolates, donated by Elaine Merrin, and mince pies, and hot mugs of tea to keep me going. It was a fantastic day with all of you helping me to raise money for this very worthy cause.

The hospice is for the boroughs of Barnet, Enfield and Haringey. Their fundraising manager Judy Guy told me that the running costs for this year will be £6 million, and that they depend on people's kindness and voluntary donations to keep providing valuable respite for life-limited patients and their families.

She was thrilled at seeing the amount we'd raised when I presented her with a cheque for £270. To all of you in East Finchley who gave their time, money and smiles on Christmas Eve, thank you so much! I couldn't have done this without you.

Gardening for the brain

There is a proposal to develop a regular session at the Meadow Orchard project in Park Road, N8, for people interested in gardening, wildlife and conservation who also have dementia.

The project would be for people with dementia who live in Barnet, Enfield or Haringey. It could be of particular value in cases of young onset dementia, for which there is very little support.

To express interest or for further information, please contact Lynn Molloy, Haringey Memory Assessment and Treatment Project Group, Victoria Day Unit, St Ann's Hospital, N15 3TH. Tel: 020 8442 6727 or 6109. Email lynn.molloy@beh-mht.nhs.uk.

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Out and about with a pram

By Alisha Johnston

Last May I found myself joining the ranks of First Time Mums. Having commuted from East Finchley for many years, I knew little about N2 on weekdays from 9 to 5. Its streets become the domain of new mums going to and from play groups, meeting for coffee or just trying to get the baby to sleep.

In those early months I needed to get out of the house to save my sanity. So I found myself joining the pram-pushing brigade, tramping the local streets, walking round the solace of Cherry Tree Wood and sipping tea at the Lazy Sally Kiosk.

As time went by, I could clock up more miles and was always looking for a change of scene. So here's my list of local spots if you want to walk somewhere different (whether or not you are pushing a pram).

Key: BC (known to have baby changing facilities), PG (playground). Please note kiosks and cafes may be closed in winter.

- **Cherry Tree Wood, East Finchley (BC/PG/kiosk)**
www.cherrytreewood.co.uk
Entry opposite East Finchley tube station.

- **Coldfall Wood, East Finchley**
www.coldfallwoods.co.uk
Entry off Creighton Avenue, East Finchley.

- **Long Lane Pasture, Finchley**
Entry off Long Lane opposite the fire station.

- **Avenue House, Finchley (BC/PG/ kiosk closed until spring)**
www.avenuehouse.org.uk
Entry off East End Road.

- **Highgate Wood, Muswell Hill (BC/PG/café).**

Entry off Muswell Hill Road, Lancaster Road, or Archway Road. Walk through Cherry Tree Wood or take bus 143 towards Archway Station or 263 towards Nags Head, or 234 towards Highgate Wood / Sussex Gardens and alight at Highgate Tube.

- **Queens Wood, Muswell Hill, (café), www.fqw.org.uk.**

Entry off Muswell Hill Road. You can also walk through Highgate Wood to get there.

- **Alexandra Palace Park, Muswell Hill (PG/café)**

www.alexandrapalace.org.uk. Take bus 102 towards Edmon-ton Green Bus Station or 234 towards Barnet/Spires Shopping Centre and alight at Muswell Hill. Walk down Dukes Avenue and entry is on the right. Also free parking at Alexandra Palace Park.

- **Lyttleton Playing Fields, parallel to the A1 (PG)**

This is part of the Capital Ring, www.walklondon.org.uk.

- **Waterlow Park, Highgate (PG/ cafe open Tue-Sun)**

www.waterlowpark.org.uk. Entry off Highgate High Street or Swains Lane. Take bus 143 towards Archway Station and alight at Highgate Village.

- **Big Wood, Hampstead Garden Suburb.**

Entry off Oakwood Road, NW11.

- **Heath Extension, Hampstead Garden Suburb.**

Entry off Wildwood Road or Hampstead Way, NW11.

- **Golders Hill Park, Golders Green (BC/PG/café/ small zoo).**

Take bus H2 or 102 to Golders Green tube station, then it's a five-minute walk up North End Road turning right into West Heath Avenue.

Do you have your own favourite pram-pushing destination? Write to us at the-archer@lineone.net or The Archer, PO Box 3699, London N2 8JA.

Mummy Zumba

New classes for Zumba, a Latin-American dance-based fitness class, have started in East Finchley aimed specifically at mums with babies.

Mums can bring their prams and leave them at the side of the room while they enjoy exercise classes with West End dancer AJ O'Neill. There are also baby-changing facilities.

The classes take place on Wednesdays at 3pm at Holy Trinity Church, Church Lane, and cost £7 a class, with reduced rates for block bookings. For more details, contact AJ on 07738 968408.

