



Joe and Patricia perk up the coffee shop scene

A blackboard menu hanging on the wall of the new Campbell & Syme coffee shop in Fortis Green is like a mini tour of the world's best coffee-producing regions. Brazil, Rwanda and Ethiopia are among the countries that might feature, depending on the season and the time of the harvest.

Joe Syme, owner and barista, has made coffee quality his top priority, trading directly with farmers in these countries through a merchant, rather than buying homogenised blends in bulk through a chain of middle men.

"The farmers get a much fairer price for their beans that way and I know I'm always buying speciality-grade coffee," says Joe. "It's quality that motivates me and that's something that tends to go hand in hand with good ethics."

Sounds good, but aren't there plenty of cafés in East Finchley already? "A few people have said that to me," smiles Joe. "But I think the location I've got here is a good spot for a meeting place and I wanted to offer the neighbour-



Patricia and Joe Syme are behind the counter at the new coffee shop.

hood something that's just a bit different."

Of course, coffee is not the only refreshment on offer. Teas, soups, baguettes and home-made cakes baked by Joe's mum Patricia complete the menu, and there are plans to offer salads in the warmer months.

Joe's been in the catering business for 10 years and Patricia brings more than 30 years of catering experience to the new venture. Campbell & Syme is open Tuesday to Friday from 9am to 5pm, and Saturday and Sunday from 10am to 5pm. Find out more at www.campbellandsyme.co.uk

Rare sightings for bird lovers

By Nick Young
January and February have passed with some interesting bird sightings in East Finchley. Robins, wrens, chaffinches, goldfinches and three species of tit (blue, great and long-tailed) have all been seen in parks and gardens, while the waterlogged field in Cherry Tree Wood has attracted a few black-headed gulls.

More unusually, a female grey wagtail has been sighted near the High Road. This bird has a slate-grey back and a yellow-under-tail, and is almost constantly on the move. Although more usually associated with rivers, it is not unknown for them to visit other habitats, including urban areas, during the winter.

Another rare sighting has been a goldcrest in Cherry Tree Wood. This tiny bird is dull green in colour and has a distinctive patch on its head (yellow for females, orange for males). It's a resident bird, but in winter its numbers are swelled by migrants from Scandinavia and Eastern Europe.

Winter visitors have included fieldfares, redwings and waxwings. The first two are members of the thrush family. Fieldfares have grey heads and chestnut backs and are particularly fond of apples. Redwings are smaller (about the size of a song thrush) and can be identified by their red flanks and a distinctive white stripe above the eye.

The waxwing is a much rarer sighting. Slightly smaller than a starling, it is a reddish-brown bird with a prominent crest, a small black mask round its eye and a yellow-tipped tail. These species are usually seen in flocks and are more commonly associated with the countryside, but during harsh winters they do move to towns and suburbs in search of food.

Calling all brass players

Did you fancy joining in the brass band playing at the East Finchley Christmas Festival? Now's your opportunity. The same group of local brass players are starting a brand new band based at Fortismere School. Enthusiastic learners and more experienced players are all welcome. From secondary school age to retirement age, the only requirement is grade 1 standard on a brass instrument.

Starting on 2 March, the band will run on Saturdays from 10am to noon at Fortismere Music Centre (entrance through school gates on Tetherdown). The fee will be £5 per session (£50 for a ten-week term), but there is no charge for school-aged students. Some instruments will be available for hire, so if you're a trumpeter who's always hankered for a blast on the tuba, now's your chance!

A diverse repertoire will include film music: James Bond

and Pirates of the Caribbean; pop music: Baggy Trousers (Madness) and Bohemian Rhapsody, as well as more traditional classical and brass band music.

The new band, to be called Fortismere Community Brass Band, will have at least three concerts a year. Paul Hooper, a teacher and professional musician of some 15 years, will conduct the band. For more details, e-mail: FMCInfo@fortismere.org.uk or call Craig on 07588 868600.



The brass players were a big hit at the Christmas Festival in December. Photo by John Lawrence

Keep fit on the Tube

By Daphne Chamberlain
In January 1935, Pennyfare, the London Underground staff magazine, reported a new keep-fit idea. Some people were considering running up the stairs at Hampstead and Belsize Park stations. Please don't try this. At 58.5 metres (192 feet) below street level, Hampstead is the deepest station on the Underground.

Our own branch of the Northern Line has the highest point: Dollis Brook viaduct, on the Mill Hill branch, is 18 metres (59 feet) above the ground. Keeping it local, there are plaques commemorating Harry Beck, designer of the Tube map, outside his former home in Courthouse Road, North Finchley, and at Finchley Central station.

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KALASHNIKOV KULTUR

By Ricky Savage, the voice of social irresponsibility

Lunch on the hoof

In the weird and wild world of modern cuisine nothing causes as much fear as discovering that there is something 'wrong' with your food. As supermarkets clear the shelves and consumers reel at the shocking news that Dobbin the knackered nag has replaced Daisy the cow in frozen lasagne, panic takes over. But I can't understand what the problem is.

Let's get real; horsemeat is sweet, tender and low in fat. In Sweden, it's salted and stuck in sandwiches, the Dutch serve it smoked and Ukrainians shove it in sausages. Horse is popular in Italy where it turns up in stews, salami and pasta sauces and in Belgium they sell it as steak tartar. And that's before we get round to the French.

The French will eat most things if it's cooked with garlic and shallots and served in a white wine sauce, and horse is no different. They have had specialist horse butchers since 1866 where you can get the finest nag and, you'll have to trust me on this, horse steak and chips is a pretty good meal. Naturally, when the French went to Canada they took their cooking with them and horse is still popular in Quebec. Go over the border to the USA and horse is banned for all the wrong and sentimental reasons.

Naturally, us pet-loving Brits get upset at the idea of fluffy bunny rabbits ending up as stew, so the thought of the entire pony club ending in a bolognaise sauce is enough to cause complete social meltdown. Funny thing is, we never used to be like that. Horse and donkey were popular right up until the 1930s and Yorkshire folk had a particular liking for 'Last horse in the Grand National pie'.

So what's the problem? There are plenty of other less appetising things they could shove in your burgers and, in some countries they sure as hell do. We all know about the world of Korean cuisine with its life-affirming dog stew. Most of us know that the average Peruvian sees guinea pigs as a tasty roast, not a family pet. And when things get tough and food gets scarce people will eat anything, as long as it's nicely prepared. And that includes most family pets. The Swiss have a liking for eating cats, except they call it roof rabbit, and the Budgens in Crouch End will sell you free range squirrel. As they say, when in doubt eat it, although even I'm not too sure about foptail soup.