



Letters to the Editor

A message from the Borough Commander

Dear Editor,

To the residents, business people and their employees in Barnet I want to say thank you. Without your overwhelming support, the police efforts in Barnet and London would not have been possible. It has been a deeply humbling experience that so many of you have come out to say thank you and to talk directly to police officers and community support officers patrolling your streets to keep you safe.

When the worst violence to hit the UK since the 1980s erupted on our streets, my officers and staff said goodbye to their families, cancelled all leave and came to work. They were ready to put their lives on the line and protect the community they love. Thanks to incredibly robust policing in the first 48 hours of the violence, Barnet was spared the worst.

But I am acutely aware that some of our residents and businesses did suffer and many people were left in fear that Barnet would be next. I will always be sorry for that and assure you that on my watch, your police will do everything we can to prevent it from happening.

Never has there been a more important time to examine the relationship between the public and the police. At a time when we have been under the greatest threat we have felt that the vast majority of decent people have stood shoulder to shoulder with us and we salute you for it.

As I toured the Borough, I was regaled with stories from my officers and staff about the kindness and concern shown by members of the public, young and old and of every colour and religion. It is a real demonstration of the strength of this Borough.

Please remember that you owe us nothing. This is our job and we are proud to do it on your behalf. But as we return to normality we should never forget that we were in this together, and I would be forever grateful if you continued to extend the hand of friendship you have offered my people long into the future.

In turn we must do the same, talking to you at every opportunity, listening to what you have to say, and making sure you feel safe. Once again, thank you.

Yours faithfully,

Neil Basu

Detective Chief Superintendent, Barnet Borough Commander

Clean-up spirit

Dear Editor,

With high youth unemployment, public services and community groups suffering cuts and reductions in education funding, young people are worried about their future and to some extent angry. Whilst these issues in no way justify the recent riots it is vital that we understand these contributing factors and address them as quickly as possible.

We must also remember that the vast majority of young Londoners do not commit crime and aren't antisocial. In the same week of the riots 21-year-old Chantal Hamilton from Barnet received an award in the annual Metropolitan Police awards ceremony for helping to stop some

one committing suicide. There are many more like her.

Community Barnet is heartened to see local people so involved in cleaning up after the riots. It shows that contrary to popular opinion, people care deeply about their communities and want to get involved in supporting their neighbourhoods.

We represent over 800 active community groups and charities in Barnet. They offer a huge range of support, self-help and neighbourhood-based services and activities for everyone. Our Volunteer Centre helps thousands of people to volunteer each year.

We encourage your readers to build on the clean-up community spirit and contact us on 020 8364 8400 to find hundreds of ways they could continue to make a difference. Giving more support to community groups can help make sure everyone feels included.

Yours faithfully,
Shereen Williams,
CommUNITY Barnet.

Wartime suppers in the Odeon

Last month we asked for memories of the Muswell Hill Odeon, 75 years old this month. Here, the cinema's use as a canteen is remembered.

Dear Editor,

As a lifelong resident of Muswell Hill except for two and a half years in the RAF I've seen much. I recall that just before joining up I volunteered, in a team, to cook evening meals (sausage and mash, etc.) in a makeshift kitchen in the Odeon. This was for folks after their work in town or before going out to do duty as air raid wardens.

We were in our late teens so we thought of it not only as a service and 'doing our bit' but also as great fun. Little did I know what the future held. We were young then!

Yours faithfully,
Dorothy Quill,
Fortis Green, 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.

Dumped bikes are eyesores

Dear Editor

You notice a lot of rats and foxes on our city streets these days, but have you noticed another infestation? It now seems that whatever is sticking out of the ground, there is a cycle attached to it. Lamp posts, trees, fencing and traffic lights are not safe, and I'm getting worried that if I stand still long enough someone will padlock a cycle to my leg.

When you see a cycle padlocked to something, it's like seeing a trapped animal. Some are lucky to have their owners return to take them home, but others are left to die where they are attached.

We have to watch as these bikes start to decompose; is it people or buzzards who peck away at the carcasses leaving just the bones? They have become eyesores, with no one wanting or able to remove them. What do visitors to our city think? But then, cycles sort of fit in with all the other rubbish.

As with pets, cycles should be added to the poster campaign: A bike is for life, not just for Christmas. Too many cyclists think it's okay to disregard any rules, and with arrogance don't care about dumping their bikes on our streets.

Yours faithfully,
Dennis Gimes,
High Road, N2.

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September show at Chorak

By Sheila Armstrong

Having had a successful year on The Institute's Foundation Course, local artist Sharron McLeod will be exhibiting a new selection of her prints and paintings at Chorak in the High Road in September.

Returning from New Zealand some years ago, she and her family now live in N2. Though coming from a banking background Sharron has never entirely stopped drawing since O-level art at school. Nature is her inspiration and she uses sketches and photos to inform her paintings and prints. Durer and Modigliani are her heroes.

Her paintings are evocative of the colours and landscapes of Majorca where she has holidayed; her etchings of sea life, dogs and other animals capture their spirit.



Sharron McLeod's work will be on show at Chorak.

A passion for writing

By Ann Bronkhorst

Time: two afternoons in early August. Place: the upstairs room at East Finchley Library. Eight teenagers are writing, silently absorbed.

That's not the whole picture, though. There's also laughter and quick thinking during word games; a drama tutor helps one girl bring her ideas to vivid life; there's discussion about creating a 'bridge' in a song; and a shy young writer gets feedback on how to face an audience.

This was a workshop for the Barnet's got Writing Talent competition, held through the summer holidays in several Barnet libraries and leading to a final on 17 August at Chipping Barnet Library.

When I visited, poems and song-lyrics, raps, drama-scripts and stories were emerging from this quiet space with its supplies of paper and pens, a computer, a rhyming dictionary and stimulating adult tutors.

Inspiration and fun

Lead tutor was Michael Harris, aka Mikee Majestic, poet and rapper, who heads a company called Real Positive. "I've tried to make it fun and to inspire them to be creative," he said. His encouraging approach was paying dividends. Michael was generous about the young writers: "This group has given 110%....They have a passion for writing."

India Harwood, a Y8 student

from Mill Hill, was enthusiastic about learning new writing techniques and experimenting with rhymes and word games. "I'd be very happy if we were taught English like this at school," she said. Her poem had a low-key title, *Reading*, but explored disturbing ideas about books as a refuge. One lovely line was: "The pages fold away back into their warmth".

The sessions allowed Ellie Franklin, a Y9 student at Fortismere, to develop a complex, unusual story involving a couple who die but find themselves in separate afterlives. Ellie writes for pleasure at home but still enjoyed the workshop. She was planning to read some of her story aloud at the final and possibly record the whole of it.

All the young people seemed to have grown in confidence. For some competitors the workshop process may prove to have been more valuable and memorable than the final contest.

For information about Barnet's Positive Activities Programme for young people, email payp@barnet.gov.uk and for information about Real Positive contact info@realpositive.co.uk.

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