YOUNG ARCHER



Santa enjoyed his refurbished grotto at the Martin School fair.

VIP guest at school fair

By Rachel Ellis

Hundreds of parents, pupils and local residents visited the Martin school's Christmas Fair on Saturday 11 December, giving the event a real buzz. A particular hit was Santa's splendid new grotto which had been given a major revamp for the fair.

For the first time, candy floss was on sale, which proved very popular, and there was also an indoor bouncy castle. The school choir, the Year 6 band and the recorder group

all gave wonderful performances, and there were some amazing outfits in the Fancy Dress Competition.

The event, organised by the Parent Teacher Association, raised £4,400 for the school. It was sponsored by GLH and Prickett and Ellis, and received generous donations from Budgens, Hughes Design and J G Bryson, Printer, who provided the programmes.

Headteacher Helen Morrison said: "We all thoroughly enjoyed the day. There was a fantastic turnout and I'm so grateful to the whole community for supporting the event."

PARENT & BABY/ CHILD ACTIVITIES

- ❖ Coffee & Kids, Fri 9.15-11.15, Green Man Ctr. Rachel 8343 6147.
- ❖ Dads' Club: Get-togethers for dads looking after young children in East Finchley. Adam 07957 441435.
- ❖ EF National Childbirth Trust contact Ruby Yang or Patrizia Canwell at eastfinchleynct@googlemail.com
- ❖ Parent & Toddler Group, Green Man Centre, Julia 8444 2276
- ❖ Stepping Stones, interactive play session for under 3's. Karen 07957 278860.

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KALASHNIKOV KULTUR

By Ricky Savage, the voice of social irresponsibility

Name game

In the weird and wonderful world of austerity Britain as the country lurches towards wide-eyed madness there is one beacon of blinding light in the darkness. Yes, the Beckhams are breeding again. Just when we feared that they would decide that three was enough they've announced that they are making another contribution to society. And, to the amazement of the watching world, Victoria smiled for the first time since Botox was invented.

Now that we know there's a new baby Beckham on the way we can all indulge in that great party game and try to work out what they are going to call it.

Let's start with Brooklyn. He's called after the place where he was conceived and set a trend. Out there in the weird world people have taken this idea and run in ever decreasing circles with it. What about the girls called Paris or the boy called Finchley? Better still, there's some poor kid out there called Leyton. Yes, a kid named after a crossroads in East London notable for two pubs, one bookies, a Polish shop and a god-bothering centre. Nice?

For child two, Romeo, the Beckhams went for the back end of an Italian car. Not the first: there are a couple of Cortinas out there and Sienna Miller's got a sister called Sierra (1.6L). What next? A girl called Mazda or a boy called Nissan?

Child three didn't do much better. They called him Cruze, probably after Tom and probably because they can't spell. Maybe it's time to name-check their other friends: how about Giggs for a boy or Fergie for a girl?

The only thing to say in favour of not very posh and stupid is that they've avoided fruit, so far. Gwyneth has her little Apple, so maybe now is the time for an Orange or Banana or Raspberry? They could go for drinks and call it Brandi or Bacardi and Coke. The big problem is that had they realised they would have four kids they could have gone all Vivaldi and called them Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter. Now that would have been different.

It's Showtime Again for writers

By Daphne Chamberlain

Fans of East Finchley Writers will know immediately that anything with that title could only be the group's third published anthology. Showtime, Showtime Too, and now Showtime Again are inspired names. These annual collections show off the writers' very varied talents, but there is also a theatrical feel about a lot of their work. As I was reading through, I could see many of them as tightly-written television dramas.

Without turning this review into a spoiler, you can take your pick from a South African inquisition, an English day trip, war-torn Eritrea, a ghost, an original twist on time-travelling, friends meeting again after many years, and many more.

There are 36 stories, essays and poems in this book, the work of eight of the East Finchley Writers.

Who, where and why

East Finchley Writers are a diverse group of individuals with distinctive styles and personalities. For the last three years they have read some of their work at the East Finchley Arts Festival, and they meet on Wednesdays

at the Old White Lion to offer support and constructive criticism to each other.

What they have in common is a love of writing, and anyone who shares that will be very welcome at their meetings. If you are interested, please contact Carola on 020 8883 5808 or Lilian on 020 8444 1793.

Care home help

The national charity, **Counsel and Care**, supported by the **Department of Health**, has published the **Care Home Handbook**.

The handbook, which is free to all Barnet residents, guides people through the options for funding care, gives advice on choosing a suitable care home, and clearly sets out the rights and choices involved. To obtain a copy of the Care Home Handbook call 0845 300 7585 or go to www.counselandcare.org.uk/helping-you.

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What is the mystery bird of prey? Photo by Luke Potter

Can you identify this bird?

