



Fashions for all body types

By Daphne Chamberlain

Ann Olivier has had MS for 20 years, and now uses a wheelchair. She is an architect who became a dress designer when, while getting ready for an important occasion, she realised she had nothing suitable to wear. Fellow wheelchair user Sippy Azizollah was delighted to meet her, saying, "What really bugs me is that designs for disabled people are often made by the able-bodied, who don't realise the pitfalls we meet."

At her home in Hunt- ingdon Road, Ann talked us through some of those pitfalls: skirts riding up and gathering over the lap, buttons and zips too difficult to use, garments revealing any prosthetic plumbing or other medical neces- sities, and clothes that simply can't be taken on or off if their wearer can't stand. Her designs are cut away at the seat or vented at the back, and are fas- tened by magnets, which go safely in the washing machine. Skirts are below knee-level, and trousers have graduated hems, which actually give a more even appearance when sitting.



For convenience, and also to disguise loss of body tone, she is fond of tunics, but all her designs have interest in the upper torso area, because that's where people's eyes focus. When we met her, she was wearing a very elegant jacket with an asymmetric neckline.

Meeting the challenge

Of course, not all disabled people use wheelchairs, and mag- netic fastenings are a godsend for arthritic or immobile hands. Ann also markets jewellery in this range, and hopes that other designers will work with her on this.



Ann Olivier shows Sippy a hooded coat.

Clothes she offers now are for formal or luxury wear, made to order in London. How- ever, her collection was only launched in April this year, and Ann hopes to expand it. She has already had interest from Florida and Singapore, and feels that now is the time to meet the clothes challenge.

She told us, "I have a dream that every fashion show will have at least one design for disabled people". Find out more at www.xenicollection.com.

Do you have a story for us?

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Letters to the Editor

Neighbourly spirit in Church Lane

Dear Editor,

I read your article (Clash over changes to Victorian house) in your November issue with dismay. I note that a similar article appeared in The Press a few weeks back. The family concerned have simply expanded their living space to accommodate a young growing family and have abided by all plan- ning laws. This is something that very many of your readers have done or may plan to do.

It must have been uncom- fortable and embarrassing for the family to be identified in the local paper and I applauded them for their measured response. THE ARCHER should think very carefully before allowing itself to be used as a platform by aggrieved neighbours running a public campaign against one household. I do not think that is what THE ARCHER should be for. As Christmas approaches, I hope some of its spirit rubs off on the residents of Church Lane and that the parties concerned reflect on their personal relationships with the family identified.

Yours faithfully,
Helen Drake,
Creighton Avenue, N2.

Dear correspondents...

THE ARCHER is unable to print anonymous letters. Please include your name and postal address when submitting letters. We will gladly consider withholding addresses if requested. Thanks.

Send your correspond- ence to: "Letters Page", The Archer, PO Box 3699, London N2 2DE 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.

Any reader who feels strongly about any matter is invited to use this "Soapbox" column.



Please note that opinions expressed are those of the writer alone.

Lest we forget

By Bruce Boyd

Those of you who know the small collection of streets on the western side of East Finchley just off East End Road will know the sad sight of the old Royal British Legion building in Manor Park Road.

Manor Park Hall closed last January and was sold at public auction in September. It is now the subject of a planning proposal (Ref: F/03645/12) for demolition and the building of two new houses on the site. All well and good for new housing.

However, what most of you won't know is that behind the doors is a small reminder of the sacrifice of local men in the carnage of the First World War which risks being lost forever. From 1914-18, 22 men of the Manor Park Presbyterian Mission, which met at the hall, lost their lives in action; that's nearly half the congregation removed in four short years.

This must have shattered those left behind. One way to mourn and cope with their loss was to erect a marble plaque as a "Memorial to Heroes Who Fell in the Great War 1914-1918". This was placed just inside the main left entrance door so that "Their name shall remain for ever: Their glory shall not be blotted out".

The memorial hints at the personal tragedy involved. The photograph shows four surnames 'Green' listed, two in each of the Regiments of 4th & 7th Middlesex, perhaps members of one family.



So, when the Royal British Legion com- pleted the sale of the premises, did they find a suitable alterna- tive location for this memorial? The short answer is a resounding NO. I wrote to the Legion via their sale agents to point out the importance of the plaque but didn't receive a reply. The new owner of the site appears not to have been made aware of its importance.

Fortunately, local people and councillors have brought it to the attention of Barnet Council's planning committee and there are discussions about removing the plaque and relocat- ing it somewhere close by, possibly in the Finchley Memorial Hospital garden.

Do you have any views on this? Are you a descendant of any of those listed on the Memorial? The planning department may be able to consider any points raised, if sent to them quickly.

As for the British Legion, the words "We will remember them..." seem rather hollow in this case.

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MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A VERY HAPPY NEW YEAR!!!

OPENING TIMES DURING CHRISTMAS: WE CLOSE ON SATURDAY 22ND DECEMBER AT 5.30 PM AND REOPEN ON WEDNESDAY 2ND JANUARY AT 9.00 AM.