



Asghar Shaikh at Tops Dry Cleaners on Fortis Green. Photo Mike Coles

A clean record for 30 years

By Diana Cormack

In 1964 one of the first dry cleaners in East Finchley opened its doors at 3 Fortis Green. It was one of four started in the mid-1960s by the then proprietor of Coral Travel Agents on the High Road. Years later it was put up for sale and an advert in a trade magazine caught the eye of East End born and bred Asghar Shaikh. He had been working in Kensington for seven years learning the trade and thought this might be a good career move.

Tops Dry Cleaners opened on 22 July 1985. Since then Asghar has built up a steady and loyal clientele who appreciate the sort of service he provides. Over the years he has got to know some of them well and a display of signed photographs on the wall reveals that they include a number of media stars.

With dry cleaning, clothing repairs and alterations having been done there for over 50 years, Asghar recently made a move into more modern methods. In January he introduced Wet Cleaning, an eco-friendly process which is water-based and uses special liquids which are kind to even the most delicate materials. Asghar told *THE ARCHER* that no chemicals are involved, so everything comes

out smelling fresh and feeling soft and, after 30 years in the business, he should know what he's talking about.

Expert talks for busy mums

Sorting Self is a series of talks for mums at the Clissold Arms in Fortis Green, giving them time to meet up and learn new ideas.

The next talk is titled Build a Capsule Wardrobe, with Daisy from Wardrobe Workshop, on Monday 7 September at 8pm.

In October, guests can learn about moving from 'Procrastination to Motivation' with Tali Spink, on Monday 5 October. Then Sonia from London Craft Club will give ideas for a home-made Christmas on Monday 2

November.

Tickets are £8 in advance or £10 on the door. There's a £1 discount if you use the code [sortingself100](http://www.sortingself100) when purchasing. For bookings and information, visit www.sortingself.com or email sortingself@gmail.com. You can also find Sorting Self on Twitter and Facebook.

Exercise in the open air

Lyttleton Playing Fields in Hampstead Garden Suburb and Holickwood Park in Muswell Hill are to be the site of two new outdoor gyms this summer, offering free exercise equipment for anyone to use.

Work has already started and is set to finish this month. Along with a third new gym in Sunny Hill Park, Hendon, the total cost of the Barnet Council project is £48,000, and they bring the total number of outdoor gyms in the borough to 11.

Working from home is a gift

By Diana Cormack

As many of us know, having children makes a huge difference to our lives and sometimes the changes they bring about can send us in entirely new directions. Juliet Holroyd-Doveton, of Huntingdon Road, can bear witness to this.

She had worked in retail for more than 20 years, predominantly as a buyer for large corporate companies. But after having two children Juliet foresaw problems in going back to work for a large company, so she decided to take the opportunity to do something for herself.

Four years ago Juliet took the plunge and started her own business when she began designing and selling personalised gifts from home. 'Croftrose' specialises in wholesale decorative gifts which can be personalised. The lightweight decorations are all originally designed by Juliet and her friend, former East Finchley resident Emma Wass.



Juliet Rose with some of her decorations to personalise.

Photo Mike Coles

They are made of polyresin and each pack includes a special pen to allow clients to customise their chosen items. The Croftrose range of decorations includes Christmas, religious, family, new baby, teacher, medals and cups. A significant number of new products will be added every year.

As well as more resin items, Juliet told *THE ARCHER* that future plans include wooden decorations to personalise. It takes around six months or more for an idea to be developed into the finished product which is decorated by hand using high gloss paint. Visit <http://croftrose.com> to view them or call 020 3151 9180 for more information.

New faces for coffee and chat

East Finchley Altogether Better or EFAB's community-led Coffee and Chat sessions have been seeing new faces each week, with the group chatting informally and sharing local info between themselves.

On Monday 6 July the group enjoyed a presentation by Action Against Hearing Loss (formerly known as RNID), where they found out about where to seek help for hearing issues and learnt some basic sign language.

Casserole Club is due to

send a speaker in the next few weeks, and any other relevant speakers are also welcome to get in touch.

If you would like to join the EFAB Friends come along for a cuppa and a chat; please contact Lisa Smith on 07909 998453 or email us@efab.org.uk

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