



VE Day Phoenix-style. Photo by Maurita Van Droogenbroeck

Phoenix turns back the clock

For one night only, the Phoenix Cinema spooled back in time to its previous incarnation as The Rex to help celebrate the 70th anniversary of VE Day at the start of May.

There were plenty of 'Sentimental Journeys' and everyone was 'In the Mood', many dressed in 1940s style, to enjoy a Victory in Europe street party and a special screening of the new movie A Royal Night Out, which follows the stories of Princesses Elizabeth and Margaret on VE Day in 1945.

Balloons, bubble guns, bottles and bones

By Daphne Chamberlain

Weather obeyed orders for last month's VE Day party in Stephens (Avenue) House. The sun shone for picnickers on the lawn, strollers round the grounds, visitors to the Bothy Garden and its new cafe, Maypole dancing children, and Sea Cadets going through their paces.

If you were among them, you may know the answer to this question: If you found a Johnnie Walker whisky bottle said to be from 1907, how would you know it was a fake? Answer: Before 1908, it would only be marked as Walker's Kilmarnock Whiskies.

That was useful knowledge for HADAS (Hendon and District Archaeological Society), who were among the local stall-holders on parade. HADAS have unearthed a hoard of whisky, gin and brandy bottles in the grounds of Stephens House.

Were their contents drunk by doctors, nurses, patients? Other finds include medicine bottles, pottery and animal bones. The bones suggest that some birds, sheep and cattle might have been kept in the grounds as food supplies, when Stephens House was the RAF Central Hospital from 1915 to 1925.



The Phoenix and Stephens House both marked VE Day.

Photo by Maurita Van Droogenbroeck

Last month it was a happy place of balloons and bubble guns, with the band playing "On the Sunny Side of the Street". Guns of a different kind gave it a more serious aspect during both World Wars.

New events this summer

From 1 July to 30 September, the basement will go back to WW2, when Stephens House

was the Finchley ARP headquarters. (Some of the recent WW1 exhibits will stay.) Any personal recollections or memorabilia for loan or offer will be very welcome, as will offers to steward.

There will also be an opportunity to grow vegetables in a Dig for Victory patch in the grounds.

Contact Fiona Harkus on 020 8346 7812 for details.

Old Barn: how to have your say

By Janet Maitland

Barnet Council will submit a planning application about the Old Barn community centre in N2, some time during June. Their proposals include building a new wing primarily for the local Somali Bravanese community, whose centre on Coppetts Road, Muswell Hill, was burnt down in a racist arson attack in June 2013.

If you live within 100 metres of the Old Barn, you'll be contacted by the council once the application has been made and you'll then have four weeks to comment. But even if you don't live close by, you can still participate in the consultation once the application has been submitted.

You can check if it has or not by going to <https://publicaccess.barnet.gov.uk/online-applications/> and entering the centre's address, which is 20 Fallow's Close, East Finchley,

London N2 8LG. If you have comments about the plans for the centre, write to the Planning Department, Barnet Council, 4 North London Business Park, Oakleigh Road South, London N11 1NP.

At the time of going to press, those involved in the additional consultation were not able to say if outstanding issues, such as whether the council has the right to build on the land adjacent to the Old Barn, given its history as protected green space, had yet been resolved.

Coffee and chat

A friendly weekly coffee and chat group meets on Mondays from 10.30am to 12.30pm at the Bald Faced Stag in the High Road, N2.

Organisers EFAB Friends say everyone is welcome to drop in for however long they like. Visitors are asked to use the garden entrance as the main doors to the pub may be locked. For more details contact Lisa Smith on 07909 998453 or email: us@efab.org.uk

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