



Nursery put children 'at potential risk of harm', says Ofsted

By Janet Maitland

Ofsted has cancelled its registration of the Mini Me's nursery based at the Old Barn community centre on Tarling Road for failing to provide safe childcare.

The nursery was first registered in December 2012 but complaints started a few weeks later. Ofsted made a number of inspection visits and suspended the nursery's registration when it found that the children were 'at potential risk of harm'.

The suspension was lifted in June 2013 after the nursery made some changes. Nevertheless, Ofsted continued to inspect the nursery and ultimately decided to cancel the registration last September in the light of issues relating to staff recruitment and management stability.

Nursery appeal ongoing

Although it has cancelled the registration, Ofsted still inspects the Mini Me's nursery on a regular basis and has identified further breaches. These include problems with supervision and attendance registers, 'failure to identify and minimise risks' and 'failure to meet the needs of children with special educational needs'.

The nursery objected to the cancellation. When Ofsted dismissed their objection the nursery appealed to an independent tribunal. The first hearing took place in May and was adjourned to a later date.

Relationship unclear

Until the current trustees took over the Old Barn in 2010,

the community centre had been running pioneering services for children and young people for over 25 years. These services were discontinued under the new management.

A spokesperson from the council, which owns the building, said that Mini Me's nursery was an independent provider that hired the Old Barn and was "subject to the governance of the Old Barn Youth and Community Association".

The Charity Commission said that "it appears that the nursery is private, but the trustees have not yet clearly explained the precise nature of the relationship between the nursery and the Old Barn".

The manager of the nursery declined to comment and asked for her name not to be used.

Appointments invalid

Local campaigners have been trying ever since the takeover to restore the centre to local people, working alongside Barnet Council, Community Barnet, the Charity Commission and MP Mike Freer. The Charity Commission announced in April that in their view the trustees were not validly appointed in the first place. The commission is now trying to establish a proper membership so that elections to replace the trustees can be organised.



Old and new: Mick with two of his 1930s Ford V8's. Photos by John Lawrence



Before: Inside the cab of one of Mick's Fords.



After: How it will look after five years of hard work.

American classics keep on trucking 80 years later

By John Lawrence

Unroadworthy relics from the mean streets of 1930s America are finding a new lease of life at the back of a garage in King Street.

H&B Motors owner Mick Harle lavishes his spare time and cash on restoring original Ford V8 trucks that once might have motored round New York or Chicago, or trundled over farmland in the mid-West.

Mick finds the trucks for sale through his contacts and ships them to East Finchley for a restoration process that can take up to five years and cost £30,000.

Part of the challenge is finding parts. The internet helps, of course, and there are plenty of sellers in the States where the hot rod scene is alive and well. Mick also fashions bodywork

himself and uses family connections to make the immaculate leather seats.

"Custom cars were huge when I was young," says Mick. "I loved Ford Capris and Escorts. I watched *American Graffiti* and wanted to be in that world."

Mick is chairman of the National Street Rod Association, which has 1,500 members. He takes his lovingly restored vehicles to national meetings and often comes away with the Best in Show trophy.

"Hot rodding started with American soldiers coming back from the war in the 1940s with

nothing much to do so they did up cheap cars from the 1930s and raced them," he says. "It's still a big scene in the UK. When we're driving to and from meetings we get a lot of honks from other drivers, and people lean out of their car windows to take photos."

Give way to low-flying herons

By Ruth Brown

One weekend in May, the Sunday morning quiet in Park Hall Road was suddenly broken at 8am by lots of cawing and commotion outside my house.

I got to the window just in time to see a large heron fly by with its long neck extended and enormous wings beating. It was racing up the hill towards Fortis Green, so low that it was level with the parked cars.

This wasn't the usual slow graceful wing-flap of a heron. It was panic! It was being pursued and mobbed by a flock of cawing crows.

When the heron got to the top of the hill, still flying low between the houses, it turned sharp left into Fortis Green, as if it was part of everyday traffic. It zoomed off towards the High Road crossroads at high speed.

I didn't see whether it obeyed the 'no right turn' there but I guess it could always have gone further up the High Road and used the pelican crossing.

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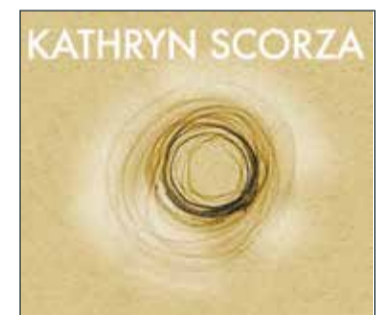
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