



Letters

Library is a lifeline

Reading about the proposed plans for the downsizing or closure of East Finchley Library has left me angry and distressed I have multiple sclerosis and two years ago my mobility further suffered after a brain haemorrhage. East Finchley Library has provided a lifeline to me as one of the few FREE, warm, friendly and educational places where I have been able to take my daughter as a baby, a toddler and now as a nine-year-old.

Over the years, East Finchley Library has proved a joy and a sanctuary to me. We still use it weekly, as, indeed, do all the local schools. For students it provides computer access and a warm, quiet place to study. It is the hub of the vibrant local community. It is shocking to think that Barnet Council could even consider closing or downsizing this irreplaceable local resource.

**Yours faithfully,
Harriet Connides,
Manor Park Rd, N2.**

Happy years at the library

Dear Editor,
After 14 years as a Kumon instructor, I decided to leave my classes at the end of November 2014. It was a sad decision to make, but I felt the time was right.

I became an instructor in August 2000 with an enthusiasm for helping the children of my first home. I knew East Finchley, having lived in Hertford Road, and attended the Martin schools.

After searching for premises a friend told me to check East Finchley Library as they might be able to accommodate my classes. Well, I did, and that was the start of my relationship with the library.

In September 2000 I started running my classes in the hall upstairs. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has been involved in assisting me in the running of my classes and to thank the past and present managers and staff of the library.

I would like to thank all the students and parents who have passed through the "doors" of Kumon East Finchley. I would also like to thank *The Archer*, the first paper I advertised in.

**Yours faithfully,
Ritu Khanna,
Address supplied.**

Helping hand

Dear Editor,
As I lugged a large bag of *Archer* newspapers up Hertford Road to one of our deliverers on 5 December a teenage boy offered to help and took the bag to the house. We'd never met and I didn't ask his name, so whoever you are, thank you so much.

**Yours faithfully,
Ann Bronkhorst,
Address supplied.**

Rock on!

Dear Editor,
East Finchley rocks! What a terrific Winter Festival we had on the High Road in early December. A big thank you to all the organisers for their very hard work in arranging it all, including the weather! The stalls were excellent, providing something for everyone, and I'm sure the shops had a good day as well.

Community spirit can be hard to come by these days, when it feels as though the activities of our political masters are designed to crush it, but it's alive and well in East Finchley and was encapsulated, for me at the festival, by the latest copies of *THE ARCHER* being handed around, very much part of the glue of this community and all done on a voluntary basis.

**Yours faithfully,
Harriet Copperman
Diploma Avenue, N2.**

Send your correspondence to: "Letters Page" The Archer, PO Box 3699, London N2 2DE or e-mail the-archer@lineone.net.

Letters without verifiable contact addresses will not be printed. Contact details can be withheld on request at publication. We reserve the right to abridge letters for reasons of space.

Making a memory for children's hospice

Choirs from Coldfall and Rhodes Avenue Primary Schools joined singers from the Crouch End Festival Chorus and Camden Gospel Choir for the Noah's Ark Children's Hospice first Precious Moments Concert.

Held in St James' Church, Muswell Hill in late November and hosted by actress Caroline Quentin, it launched the charity's Make a Memory campaign, which aims to raise funds to support the charity's community services as well as to raise awareness of the work carried out by its staff, volunteers and supporters.

Well-known conductor and musical director of the concert David Temple said: "Noah's Ark is doing an amazing job of supporting and caring for many seriously ill children in our community and this is just one way of showing our appreciation and thanks for all their hard work."

The festive concert raised £9,000 on an evening which Caroline Quentin described as "magical and inspiring". For information about the Make a Memory campaign call 020 8449 8877 or email rsevern@noahsarkhospice.org.uk

A document of life in Bethlehem

By Ann Bronkhorst

Leila Sansour grew up in "legendary" Bethlehem where her father founded the university and hundreds attended his funeral, yet she left at 18 feeling that the town was too provincial, too limiting. Why did she return for just one year and why then stay on for over seven?

Her film *Open Bethlehem*, screened at the Phoenix on 10 December, addresses these questions; it's also the name of a remarkable campaign established against great odds.

Erosion and hope

Bethlehem, shown in grainy archive film and in modern colour, is a place where different faiths and sects have always co-existed, but now an eight-foot-high concrete wall zigzags through and around the city, dividing people, closing roads and destroying livelihoods. We're told little about Israel's case for building the wall but can see for ourselves the results: "the erosion of a city".

Leila, with a few allies, attempts to resurrect the dying tourist industry in Bethlehem; then she has an "epiphany" and creates a unique passport, available to supporters of an open Bethlehem. Gimmick? Symbol? This unusual idea has caught imaginations worldwide and, in her words, has been "a voice for Palestine".



Little town: Leila Sansour explores Bethlehem. Photo courtesy of openbethlehem.org

Low-key but powerful

The film is punctuated by Christmases as she stays on, remembers the past and campaigns for the future, sometimes with little hope. One repeated motif is the ancient family car, brought back to life again and again. As Karl Sabbagh pointed out, however, the film is not contrived but takes a straightforward, mostly linear and documentary approach. There is no stridency, no polemic.

Sabbagh was one of two writers of part-Palestinian heritage who joined Leila Sansour for a Q&A after the screening at the Phoenix. He noted the film's Christian and middle-class context: these are not terrorists. Leila regretted the emigration of such people, with their vision and stamina; with them, she felt, went important memories of Bethlehem's history.

She was calm and factual when dealing with audience questions, and clear-sighted about the difficulties of raising funds for a global campaign. As a start, her documentary will reach millions of viewers, she hopes. To see it, or to obtain a passport, visit www.openbethlehemcampaign.org and follow the links.

War graves

Readers who follow any of the First World War walks in Islington and St Pancras cemetery, described in last month's *Archer*, may want to know more about the young men whose graves are mapped and listed. Two websites are helpful: www.islington.gov.uk/thestreetstheyleftbehind and www.pinterest.com/islingtonww1

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