By Lois Lawrence

ARCHER reader Luke Potter spotted a mysterious bird of prey near his home in Cedar Drive one evening in December. He'd seen a wide range of birds over the years but he wasn't able to identify the bird he saw. It was sitting on top of a pigeon that it had just killed and stayed there feeding happily for about 10 minutes before leaving.

There weren't any rings on the bird's legs so Luke assumed it was a wild bird of prey that may have come from somewhere outside London.

The photo is not very clear but Luke is intrigued to know what type of bird it was and what habits might bring it this far into the city. If anyone can help, contact *THE ARCHER* on the-archer@lineone.net or 0844 579 6949 (mailbox 63450).

Waxwings

Meanwhile, in other birdspotting news, Peter Cox witnessed the arrival of flocks of waxwings around his house in Hertford Road. These subtly beautiful birds are fairly regular winter visitors to the east coast

from their breeding grounds in Scandinavia but Peter has not seen them before in our neck of the woods.

At first glance, they are starling-like, but with crests and yellow tail-tips. Peter saw around 50 of them clustering on TV aerials on roofs around his home.

He said: "They tend to turn up in places like the Tesco car park where there are berries to feed on. We have a rowan tree outside our house so that may have attracted them."

Waxwings are likely to be around in our area throughout February. Keep your bird feeders full and look out for them.

London honours local naturalist

By Ann Bronkhorst

Woodland enthusiasts from the Greater London area saw a distinguished local naturalist honoured for his lifetime achievement on Thursday 2 December. City Hall on the South Bank hosted the London Tree and Woodland Awards, which recognise organisations, individuals and schools that have helped to improve London through their dedication to trees and woodlands.

David Bevan, botanist and former Conservation Officer for Haringey, received the Individual Commitment and Achievement Award for his work for the woodlands of north London. Many local people have enjoyed his guided walks through Coldfall Wood and Queen's Wood, and the wealth of knowledge he continues to share through his teaching, advice and active involvement with the London Natural History Society.

Receiving the award, David outlined the benefits and discoveries that have

resulted from coppicing and other woodland management methods in both woods, and paid tribute to the energy and commitment of the two Friends groups.

Keith Good, one of the Friends of Coldfall Wood, was shortlisted for the Photographic Award with some of his work enlarged for display that evening. Keith's wildlife photographs can be seen at www.coldfallwoods.co.uk and for more information about David Bevan's work go to freespace.virgin.net/conserving.bevan

Get your bus routes straight

By Daphne Chamberlain
In December 2010 we published a letter from reader Lorna Roberts, (written in November) complaining about the re-routing of the 143. It used to run along the whole of East End Road and Gravel Hill into Hendon Lane but now turns off East End Road to take in Manor View, Squires Lane, Long Lane and Ballards Lane. Obviously this adds to the time it takes to reach Brent Cross.

Our correspondent said that Transport for London told her they would consider restoring the original route, but she had heard nothing since.

Misinformation

THE ARCHER contacted TfL on 12 November, asking whether any considering had been done. Our enquiry was acknowledged, but we heard nothing further. On 7 December, after a reminder from us, TfL apologised for the delay in replying and said that the 143 had always run along the present route, while a 143A (withdrawn in 1995) had taken the direct route along East End Road.

To anyone using local buses up to the early 1990s this was a statement from a parallel universe! When we protested, TfL re-investigated. A further letter from them confirmed that the original route was as described by our reader. TfL apologised for misinforming us and Ms Roberts, but confirmed that they were not considering changing the existing route.

They said that there was low usage along the end of East End Road and high demand for buses along Long Lane. Bus stops along the Manor Way, Squires Lane, Long Lane and Ballards Lane part of the route are used by 24% of all the passengers.

And another thing...

Lorna Roberts had also asked TfL whether the H3 would ever run more than once an hour, and whether it could be extended beyond 2.30pm.

TfL told *THE ARCHER* that current usage was well matched to one bus per hour, and there was insufficient demand to extend the hours of operation

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- ❖ **Finchley & Hornsey Ramblers Group** Call Vivien 8883 8190
- ❖ **Glebelands Indoor Bowls Club**, Summers Lane N12. New and experienced bowlers welcome.
- ❖ **Keep fit for the Retired** on Wednesdays, Christ Church N12. Call Bridie 8883 5269
- ❖ **Muswell Hill Bowling Club**, Kings Ave, N10. New & experienced bowlers welcome. Tel: 8883 0433.
- ❖ **Pilates** in East Finchley, qualified teacher. Contact Dee on 8883 7029
- ❖ **Pilates class** Weds 3.30 & 7pm at Ann Owens Ctr, N2. Call Penny 8444 2882.
- ❖ **Tae Kwon Do** for children & adults at Finchley Lido Mon & Fri 7-9pm 07949 612 706. www.taekwondo-uktd.co.uk
- ❖ **Tai Chi class** at EF Methodist Ch, Weds at 1pm. Call James Drewe 8883 3308 or james@taiji.co.uk
- ❖ **Tennis club** with four clay courts off Southern Road. Call 8883 7723.
- ❖ **Yoga, breathing & relaxation.** Weekly drop-in classes - N3, N6, N10. Phone Judy on 07956 375607.
- ❖ **Yoga, pregnancy yoga, meditation classes.** Call Sunnah 07941 321 772 or see www.stretchingpeople.co.uk.

