



The original Archer team outside Welch's in 1993. Back row L-R: John Dacam, Pete Maslen, Kevin Finn and Paul Savill. Front row L-R: Malcolm Griffiths, Pat McManus, Ros Walters and Len Willcocks.

Leonard Willcocks, 1927 – 2018

Len Willcocks, one of the original members of the Archer team, sadly passed away on 1 April at the age of 90. Len was a prolific contributor to the paper in its early years in the 1990s when, as well as supplying a variety of articles and stories, he was also our crime correspondent. He later took on the role of news editor and was a member of the editorial team until the end of 2000.

Len, who lived in Park Hall Road, N2, regularly attended the Archer's Saturday morning meetings at Maddens, where he was particularly helpful to new writers and adept at supplying suggestions for subjects, gleaned from his knowledge of and involvement in the local community. This also made him the ideal person to report on the area forum meetings.

His familiarity with East Finchley and its history belies the fact that Len was born in Stoke Row, Oxfordshire. He grew up in Muswell Hill but returned to Stoke Road briefly as an evacuee in the Second

World War.

Len worked as an engineer and in 1954 he migrated to Australia under the 'Ten Pound Pom' assisted scheme. After three years he returned to the UK and became an international telephonist for what was then the Post Office, later BT.

A keen runner, Len ran three London marathons and took part in others around the UK and in Dublin.

In 1959 he married Mary Josephine Egan (Josie) at Our Lady of Muswell RC Church. They had three sons, Alan, Terry and Paul. Len converted to Catholicism in 1977 and,

along with his late wife, was an active member of St Mary's RC Church, East Finchley.

He proved a useful link between the church and The Archer, particularly after his retirement, when he continued to write on an occasional basis and to provide useful story leads and comments. He also wrote short stories, letters to the editor and Soapbox features whilst continuing to deliver the newspaper for many years.

Fond memories of Len will live on in the locality as will his words, many of which can be found in the archives of The Archer.

Letters

Let's go plastic-free

Dear Editor,

We know plastics are killing our planet. Is it possible that we could make East Finchley the first high road in London where people can shop single use plastic free?

In Amsterdam a supermarket has instituted a plastic-free aisle which has been widely celebrated in the media. If we could achieve this we would give our area huge news coverage and I think widely attract shoppers from around London. Could we become the go-to food shopping destination for responsible consumers?

As consumers we cannot duck our responsibility. We are in the driving seat. Groceries transported in small quantities seem to be always packaged in single-use plastic. It is what supermarkets think we want. We do not.

What we should do in East Finchley is award a symbol for prominent display in shops for celebrating their attainment of single-use plastic-free status. The whole High Road could gradually attain total plastic-free status.

Let's start now. Already we have shops that nearly attain the status. They tend to be local fresh food shops buying in bulk and selling on in smaller quantities, for instance Tony's Continental, A. Scott & Son fishmongers and Amici delicatessen.

Patronise your stores and insist on no plastics; it used to be done, why not now? Is using scoops to place loose rice granules into paper bags that you then decant into glass jars in the kitchen impossible? How about similarly decanting spices? Shopping could become a pleasure again.

Time for a coffee? Use only ceramic cups and branded multi-use individual flasks. Don't have the option of using throwaway plastic and cardboard amalgams.

We are in the driving seat and we can change the way groceries are sold by the way we change our buying habits. On a day-by-day basis we can monitor the number of single-use plastics we buy and reduce the number relentlessly.

Yours faithfully,
Ann Inglis,
Huntingdon Road, N2.

Happy memories of Valona House

Dear Editor,

In the March copy of The Archer, there was a Soapbox item from Dr Ruth Brown regarding Valona House, opposite the Tube station. It interested me as in 1944, aged 14, I was offered a job as a "trainee" dental chairside nurse there.

My employer was to be a gentleman called Mr Sidney Puckey, who was a dental surgeon living and working in that very house. I worked there for many years until Mr Puckey died of a heart attack, so you see I have happy memories of that fantastic building. I can remember the front door opening to the surgery, waiting room and the workshop where many sets of dentures were

made. Opposite the workshop was a small recovery room where patients waited after extractions and other operations when necessary.

At the end of the hall, a flight of stairs led up to the dentist's wife and daughter's living accommodation. Back and beyond were the original stables and above them dark bedrooms, still with beams in the ceilings - very spooky and I was sure they were haunted, although I never saw a ghost.

These rooms and stables were used by the coaches going through East Finchley to get into London. The horses were fed overnight and the passengers given a good bed for the night to rest their shaken-up bones.

In my time there I remember the well-tended gardens, always a delight to see, even the fish pond which could be seen from the surgery window, with many goldfish swimming happily around. When the courier company GLH took over, the garden disappeared and concrete was put down to make way for the cars that were there for hire. It saddened me to see this change but time goes on and so we had to accept the changes for the flourishing business that GLH brought to our High Road. Although I am now 88 years young, I will always look back to my time there with happy memories and thoughts and hope it will remain in place forever.

Yours faithfully,
Evelyn Bagley,
Church Lane, N2.

Barrier to entry

Dear Editor,

Having read Brian Ingram's letter urging us to make the most of East Finchley library published in your April edition, I decided to do just that this afternoon. I am very conscious about how my library usage has fallen since the new system was introduced and it's quite some time since I last went to borrow a book. Alas, I was thwarted in my intentions by the system. I do have a library card and am a registered user with a PIN number but access was denied. At the third attempt the security guard came out and tried my card himself, to no avail. He advised me to come back when a member of staff was on duty. I duly left fuming. It has made me really appreciate how the children in the article on your front page last month feel when they can't get into this public resource. I am still fuming as I write.

Yours faithfully,
Vanessa Carpenter,
Baronsmere Road, 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.



Message couldn't be clearer

Thanks to the reader in Church Lane who sent us this photo of a new sign on his front door. We appreciate the sentiment. Let's hope it works!



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