



Milkmen upheaval after years of serving local customers

By Ann Bronkhorst

Milkmen serving East Finchley, Highgate and Muswell Hill have been ousted from the depot they have used for many years with just two weeks' notice by its owners.

The independent deliverers had a supply agreement with Capital Dairies, renewable every two years and based on the long-established use of their north London depot and vehicles. These were bought two years ago by Milk & More, owned by the large German firm Müller.

This year, the milkmen's agreement was not renewed; instead they say they were told they would have to move to Capital Dairies' new site in Barking, Essex, less convenient for most of them and without electric vehicles. They claim Milk & More offered to buy their rounds for their own deliverers to take over.



Going independent: Milkman Mike Fuller

Angry and shell-shocked at their treatment, the milkmen refused the company's proposal. Staying united, they searched for another supplier and found Ongar Dairy in Epping, which supplies the well-regarded Cotteswold milk and can provide vehicles, albeit quite noisy ones, for now.

Online or traditional

The milkmen say the online-only ordering system run by Milk & More does not work for everyone. "Not all customers have the internet," said Mick Fuller, who delivers in East Finchley, "and many love the one-to-one contact with their

milkman." He points out the flexibility with which orders can be arranged and altered when customers know and trust their regular local milkman.

Tony Drew, who has delivered in Highgate for 40 years, spoke movingly about the social role of milkmen. He has been involved with rescues, helping stroke victims, calling police to burglaries and other situations when the protective presence of someone who knows the community has been vital. For him, "It's not the money aspect but the moral aspect. I will fight to the end."

Milk & More respond

Andrew Kendall, Deputy CEO of Milk & More told *The Archer*: "At no time were these independent milkmen told that they needed to sell their rounds to Milk & More and that if they did not they had to vacate the premises they operate from and lose their electric vehicles," but added: "If they were interested in selling to us then we would review the opportunity." The spokesman also emphasised that Milk & More's contract was "solely with Capital Dairies... [we] have no contracts with these independent milkmen." Milk & More and Capital Dairies, he said, had met in August to discuss their agreement and "agreed to serve notice on the arrangement." Of this the milkmen say they knew nothing.

Watch this space

These long-serving milkmen have at least succeeded in protecting their rounds for now, so customers' deliveries are safe and these traditional, much-valued small businesses won't disappear ... here, at least. In fact there's been a tsunami of support on social media. One typical comment is: "Let's all try to spread the word and help milk delivery services survive."



Story time: Children enjoying a picture book at the Finchley Community Toy Library.

Double the fun at toy library

By Diana Cormack

The Green Man Centre in Strawberry Vale, N2, has been housing Finchley Community Toy Library every Tuesday morning in term time for five years. In January 2020 openings will be extended to include Monday afternoons, giving more pre-school children and their parents the chance to enjoy some valuable play experience with a variety of toys but without the cost of buying them.

There is a soft play area for babies and each session offers activities for toddlers, which includes story time, along with facilities for adults to share play with their youngsters. Two toys can be taken for two weeks at a time at a minimal cost. Books, of which there is an impressive collection, are not charged for.

Meeting a need

Sadly the toy library in Muswell Hill closed this summer as did East Finchley's own many years ago.

Finchley Community Toy Library founder Nina Gentry said: "It is so hard to get into a library these days. You need a PIN code, a timetable and all that nonsense. Most obstructive!" She told *The Archer* of her future plans for a book bag scheme to encourage parents of pre-schoolers into the habit of book borrowing.

The toy library is open to all, though it is under the auspices of Barnet Lone Parent Centre, which is able to offer

help and advice to parents who are on their own for whatever reason. Attendance is flexible after registering. Sessions are run by a group of paid and volunteer workers who have been described as friendly and accommodating and who offer coffee and snacks to users as well as a warm welcome.

For more information search online for Barnet Lone Parent Centre, call 020 3828 4824 or email nina.gentry@peabody.org.uk

Stories of a church and its soldiers

By Sue Windridge

After much hard work, All Saints' Church in Durham Road, N2, launched two fascinating publications at its open day in October.

The first is a long-awaited history titled *The Story of All Saints', East Finchley* in a colourful and engaging format, written by David Sillito, who is the BBC's media and arts correspondent and a member of the congregation.

The second publication, *In Memoriam*, collects together articles on the casualties listed on the All Saints' war memorial, researched and written by congregation member Sally Atkinson and previously published over a period of four years in the parish magazine.



Tales to remember: The cover of one of the All Saints' books

The men listed on the memorial are aged between 16 and 40. Most died on the Western Front, but one died in East Africa and one in Mesopotamia. There are four sets of brothers.

The Story of All Saints', East Finchley costs £10 and *In Memoriam* £7.50, and both are available by emailing saintsabounding@gmail.com or calling 07767 427264.

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