MUSIC, DANCE & CREATIVE ARTS

- ❖ **Art Classes.** For info call Henry on 8888 5133.
- ❖ **Ballroom Dance Classes**, Wednesday eves for beginners & improvers. St Mary's Church Hall, N3. 8444 0280.
- ❖ **Ballroom & Latin American Dance Classes**-beginners & improvers. Wed & Fri eve, Bishop Douglass Sch. 8207 2323.
- ❖ **Creative writing classes** in informal, friendly atmosphere. Tel Sallie Rose 020 8444 7217.
- ❖ **Drama Classes** for 11-15 year olds. Mondays 6.30-8pm. Contact Dominic Conway 0777 284 3958
- ❖ **East Finchley Writers Group**, Weds at the Old White Lion. Contact Carola 8883 5808 or Lilian 8444 1793.
- ❖ **East Finchley Poetry Writing Workshops.** Monthly on Saturdays. Contact Dennis Evans 8346 9528.
- ❖ **Finchley Jazz Club: Live jazz** on Mon 14 & 28 Feb at 8.15pm, Wilf Slack Cricket Pavilion, East End Rd, N3.
- ❖ **Memory Lane Singing Club** - friendly singing club meets every Friday in Finchley. Call Valerie 8458 4508.
- ❖ **Over 50s Tea Dance** at Christ Church, North Finchley. Every Weds, 1pm. 020 8444 0280.
- ❖ **Learn to sing** at Finchley Methodist Church, Ballards La. Call 8888 4412.
- ❖ **SwampRock** Louisiana Dance Club. Live music. Contact 07957 344 724 or www.swamprock.org.uk.
- ❖ **Symphonic Wind Orchestra** Contact Caroline Egan 8340 2706
- ❖ **Traditional music** at EF Constitutional Club on 2nd Mon each month from 8.30 pm. Free to join in or just listen.

CLUBS & SOCIAL

(See p8 for Parent & Toddler Clubs)

- ❖ **Bingo evening, 8pm Sundays**, at the Constitutional Club, The Walks, N2.
- ❖ **Bingo Club** Mondays 7-9pm, Green Man Centre, Contact: Jan 8815 5452
- ❖ **Contact Lunch Club** Tuesdays at the Green Man. Call 8444 1162 to book.
- ❖ **Finchley & District Philatelic Society**, Contact Brian 8444 3251
- ❖ **French conversation** in small friendly group with native speaker. 8444 9395.
- ❖ **Friends of Cherry Tree Wood** www.cherrytreewood.co.uk or 8883 7544.
- ❖ **Haringey Recorded Music Society** informal meetings locally. Call David Moldon on 8361 1696.
- ❖ **LGBT?** 1st Weds every month in a local pub. Welcoming atmosphere. Email efinchleylgbt@hotmail.com
- ❖ **Muslim Lunch Club** 1st & 3rd Weds, Green Man. Call 8444 1162 to book.
- ❖ **North London Bridge Club**, Muswell Hill. Contact 8348 3495
- ❖ **Northside Bridge Club**, EF Methodist Church, Thurs 7.30-11pm. 8346 8145.
- ❖ **Jewish Friendship Club** for over 60s, Tues 1-3 pm at Muswell Hill Synagogue, Tetherdown. Call Anita 8886 6140.
- ❖ **Muswell Hill Tetherdown Bridge**, contact 8883 4390
- ❖ **Probus Lunch Club** for retired professionals. Call John 8883 8114.

Hallelujah, Brent Cross breaks out in song

By Marian Bunzl

A flash mob or, as north London calls it, a spontaneous cultural event, took place on the Saturday before Christmas at Brent Cross. Organised by the Highgate Choral Society, about 200 singers (including members of North London Chorus) gathered incognito at the shopping centre. Our instructions were to dress and act as Christmas shoppers.

At 11 am, at a signal from a hidden organ, we were to burst into Handel's *Hallelujah Chorus* and at the last "Hallelujah!" throw our arms into the air, and melt into the crowd again. We had to learn the work by heart, as carrying the scores would s"For ever and ever"

Just before 11 am, we gathered in the central corridor and as the introductory bars sounded, off we went. The sound spread through the whole centre. Some came

singing out of the lifts, others up and down the escalators, shoppers joined in at random, and mobile phones popped up everywhere recording the event. Under the circumstances, it couldn't be a very polished performance, but the response was heartwarming: cheers, applause and hugging, and somehow everyone looked much less stressed.

