



### Letters to the Editor



#### No place for a moped Dear Editor,

I was in Cherry Tree Wood today when a Domino's pizza delivery guy came in through the main gate with his motorbike. It was a lovely sunny morning during half term so the park was particularly busy with children playing, as well as babies in prams and people walking their dogs, and there could have been a serious accident. It seems yet another example of antisocial behaviour from a firm that already disregards the needs of other local businesses by taking up valuable parking spaces along the High Road with its many mopeds.  
**Yours faithfully,  
Name and address supplied.**

#### School offers Dear Editor,

In response to the letter in your February 2017 issue ('Children Missed Out'), I am sorry to hear that some local children were unable to get places at Fortismere because their parents did not perceive it to be a realistic option and so did not apply.

I agree that it would have been helpful if Fortismere had announced their increase in places earlier. However it is important to put your child's preferred choice first and other choices in order of preference (whatever your perceptions) as your chances may be better than you think given there are usually several rounds of offers.

It is right to say that first round offers for Fortismere last year reached 1.19 miles. However in the three subsequent rounds the offers went out much further. I understand

that families living on roads near to Brookland School in NW11 were offered places for their children on these later rounds.

Only 229 places were accepted at Fortismere on the first round and so not all the places (originally 243 and then increased to 270) were taken. Therefore a further 36 places were offered on the second round and then a further four and then finally one on the fourth round.

It is worth adding that prior to the opening of the Archer Academy in 2013, first round offers for Fortismere were traditionally a tight 0.4 to 0.6 of a mile from the school and even second or third round offers often didn't get further than the top of the county roads and rarely over East Finchley High Road.

Thus, in terms of the availability of comprehensive, non-faith, mixed-sex secondary school places, prospects for local children in N2 are better than they have been for many years. The opening of the Archer Academy has made a significant contribution to this improvement.

**Yours faithfully,  
Helen Drake  
Address supplied.**

#### Not alone Dear Editor

Thank you, Yasmin Escayg-Lee, for speaking out on The Archer's Soapbox last month about being harassed on the street. Like you, my 17-year-old daughter has been harassed in Coppetts Road, N10, and your piece has reassured her that she wasn't particularly singled out.

A few months ago, in daylight, she was waiting alone at a bus stop, when a man pulled up in his car and tried to persuade her to get in. The great thing was that three separate women stopped to help. Two women drivers pulled over, and one of them called the police. A woman jogger stopped to wait at the bus stop with my daughter, and flagged down the police car when it arrived. The jogger had taken a photo of the driver and his licence plate, and the police visited his home and gave him a warning. I hope the police are keeping a close eye on this road. If anyone else gets harassed on the street, I would ask them to consider reporting it to the police or a local councillor. If any of those three brave women are reading this, I am so grateful to you for helping my daughter. You've set a great example to us all of how to stop and help someone in the street if something doesn't look quite right.

**Yours faithfully,  
Name and address supplied.**

**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.

## Jo: our brilliant friend

By Verity Smith

**Crowds of unbelieving mourners gathered, crammed in the pews, sitting on the floor or craning at the back, at Marylebone Crematorium on East End Road at the beginning of February for the funeral of Joanna Witt, of Long Lane.**

Her illness had been so sudden and so swift that many of her friends had seen her on the school run or on the High Road only a few days prior to her death. Aged 43, she leaves her partner, Oliver and their three boys aged three, five and seven.

The disbelief was magnified by the knowledge of the person she was: vivid, funny, clever, warm; someone who put energy and conviction into everything she did, be it drinking wine with friends, rallying



Jo Witt with her husband Oliver and their three young sons

support for the Library, joining the East Finchley Women's Football team at its inception, corralling local friends into a book club, or, most importantly, caring for and enjoying her time with her boys.

