



Rene Bell with the Reverend Michael Giles. Photo Robert Alderman

Happy birthday, Irene, on your 100th

By Daphne Chamberlain

Last year, Mrs Irene (Rene) Bell asked us if she was our oldest East Finchley-born reader. Nobody has disputed this, and last month Rene gained another distinction by reaching her 100th year. The Sunday after her birthday, East Finchley Methodists celebrated this milestone in their morning service. It was a happy family occasion, with people of all ages congratulating Rene in the church where she has been a lifelong member.

"I was almost born there," she told me, "and when I was very young I used to walk all the way to the church from Ingram Road by myself." Her sister took a Sunday School class, and later on Rene became a Brownie. ("In those days all the churches had Brownies"). Later still she ran the Brownie

pack herself for many years.

Her fellow worshippers made birthday cakes, bought giant "100" balloons, and presented her with a big bouquet and an album of tributes and photos. Rene chose the hymns herself.

Unfortunately she missed the first bit of the service through a mix-up with her cab, but was greeted with cheers and applause when she arrived. Activities Manager Paul at The Meadows, where she lives now, wheeled her from Muswell Hill to the church. "It was a bit bumpy", she said. Picking out Rene's special qualities, the Reverend Michael Giles emphasised fun, and smiles were the order of the day.

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Residents can claim £2million in parking refunds

By John Lawrence

Our front page last month reported on the High Court victory of campaigners in East Finchley protesting against enormous increases in residential parking charges in 2011. The cost of a controlled parking zone permit had risen from £42 to £100 and the cost of visitor passes from £1 to £4.

Appeal fears quashed

There were worries that Barnet Council would waste more time and money by appealing against the court's ruling. Shortly afterwards, however, the leader of the council put those fears to rest by announcing that there would be no appeal and that residents could now apply for full refunds. It is believed this could cost the council around £2million.

David Attfield, of Summerlee Avenue, who spearheaded the legal challenge against the parking charges, said he hoped the money could be paid back without an impact on council services.

"The truth is that the council is the author of its misfortune and shunned every opportunity along the way to resolve this issue at considerably less inconvenience and cost to it," he said.



People's champion, David Attfield

Council leader's response

Here is the statement from Barnet Council leader Richard Cornelius: "After taking legal advice, we have decided not to appeal against the court's judgement that the charges for CPZ were increased without going through the proper process.

"I am sorry that this was done in the way that it was. The Court has ruled that the increase was wrongly implemented and so we will go back to the old charges. Any change to these will have to go through the proper process."

How to claim

To secure a refund, fill out a form on the council's website www.barnet.gov.uk, or email CPZParking-Refunds@barnet.gov.uk or write to Parking

Team, CPZ Parking Refunds, London Borough of Barnet, Building 4, North London Business Park, Oakleigh Road South, London N11 1NP.

The council says it aims to complete the refund process by the end of September.

New rescue service for children takes to the air

By Diana Cormack

The Children's Air Ambulance is a new service which aims to provide vital neonatal and paediatric hospital transfers for critically ill children.

It is not meant for the victims of accidents, an area which is already covered by the Air Ambulance Service, but for the 5,800 or so youngsters per year who need to be moved to a more specialised hospital. Instead of a long and arduous road journey, they can be transferred quickly in a specially equipped helicopter with an on-board team of clinicians. This can

mean reaching life-saving care sooner, giving a better chance of survival and recovery.

The service is free and relies totally on voluntary contributions. To help raise funds, its first charity shop opened in Crouch End earlier this year and in May another shop

opened at 58-60 Fortis Green Road. This boutique-style shop needs donations and volunteers, so if you are interested in becoming involved, pop in and see them.

For more information visit www.thechildrensairambulance.org.uk



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