An hour later Brent Cross closed down for the day. It wasn't us, Guv! It was the snow.

To northern Canada and back in a day

By Jake Eiseman-Renyard

Ruth Gibson and Bruno Martelli's installation *Visitor* invites the viewer to step into a landscape set in a fictional, though convincing, region in the Canadian Rockies, effectively teleporting you thousands of miles away without having to travel any further than to artsdepot in North Finchley.

Although there are only three exhibits, they are packed with imagination and originality. The first is a black and white shack; effectively a 3D, tangible black and white photograph of a shack, cleverly reflecting the monotony of mid-winter weather.

Inside the shack, guests can try out a rowing boat simulator and continue their virtual journey by water, with a black and white screen featuring forests, buoys and jetties, under a snowy sky. At the touch of a button, you can get a wrap-round view of the boat and the lake.

What I love about this exhibit

is it is effectively an avant garde video game, interactive, yet arthouse. Although the artists visited northern Canada for inspiration, they build on the idea of "virtual" journeys, inviting others to share experiences far beyond simply seeing peoples' holiday photos or videos.

The concept of making "virtual places" by mixing and matching is well-used, but the media in *Visitor* add a whole new dimension to it. This time it was the Rockies, but who knows where else you could build a virtual experience from to visit within Finchley? *Visitor* runs until 27 February.



Calligrapher Cherrell Avery's work in support of Zimbabwe poets.

Artist supports poets in Zimbabwe

By Adam Justice-Mills

At the EFO Summer Open last year, I saw an amazing collection of calligraphy by local artist Cherrell Avery. One piece caught my attention: a particularly strong representation of a poem, describing life in Zimbabwe.

The story behind the work was also remarkable. Cherrell is a professional calligrapher and lettering artist and is President of North London Lettering Association. She is always looking for new sources of inspiration and heard a Radio 4 programme about young poets in Zimbabwe. She was moved by their plight and through the Poetry International (Zimbabwe) website, she chose the words of two poets to interpret.

Responding intuitively to the meaning of the words she created beautiful visual

interpretations of the poems in three art works, and the poets granted permission for them to be on exhibition. Cherrell arranged a "silent auction" of the works, with 50% of the proceeds going directly to the poet. One piece was sold (luckily for me, my bid was successful) but the other two are still available for discerning collectors.

You can contact Cherrell through her website www.cherrellavery.co.uk if you would like to buy one of these works. The money will make a big difference to the poets' lives in difficult times.

What's On...

Saturday 5 February

• **An evening of entertainment raising funds for Chalise Village and Area Schools Project, Nepal.** Special guests: Ania Lichota, Everest summiteers 2010, Dame Kelly Holmes, Rebecca Stephens. Suggested entrance price £5-£30. Finchley Progressive Synagogue, Hutton Grove, N12, 6pm. More information from Ann Goldstein, 020 8341 3737.

Sunday 6 February

• **Fabulous Finchley: a guided walk.** Meet at Finchley Central tube station (Ballards Lane exit) at 11am. A tour of Finchley Central and East Finchley with Paul Baker, City of London guide. 020 8440 6805.

Saturday 12 February

• **Barnet Ghosts: a guided walk.** Meet outside High Barnet tube station booking office at 7.30pm, with Paul Baker, City of London guide. 020 8440 6805.

Saturday 19 February

• **Spike Milligan Statue Fund event.** Quiz night at Martin School, East Finchley. £5 per person. Contact 020 8346 5258 for tickets.

Sunday 20 February

• **The Battle of Barnet: a guided walk.** Meet at junction of the Great North Road and Hadley Green Road at 11am, with Paul Baker, City of

London guide. 020 8440 6805.

Tuesday 22 February

• **Code Breaker, an evening with Ruth Bourne** who was a Bletchley Park Code Breaker during World War II; 7pm at Avenue House, East End Road, N3. Tickets £15, including wine, from Jo Ferris at North London Hospice 020 8446 2288 or Sue Fox 020 8458 3348. All proceeds to North London Hospice.

Wednesday 23 February

• **Il Trovatore: Are There Four Main Roles?** Lecture by Josie Steinfield, 11.30am-2pm at Avenue House, East End Road, N3. Tickets £16, incl coffee and sandwiches, from Val Spencer on 020 8906 3134 or email v.spencer1@btinternet.com. All proceeds to North London Hospice

• **Blood donor sessions:** mobile unit in car park to rear of East Finchley tube station from 9.40am-12.20pm and 2pm-4.40pm. Further details and appointments 0300 123 23 23 or visit www.blood.co.uk.