She had very recently left her job at The Guardian to find a way to be with them more and earn some money freelancing. In fact, her last heart-breaking blog was written only four days before she died and declared: "The future WILL come... I've got diaries, planners, lists of all the great things I'm going to achieve, spreadsheets of earnings and outgoings... I'm dreaming of the future of work three days a week while the little one does full days [at nursery], and time with him to be a *perfect*

*arty crafty mum* the other two afternoons."

At the funeral and in the White Lion pub afterwards, there was consensus: Jo was the friend who persuaded you to get involved, who encouraged others to go for their dreams, who brought people together; a Geography graduate with a terrible sense of direction and a deeply loved daughter, partner, mother.

As those of us who knew her continue to struggle with the idea of her absence, the hope is that Oliver and the boys, Henry, Digby and Ned, will be able to take some comfort from a life well lived, albeit too briefly.

Donations to sepsistrust.org would be welcomed by the family.

## Seed swap and school open day

By Roger Chapman  
**There will be two community events in one day on 22 April, both at Martin Primary School in Plane Tree Walk, East Finchley.**

Firstly it is the school's Community Day between 11am and 2pm which will be an opportunity to see the wonderful wildlife area at the far end of the school field. This area has the copse, the wildlife pond and the recent addition of an outdoor clay oven. Those feeling energetic can do some outdoor work so bring your own gardening gloves.

At the same time the East Finchley Community Trust will be holding their annual seed and plant swap on the field. If you have any spare seeds, seedlings, cuttings or plants bring them along and swap with others.

If you just want advice on successional seed planting and how to ensure you have home grown lettuce all year round, for example, why not ask one of the experts on hand?

No money changes hands but if you haven't got anything to swap you could take something and make a donation to Long Lane Pasture. So don't delay, divide your perennials today and you will have a plant to swap on 22 April. For more information contact Kate Brown on brown.kate@btinternet.com.

Any reader who feels strongly about any matter is invited to use this "Soapbox" column. Please note that opinions expressed are those of the writer alone.



### Meter madness

By Sarah Purdy  
**Thames Water (TW) is rolling out 'smart' water meters in London. They are telling customers that this is mandatory. On further investigation it turns out to be a rather grey area with the Government telling the public that they will never make metering mandatory even in an area designated as under water stress.**

TW are saying that as this area has been designated under water stress, they have the power under the Water Industry Act 1991 S162 to force us to have smart meters.

However, the act only talks about 'meters' not 'smart meters', hence smart meters are not covered by the Act. Smart meters are different from analogue meters in that they will read and collect customer data on their water usage in real time and relay it to TW. Computer modellers will be able to tell who is in the house, and when and what their habits are.

Hackers/burglars could hack in to this, as nothing on the internet is secure. It is also a privacy violation since we believe we have a right to privacy inside our own homes.

The calculations on the Thames valley being an area of severe water stress are questionable and need to be challenged. Moreover, in 2012 the Telegraph pointed out that since privatisation TW have sold off 25 reservoirs and appear to have only five left. For over 10 years there has been a plan to bring water to London from the Severn that TW seem not keen on. This would easily cover the calculated shortfall.

Less than 1% of the UK rainfall is collected for human consumption so it seems that TW have manufactured an apparent shortage and are keener on spending billions on smart meters than on infrastructure.

You have a right to refuse a smart meter on the grounds of no consultation being offered and not consenting to having your private data collected. A useful website for information is [www.stopsmartmeters.org.uk](http://www.stopsmartmeters.org.uk).

Sabrina Thompson - member of British Psychological Society - working with Hypnobirthing pain relief in labour and birth. Doula and certified APA Ayurvedic therapist. Specialist in prenatal and postnatal treatments. Lymphatic drainage and surgery recovery, designed for birth surgeries. Professionally insured.

**SERVICES**

- Prenatal massage
- Lymphatic drainage massage
- Pre and post surgery massage
- Ayurvedic massage
- Hypnobirthing
- Doula (Birth Companion)

East Finchley practice - also home treatments  
07587861597 stanfordsabrina@gmail.com  
Yogalgy yoga studio www.sabrina.thompson.co.uk