



# I'm running the Marathon for my aunt... and people like her

The capital is getting ready for the London Marathon on Sunday 28 April and here Archer reader Stephany Clark explains why she will be pounding the streets on the day.

When I was in my teens, one of my aunts went from being fit and healthy to losing the use of her legs in a very short space of time. She went from walking with a limp, to crutches, to a wheelchair and nobody knew why.

Her whole home had to be adapted for someone who needed a wheelchair to go anywhere. It was a very distressing time for the family especially as the reason was unknown. It later emerged that she had multiple sclerosis.

### Damaged nervous system

MS is a disease of the central nervous system where the protective covering that insulates the nerves is damaged so nervous impulses can't travel down

them any more.

Doctors stabilised her condition with medication for nearly 30 years. In the past year her MS sadly progressed again and she has now also lost the use of her arms and requires full-time care at home. However, she remains one of the most cheerfully upbeat people I know.

MS presents itself differently in each person, both in symptoms and severity, but most sufferers need support. I am privileged in my job as an osteopath to meet a wide array of people, some with life-altering medical conditions, but the randomness of MS has always felt disconcerting.

### Fund-raising for MS-UK

My aunt's tenacity and good

humour have always struck a chord with me so when I took up running three years ago I knew I would eventually run for MS-UK. This year MS-UK gave me my first ever place running the London Marathon 2019.

The charity is all about supporting the patient, be it through counselling, advice on medication or even support groups. They give sufferers the information and support needed to have independence, choice and control over their condition.

If you would like to sponsor me and help raise funds for this wonderful charity I would be most grateful. Just search for Stephany Clark at [www.justgiving.com](http://www.justgiving.com).



Stephany Clark training for the London Marathon. Photo Mike Coles

## Library toilet is a real inconvenience

Library users in East Finchley have had to get used to some major changes since the introduction of a self-service system and reduced staff hours. Campaign group Save Barnet Libraries has warned of disadvantages for children under 15 who can no longer go there without an adult, limited access which prevents teenagers visiting to study, people with disabilities only being able to attend when the library is staffed and some users being afraid to go when there are no staff present.

This situation has been aggravated by a decrease in the hours when there is a security guard in the building, provided by the borough.

But there is one essential provision needed in such a building which is used by a large cross section of the community: a toilet. However, when there are no staff available, the large

library loo is locked.

The Archer was told that the toilet is kept locked at these times for safety reasons, for instance in case someone is hurt in there or is unable to get out for some reason.

Local mother Erini Rodis says the out-of-bounds toilet has become part of the Save Barnet Libraries campaign because,

even library users who can get in during unstaffed hours are forced out as soon as nature calls.

She said: "It is particularly discriminatory to those looking after children or whose bladders aren't the size of sports bags. As part of the whole fiasco of library staffing cuts, it is yet another nail in the coffin of the dignity we used to enjoy as Barnet residents."

## What to do when urine trouble at the library

The reduced levels of service in our libraries are the subject of much comment and concern. Causing particular strain is the lack of toilet facilities when there are no staff present. But some employees can offer a crumb of comfort, as did one of the security guards in East Finchley library recently.

A reader told us that, about to go off duty, he came in and announced that he was going to lock the toilet, and asked if anyone needed to use it before he did so? Three old ladies quickly formed a queue.

Health and safety concerns (including someone getting trapped inside) are a major factor in the decision to keep it locked shut out of staff hours. But this leaves library users between the devil and the deep blue sea. Do they have to organise their visits only when staff are available or risk having to make a hasty exit and find somewhere else to spend a penny?

Desperate times call for desperate measures. Could this unisex urinal bottle, pictured, be a somewhat undignified but possible solution to getting



caught short? Made from sturdy robust plastic, it has a snap on lid to avoid spillages and a scale for measuring volume. A unisex adaptor is included.

## Pools closed

The two swimming pools at Finchley Lido Leisure Centre have been closed until early June while refurbishment works are carried out.

Their closure will give GLL in partnership with Barnet Council up to 12 weeks to replace the changing cubicles and floor tiles and introduce new shower facilities and replacement lockers. Improvements will also be made to the ventilation system to provide better air quality. Gym facilities at the centre in North Finchley will remain open as normal while the pools are out of action.

## East Finchley Baptist Church

Just off the High Road in Creighton Avenue N2

Sunday Mornings at 10.30 am

Crèche and Sunday School during service

Good Friday Service 19th April 10.30 am

Easter Sunday Service 21st April 10.30 am

For more information please contact the Church Office

Tel: 8883 1544 (Minister: John Lowrie)

[www.eastfinchleybc.org.uk](http://www.eastfinchleybc.org.uk)

Visitors always welcome

## Finchley history

Barnet's heritage development officer Hugh Petrie is giving the first of two talks about the origins of Finchley, called 'From a Forest to a Common'.

Hosted by the Finchley Society, it takes place at Stephens House and Gardens at 7.30pm on Thursday 25 April and everyone is welcome. Non-members pay an admission fee of £2.

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