



Street party to save the Old Barn

By Janet Maitland

The Old Barn Action Group will be holding a street party on 13 March for anyone who wants to bring the community centre on Tarling Road back to life. The aim of the action group is to return the centre to the local community, to be run by local people, for local people.

"As local residents, we strongly object to the manner in which this important local community resource has been taken over, stripped of its assets and allowed to be left idle," said William Hudson of the action group.

The street party will be held in Fallows Close, behind the Old Barn, between 2pm and 4.30pm. There will be a barbecue, including halal food, with music and children's activities

such as face painting.

A questionnaire about the future of the Old Barn will be circulated and people can sign up to support the action group, which can be contacted on 07870 647284 or endofstrife@hotmail.co.uk. A Facebook page has also been set up.

Background events

THE ARCHER reported in January that since a group of new trustees took over the Old Barn Youth and Community Association (OBYCA) last July, the Monday Youth Club had been forced to move out because of health and safety concerns. The After School Club has also been discontinued. Family support charity Home-Start still has offices at the Old Barn but its Young Parents' Group now meets across the road at the Newstead Centre.

Trustees' plans unclear

The action group claims that Reverend Geoffrey Muhoro, Director of OBYCA, has not attempted to either engage with or provide services for the local community.

THE ARCHER asked Reverend Muhoro to provide us with an update on plans the trustees have made for the Old Barn. He declined to comment, saying this was because our article in January "did not say what I told you to say."

The OBYCA leases the building from Barnet Council. A council spokesperson said that OBYCA was invited to apply for funding a year ago, but no application had been received. They added that, as a separate issue, they were reviewing the position in respect of the lease and the building.



Kinks at the Clissold

Last month we reported that Kinks songwriter Ray Davies and drummer Mick Avory had visited the newly reopened Kinks Room at The Clissold Arms in Fortis Green.

Here's a photo we didn't have room for. George Karageorgis, owner of The Clissold Arms, celebrates the opening with Ray, centre, and Mick.

Photo by Angela Anderson.



The Busy Bees are Carmel Bates, Katherine Deng, Lillian Murphy and Shirley Caldeira. Photo by Mark Healey

Busy bees

By Daphne Chamberlain

Can't knit? Think you could never crochet? Couldn't possibly make your own clothes?

Well, go along to the Bees' Knees and you might find you can. This creative group meet every Friday, apart from Christmas and Easter, at the Green Man Centre. The busy bees I met last month have always loved their handi-crafts, but quite a few other members couldn't manage a stitch when they started.

Hats and scarves are a good way to start, and then it's just confidence and practice. As Carmel pointed out: "After all, there are only two knitting stitches to learn". Experienced crafts people like Lillian and Shirley can look at snoods and dresses in magazines or shops, and adapt them in their own colours and materials for a fraction of the price.

Katherine, who is skilled in embroidery and crochet, sees the group as a great place to socialise. It was her idea to set it up in 2009. Since then, as well as creating for themselves and their families and friends,

they have produced many items to send to Africa, and have held sales in the centre.

"Knitting is a wonderful stress-reliever," they all told me. What about pessimistic folk who are afraid they would spend hours on something that didn't fit when it was finished? "That wouldn't happen here," they said.

Crafty cooks

They concentrate on a different craft each week, with knitting alternating with crochet, sewing and cookery. On cookery days, the usual tea and coffee give way to sharing the meal they have prepared. Carmel obviously spoke for all her fellow bees when she described the Moroccan meals as "wonderful".

People of all ages are welcome, including children. Bees' Knees meet at the Green Man Centre, at the top of Strawberry Vale, on Fridays, 1-3 pm. It's free, and everyone is welcome.

40 years on for Finchley Society

By Daphne Chamberlain

February marked 40 years since a group of strangers met in a former YMCA building in N12. That group became The Finchley Society, and among their anniversary guests at Avenue House on 12 February were the Deputy Mayor Cllr Lisa Rutter and local MPs Mike Freer and Theresa Villiers.

Recalling his days as Leader of Barnet Council, Mike Freer said the Society was never afraid to poke dignitaries in the chest and say, "You've got it wrong". Cllr Rutter described the Society as "the eyes and ears and voice of the public", while Theresa Villiers said their work was "a shining example of how much can be achieved when people have the energy and enthusiasm to get involved in their local community".

She also mentioned how nice it was to hear the name of Mike Freer's predecessor, the late Rudi Vis, in the Society's new Roll of Honour.

Chairman David Smith related how that original group of strangers, inspired by Spike Milligan, led by Finchley's GLC councillor Jean Scott, succeeded in saving Lodge Lane's historic cottages from demolition. What they and the current 400 members of the Society have in common, he said, is a love of the essential, unique character of Finchley and Friern Barnet.

Constant involvement

Displays in Avenue House showed what this concern

means in practice. It means constructive improvement as well as conservation. The Finchley Society is building up a comprehensive local history archive, but it also keeps a constant eye on planning, transport, and the environment. While some members liaise with Councils and official forums, others may be clearing rubbish from Dollis Brook.

Major Paddy O'Brien, the Society's Patron, praised the whole team "root and branch", and Budgens of East Finchley supplied champagne and a celebration cake.

Discover more about The Finchley Society on their user-friendly website, www.finchleysociety.org.uk, or contact Membership Secretary Stephen Yeo on 020 8445 9827.

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