Thursday 24 February to Saturday 26 February

• **Half-term at artsdepot, North Finchley: Mischief** at 3pm, an award-winning mix of dance, visual art, puppetry, live music and playful clowning, for ages five plus; **Ribbon Dance Workshop** at 2-2.45pm and

4.30-5.15pm, swirly whirly ribbon dancing inspired by *Mischief*, for ages 5 plus. Further details from box office on 020 8369 5454, or email info@artsdepot.co.uk.

Thursday 24 February

• **The Finchley Society hosts an illustrated talk about The Royal Air Force Museum by David Keen**, head of the museum's access and learning team. Aviation and general RAF history, with images from archives and present day; 2.30pm at Avenue House, East End Road, N3 (tel. 020 8346 7812). All welcome; admission fee of £2 for non-members.

Saturday 26 February

• **Buffet Supper Concert** at All Saints' Church, Durham Road, N2, at 7.30pm. Beethoven, Hanson, Achron and Shostakovich performed by Orpheus Papafilippou, violin, Gregory Duggan, cello, and Rimantas Vingras, piano. Catering by Amici Delicatessen. Concert and supper: £15 (must be pre-booked by midday Friday 25 February); concert only: £10 on door. Information 020 8444 9214. Box Offices: Les Aldrich, 98 Fortis Green, N10 (0208 883 5631), Black Gull Books, 121 High Road, N2 (0208 444 4717).

Sunday 27 February

• **Marvellous Mill Hill: guided walk.** Meet outside Mill Hill East tube station at 11am, with Paul

E-mail your listings to:
the-archer@lineone.net

Baker, City of London guide. 020 8440 6805.

Saturday 5 March

• **Sound of the Suburb**, live at Madden's Ale House, 130 High Road, N2. Tel: 020 8444 7444. Local band and regular performers at the East Finchley Festival play high energy rock 'n roll cover songs for your listening and dancing pleasure, 9pm to 12 midnight. Free admission.

Sunday 6 March

• Find out more about **St Mary-at-Finchley** (Hendon Lane, N3, close to Church End Library). **Guided tours of church and churchyard**, and opportunity to be interviewed for The Finchley Society's Oral History Project. Teas in the Parish Hall, 2.30pm-5pm. Admission free.

What's on at artsdepot

Saturday 5 February, 7.30pm, **Shiraz**. Sunday 6 February, 1pm-2.45pm, **Sunday Buzz Free - Strangeworld**. Thursday 10 February, 7.30pm, **Balletboyz: The Talent**: London premiere. Saturday 12 February, 7pm, **Clive**. Tuesday 15 February to Wednesday 16 February, 7.30pm, **The Caucasian Chalk Circle**. Saturday 19 February, 7.30pm, **Emily Smith**. Friday 25 February, 8pm, **Zoe Lyons: Clownbusting**. Friday 4 March, 8pm, **Gwyneth Herbert**.



Letters to the Editor

Gritting: give us the tools

Joyce Arram, who lives in Summerlee Gardens, wrote to us to say residents might be willing to keep crucial road junctions clear if Barnet Council could provide the necessary grit.

Dear Editor,

At a Residents Forum meeting held by Barnet Council shortly after last winter's bad weather, we were told that Barnet had over 1,000 bins with sand/grit on the streets of the Borough for use on our roads. Where were the ones for East Finchley? I certainly have not seen any in our streets or even the High Road, and neighbours assure me they have not seen them either.

It is all very well for the Council to make sure that the main roads are passable, but if they ignore the side roads so that residents cannot drive on them as they are too dangerous, how is this going to help our economy, if people cannot get to work, or delivery vans get to them?

Surely it is not too much to ask for or expect of this council in these days of the "Big Society" for it to ensure that these bins are placed on strategic parts of our side roads - junctions are obvious places - filled with the requisite sand/grit/salt.

Certainly in the little conurbation of Summerlee Avenue/Baronsmere and Southern Roads there are residents who would be willing to ensure that the junctions are gritted so that we are not isolated. And of course it's not just roads; just as important are pavements. While some residents are willing to clear the pavements outside their homes for people to walk safely, there are still areas which resemble skating rinks so that the elderly and infirm are marooned in their homes unable to get to the shops. Come on, Barnet: if you provide us with the tools we will get on with the job.

Yours faithfully,
Joyce Arram

Summerlee Gardens, N2.

Protect our local museums

Dear Editor,

Barnet Council's cabinet met on Monday 13 December and proposed the withdrawal of all funding from the only two council-supported museums in the borough: Barnet Museum and Church Farmhouse Museum. There was to be a period of public consultation up to 17 January, and then a final recommendation by the cabinet in February.

The Borough of Barnet contains a long and rich history dating back to the Romans and beyond, and this has been a significant contributor over the years to the sense of community and coherence within Barnet.

