



### Letters to the Editor

#### Money-grubbing parking service

Dear Editor,

How many of your readers assume that Barnet will remind them about their parking permit renewal? We did, and in previous years we have received a reminder letter instructing us how and how much to pay.

This year we were reminded by finding a penalty fine notice attached to our car 14 days after the permit expired. When we phoned the Parking Team, they informed us that they could not guarantee that residents would be reminded. Is an email reminder really too much to ask of an organisation that expects residents to respond online or by mobile phone to parking issues? Alternatively, couldn't the parking attendant who regularly checks that permits are valid leave a note on the car on the expiry date instead of a penalty notice 14 days later? Some constructive service would be a pleasant change and might even alleviate the council's money-grubbing image.

Yours faithfully,  
Michele Benjamin,  
Hertford Rd, N2.

#### Where was my parking reminder?

Dear Editor,

I am writing to complain about the service I have received while renewing my CPZ permit. I am also seeking explanations for the Parking department's actions. The sequence of events is as follows.

On 5 May, I received a Penalty Charge Notice for not having a current parking permit. I had been on holiday in April. When I returned I opened all my letters but there was not a renewal form among them. I assumed that the Post Office had failed to deliver the form and therefore paid the fine online on Sunday 6 May.

On 8 May I phoned the CPZ Permit section and paid the yearly subscription of £100. When I enquired why I hadn't received a renewal form, I was told that they had not been sent out in April due to a computer glitch with regard to wrong post codes.

On 15 May another penalty notice was put on my car. I explained to the warden that I had purchased the permit but it had not arrived. He said he had no record of it and issued the ticket. I requested, in the circumstances, that both Penalty Charge Notices were cancelled

and that the £30 fine I paid was returned.

I have the following questions which I think should be answered: Why weren't permit renewal application forms sent out in April? May I remind you that when CPZs were introduced the Council gave an undertaking that charges would be levied at a rate to only cover administration costs. As I am paying £100 for the privilege of parking outside my own house, it should not be beyond the budget or wit of the Council to send me the application form.

How many days in April was the IT system not working properly? Surely any competent IT department would have it fixed in a couple of days if not hours. It was a very convenient time for the IT system to break down in April with permit renewals due in May. How much extra revenue has been raised in Zone M for the first two weeks of May compared to the same two weeks in 2009, 2010 and 2011 and what are the percentage increases?

Yours faithfully,  
Jim McAdam,  
Summerlee Avenue, N2.

#### Hidden treasure

Dear Editor,

If you drive down Sedgemere Road off East End Road and turn right or if you walk down Church Lane and turn left, you will find a tiny shop owned by John who over the years has been doing tiny jobs for me.

Such as? Well, there was a tear in my sheepskin glove by the thumb; he put on a patch for me. My bag strap was so long; he shortened it for me. I broke the zip in a bag; he sewed in another one for me. One pair of shoes had heels I wanted higher; he made them higher for me.

John repairs soles and heels. He sells all sorts of things too. He is a lovely man. If only he had an apprentice because his skills are invaluable. He is usually only open in the afternoon until about 7 but if you go in and ask for his phone number, you can phone before you come. He is a one-off.

Perhaps other readers can reveal their hidden treasures.

Yours faithfully,  
Lorna Roberts,  
East End Road, N2.



## From Land Girls to Van Girls

By Cathy Young

**When Emma Lanman was a young girl at Henrietta Barnett School, her headteacher drummed into her that she should always be the best she could be and disregard the limitations others might impose on the careers of women.**

So it is no surprise that last year, when Emma perceived a gap in the market for an all-female moving business, she set up her own company called Van Girls. "As soon as you mention a van service, people know someone who needs one and they all seem to like the fact that it is a woman and van service – men and women both like the idea," Emma explained.

Emma feels her all-female staff provide a friendly, reliable service and that many people feel more comfortable with allowing women into their homes.

So, from moving a set of shelves for a cousin, the business progressed to transporting merchandise for a lingerie company to a trade fair in Birmingham, theatre sets from Hackney and running a regular pick-up service from IKEA. In one run, they helped three generations of the same family swap around pieces of furniture all in the space of a day.

While many people assume they need the stereotypical "Man with a Van" when looking for someone to shift heavy furniture, Emma, like the Garden Girls in our March issue, is inspired by the Land Girls in the Second World War who are featured on her website: [www.vangirls.co.uk](http://www.vangirls.co.uk)

"We're pretty strong. I like to remind people of all the jobs women took on during the war when men weren't around. There are plenty of people who would rather get a man and a van but we are offering an alternative."

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### Methodists' jubilee walk

By Andrea Whittaker  
Members of East Finchley Methodist Church figured prominently in a 20-mile walk held over two days in May and June as part of celebrations to mark the jubilee and the Olympic Games.

The event linked all ten churches in the Barnet & Queensbury Methodist Circuit. The first day covered the churches in the East of the Borough, from Wesley Hall at Barnet to East Finchley. The second day began at Golders Green and ended at Queensbury.

Over 100 people took part either as participants or in providing support and encouragement, and refreshments, at each church. Participants could travel by any method of their choice and for as many sections as they could manage. Most walked, but a few cycled, drove by car or used public transport for part of the way. Much enjoyed by everyone involved, this may well become an annual event.



By Adam Justice-Mills

**After the wettest April and the coldest June, here's hoping July onwards will be 'normal' again (whatever that is). We can't leave the windows open for security reasons, so how to keep cool? Seems like the right time to think about heating and power, particularly as fuel prices rise and the use of tumble dryers and air conditioners increases.**

Since April this year, you can install solar heating and electricity generation within the 'permitted developments' on your home, so most won't require planning permission. It's not for everyone; check with an installer registered with the Solar Trades Organisation. The Muswell Hill Sustainability Group has experience of many local contacts too.

Of course, you need to ensure your home is energy-efficient first (which will save you money anyway). The Energy Saving Trust website can guide you on that and also has a "how much will I save using solar" calculator, which takes your roof position and pitch into account.

#### Best-use tips

To get the most out of solar hot water, you might have to change some habits, using more of your hot water in the evening, after the sun has had time to heat it up. To get the most out of solar electricity generation, use as much as you can of the electricity your system generates, rather than exporting it back to the grid. Use your main electrical appliances (washing machine, dishwasher, tumble dryer) during the day, when electricity from the sun is free. You can even use it to heat a hot water tank if you don't have solar hot water, or to help run air conditioning. Lots to think about, but where's the hurry? Though the 'feed-in tariff' (the government incentive) is dropping, the price of solar kit has halved since 2005 and is set to halve again in the next few years. Meanwhile, fuel prices just go on rising.