



Your chance to get involved with Big Local

The £1 million Big Local initiative which aims to improve life for residents on the Grange Estate and surrounding roads in a 'forgotten' part of East Finchley has got off to a good start.

Local people and organisers held a meeting in mid-April in Church Lane to work out how to generate ideas from members of the community for the improvements they'd like to see.

Important steps will be to engage schools and young people, talk to existing community groups and consult with local businesses.

Other ideas include simply knocking on people's doors and setting up a website where people can post their thoughts.

As reported in *THE ARCHER* in January, money for the Big Local project is coming from the Big Lottery Fund, and a successful sister project is already under way in south London.

The Grange Estate and

neighbouring roads were identified as being a part of the capital which had been forgotten in recent years and which could benefit from new community facilities or safety and security measures.

Project co-ordinator Paul Bragman said that at this early stage it was all about collecting ideas and agreeing how East Finchley's project will work.

The next Big Local meeting takes place at Boyden's Pantry, Church Lane, on Thursday 9 May at 6.30pm and everyone is welcome. Don't be shy if you have an opinion and would like to get involved. If you miss the meeting you can contact Paul directly on paul@communitytyregen.net or 020 8442 2379.

Malta honour for fundraiser Dennis

By Diana Cormack

An ancient and distinguished honour has been awarded to Dennis Gimes of East Finchley High Road in recognition of his services to charity. At a ceremony held in February in Valletta, Malta, Dennis was made a Knight of the Order of Saint John.

Readers may recognise his name from last year's *ARCHER* (April 2012) when Dennis was busy raising funds for the upkeep of the long-awaited RAF Bomber Command Memorial, which was unveiled by the Queen at the end of June.

Dennis hit on the novel idea of raising public awareness by getting well known people from all over the world to have their photo taken with Roger, a teddy bear dressed in a Bomber Command pilot's outfit. He persuaded more than 50 celebrities to pose with the bear and believes that this has helped to bring in well over £10,000 for the cause.



aims to help past or serving members of the armed forces and their families suffering from financial hardship and physical or mental disabilities (visit www.soldieringon.org)

Dennis is a former soldier himself with more than 30 years service in the army. He now works as a security consultant but somehow finds the time to put in an amazing amount of work for worthy causes.

Charity dynamo

As well as working hard for this, Dennis is involved in several other charities. He is a director of The Heritage Foundation, is active in the Variety Club of Great Britain and sits on the committee of the breast cancer charity A Splash of Pink. His latest charitable role is that of a trustee for the Soldiering On Through Life Trust, which

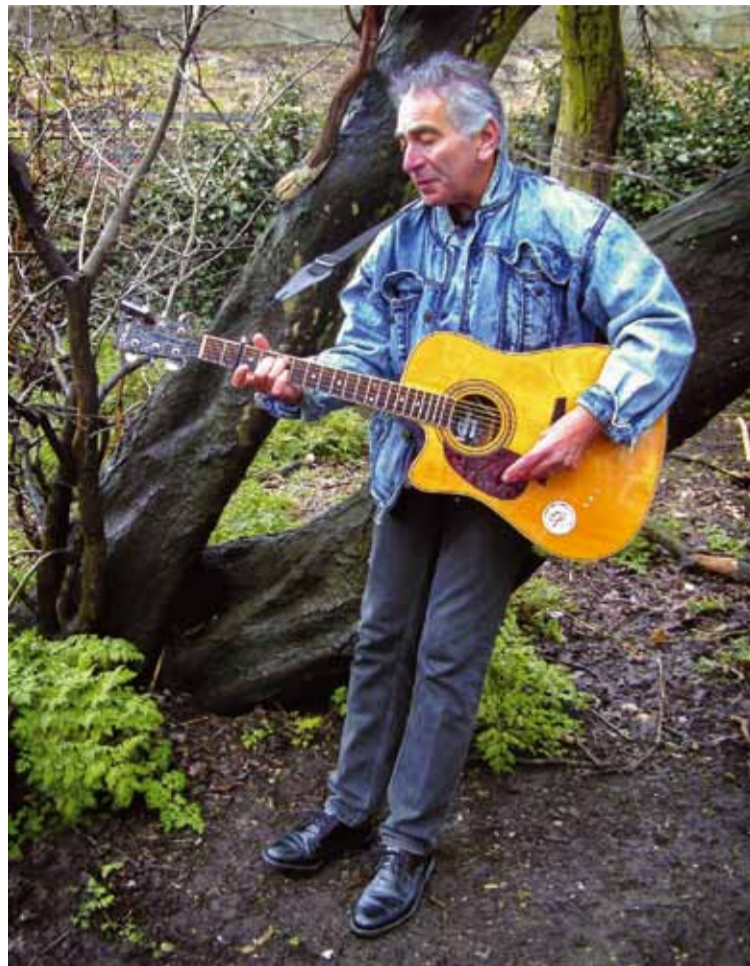
YouTube hit for local music maker

By Diana Cormack

Four years ago local resident Derek Harris lost his mother to the throat cancer through which he had been nursing her. Seeking solace in the aftermath of this sorrowful event, Derek bought a guitar and gradually began making up songs to help himself cope. Sometimes he would play and sing outdoors in parks and open spaces.

"I like to share my music with others," Derek told *THE ARCHER*. "People began to compliment me and ask if there was a CD available." Then someone asked if they could film him and suddenly Derek was on YouTube with well over 1,000 hits

This self-taught musician doesn't own a computer and is astounded that so many others are able to have access to his music. Derek says he believes his songs are different because they are simple and come straight from the heart. Now he is thinking of performing at charity events and would like to take to the stage at the East Finchley Community Festival.



Troubador - Derek Harris in Cherry Tree Wood. Photo by Diana Cormack

Find Derek on YouTube at www.youtube.com/watch?v=simKiebdkkq

Suite to boost computer skills

By Rob Robertson

The ICT suite at the Green Man Community Centre in Strawberry Vale is now open for business with eight computers, a printer and a scanner.

Peabody, which is one of the oldest and largest housing associations in London and which owns the community centre, is keen for Strawberry

Vale residents and those living in the wider community to have the opportunity to use and improve their IT skills.

There is normally open access to the suite from 9am to 12.30pm and from 1.30pm to 5pm Monday to Friday. From 2pm to 4pm on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, the suite hosts an online computer class called

Learn My Way. Volunteers are available to coach learners towards a certificate of proficiency.

Local resident Gary Connelly says: "Being computer literate is so important in the modern world so why not visit the centre's ICT suite and improve your existing skills and learn some new ones? You'll find a very warm welcome and it's totally free."

For further information about using the ICT suite or becoming a volunteer, contact Patrick O'Brien at the centre in the first instance on 020 8883 4916 or patrick.o'brien@peabody.org.uk.



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