It is essential that this sense of history and community should continue if Barnet is not to become just another outskirts of the metropolis, and these two museums are important factors in this.

For example, in addition to its educational exhibitions, every year Church Farmhouse Museum in association with HADAS, the Barnet-based archaeologists, hosts demonstration excavations in its grounds for local schools. These have proved extremely popular and educational, helping the pupils gain an understanding of their history and that of Barnet.

Whilst we recognise the need to economise, the benefits to the Borough of keeping these museums open are out of all proportion to the relatively small sums of money involved, and we strongly oppose any suggestion of their closure.

Yours faithfully,
Don Cooper,
HADAS Chairman

Thanks for your support

Dear Editor,

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all your readers for the invaluable support they have given Barnet charities over the last year and to wish all of them the very best for 2011.

CommUNITY Barnet represents close to 1,000 voluntary and community organisations in our borough.

From the smallest community groups to larger charities, our members do excellent work such as improving our environment, organising fun activities for our children, providing information, advice and befriending, supporting people with disabilities and their carers or providing meals and shelter for vulnerable people in our communities.

They would not be able to do this important work without the fantastic support from Barnet residents who generously volunteer their time and money. Please accept our deepest thanks and best wishes for 2011.

Yours faithfully,
Ruth Mulandi,
CEO, CommUNITY Barnet,
www.communitybarnet.org.uk

Praise for local shops

Dear Editor,

After moving from N10 to N2 last year, my local shopping experience has been unexpectedly delightful. The shops in the High Road are genuinely useful and the service very helpful. In particular, East Finchley Electrical has dealt with a variety of lighting problems with a patient cheerfulness and understanding of one's ignorance that brightens a dull day. We are lucky to have shops like these.

Yours faithfully,
Barbara Goward,
Fortis Green Avenue, N2.

Send your correspondence to: "Letters Page",
The Archer, PO Box 3699,
London N2 8JA or e-mail
the-archer@lineone.net.

Letters without verifiable contact addresses will not be reviewed or printed. Contact details can be withheld, however, on request at publication.

Join the singing and signing

Deaf and hearing young people are invited to perform show tunes, chart hits and favourite songs at artsdepot every Saturday until 2 April from 12.30-2.30pm.

All songs are translated into British Sign Language, so that participants can sing or sign. Anyone aged 13 to 19 will be very welcome. Artsdepot is at 5 Nether Street, Tally Ho Corner, North Finchley. Please contact 020 8369 5454 or education@artsdepot.co.uk to book your free place.

Driver wanted

THE ARCHER is looking for someone who could spare a small amount of time once a month to distribute the paper to some of our network of deliverers.

If you have your own car and could take copies of the paper to a handful of local addresses, please contact us at the-archer@lineone.net or leave a message on 0844 579 6949, then mailbox number 63450. Thank you.

For those who love to write

Although immensely satisfying, writing is a lonely occupation, according to author and confidence coach Dave Robson. That's why he believes the most valuable thing a writer or would-be writer can have is feedback from other writers and aspiring writers.

Dave has started The Pen and Ink Club, an informal writers' group open to anyone who loves writing or yearns to write. "It doesn't matter what you want to write or whether you want it published, or even if you haven't started yet," Dave explains. "Our members are working on novels, non-fiction books, advertising copy, websites, blogs, newsletters, articles for magazines, newspapers and ezines, humour, satire, poetry and plays."

Encouragement

Members can have their articles, poems or other material published on the club's website www.penandinkclub.com, and they receive support and inspiration from fellow members.

Dave started the club while finalising the manuscript for his new book *The Five Pillars of Happiness* and he says the support he received was immensely helpful. The group was then able to celebrate its first successfully published author.

"Many would-be writers give up, especially when they get rejections, and some never start because they believe they'll never be good enough,"



says Dave. "We remove the intimidation by encouraging, supporting and giving positive feedback to anyone who wants to have a go."

The club meets at The Café in Alexandra Palace Garden Centre from 12-2.30pm fortnightly on Tuesdays. The next meetings are 15 February, 1 March, 15 March and 29 March. The cost is £10 per person per meeting, or £7 for people on a low income. Dave can be contacted at info@daverobsoncoaching.co.uk or 020 8374 7911 and advises phoning or emailing in advance to confirm the meeting is going ahead.

Further study lures Sage director

By Diana Cormack
Change is coming at The Noble Sage Art Gallery, 2a Fortis Green. After four years of setting up and running one of the few places in the country specialising in South Asian contemporary art, director Jana Manuelpillai has decided to follow a long-held dream. This is to expand his already extensive knowledge of art history and connoisseurship by undertaking a PhD research degree.

Jana will be studying at London's world famous School of Oriental and African Studies. He will research and write his thesis around the Madras Government College of Art and the artists who have emerged from it in the last fifty years, some of whom he has promoted at The Noble Sage along with many other artists from South India.

Due to this change, The Noble Sage will now function on an appointment-only basis. Anyone interested in viewing needs to contact Jana (jana@thenoblesage.com) to arrange for a specialist tour of the current collection. The collection itself will continue to grow and change as normal with works still available to view online at www.thenoblesage.com.

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Strictly social

By Daphne Chamberlain

Been to a tea dance recently? If not, what held you back: shyness, lack of a partner, lack of confidence, a bad time elsewhere? In December John Lintern told us how much dancing helps with older people's mental and physical fitness. John, with Betty Chi, runs tea dances at Christ Church Hall, North Finchley (opposite Homebase), and when I visited, regulars and "newbies" alike were keen to give me their views.

Vera Wheeler was typical in saying she hadn't danced since she was in her teens. Then she took it up again four years ago, and soon got back in the swing of it.

Sylvia Szanto loves the music, company and joy of dancing. "Enjoy it while you can," she says. "If any of us see dances we don't know somewhere else, John will show us how to do them."

Partnerships flourish

The sessions are not all strictly ballroom. I saw sequence and line dancing, an Irish jig and the Charleston, at a pace all the participants can manage. So nobody need worry about turning up alone. Partnerships can flourish, though. I heard about Linda and George, who married after meeting at this group.

Pat and Carol, another married couple, have recently joined. Pat was a boxer and footballer in his youth, but after damaging his legs in an accident when he was 14, he found that dancing was the best way to strengthen them. They were competition dancers 28 years ago, but now they dance to have fun.

No cliques

Brenda from Hendon told me: "There's such a friendly atmosphere. I've been to other places where they are snooty and cliquy, but that doesn't happen here."

The weekly Wednesday sessions tend to be for older people, while there is more of a mixture of ages on Sundays.

John, a retired maths and science teacher, lives in East Finchley. He and Betty also run dance classes and give private lessons. Visit their website jandbdance.co.uk, or call 020 8444 0280 for further details.



Wasp wonder

Not many of us have a kind word to say for wasps but these summer pests are capable of constructing a home every bit as complex and beautiful as a beehive.

This photo was sent to us by reader Gill Steiner, who found this (thankfully deserted) wasp nest in the loft of her home in Woodside Avenue on Christmas Day.

Behind this intricately swirling casing is a set of hexagonal chambers, in which the wasps live and store food. Gill believes the harsh days of early December either killed off the community

or drove it elsewhere.

Gill said: "Apparently, the wasps chew up wood and mix it with saliva to make the papery thin chambers. What amazes me when you look at the nest is the team effort required: wasps in the first year of life following their instincts or instructions from the queen to manufacture a home for the next generation. You can't help but feel humbled."



By Adam Justice-Mills

Almost time for spring clear-out. There's a pile of stuff that once seemed essential to our lives. Now it's past its use: kids have grown up, girths have expanded, technology moves on. What to do with it?

Of course, there's land-fill (actually this is "last resort", a rapidly dwindling resource, reckoned to run out in the UK on present usage by 2018). So, reduce, re-use, recycle. We've put stuff outside our house for anyone that wants it but recently it got picked up by scrap metal dealers (leaving the non-metal bits). I prefer to think some could be re-used, preferably in a good cause.

Pass it on

Freecycle is a way to offer (or get) used stuff, for free! Log into www.freecycle.org, or join a local group such as Freecycle Barnet. Email a list of the stuff you have, with a contact number, and get loads of people offering to take it off your hands. They collect from your door and you give it to them for free.

It works the other way round, too: send a "wanted" email or reply to someone else's offer and pick it up from them for free. There are some sensible rules: no animals, personal services, explosives etc, and the goods are all offered "as seen". We've handed over wardrobes, shelving, light fittings, packing cases and bicycles.

If you don't like the idea of people coming round, East Finchley charity shops welcome donations they can sell to raise money for their causes. They all like clean clothes and books, jewellery and knick-knacks; some will take toys; most won't take electrical items or soft furnishings.

Tech stuff can be harder to shift and you should always check the hard drives are wiped properly or removed before handing them over as they've got your identity data all over them. Check out www.envocare.co.uk for ethical and established tech recycling organisations for phones, computers and TVs. That pile of stuff is looking smaller and more beautiful already!

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Calling all electric car drivers

Adam Justice-Mills, who writes our Every Little Helps column, is planning to write an article about the reality of owning and running an electric car: why people choose an electric car, the benefits to the environment, and how practical they are to use. If you own an electric car, Adam would like to interview you. Get in touch via email on the-archer@lineone.net or leave your details on our voicemail by phoning 0844 579 6949 and entering mailbox number 63450. Thank you.

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