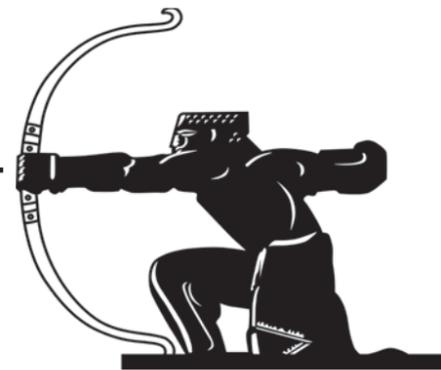




The Archer

Local News is our Aim



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January 2019 No. 297

A community newspaper for East Finchley run entirely by volunteers.

Pavilion to be demolished

By Diana Cormack

After more than 30 years of standing empty, the future of the pavilion in Cherry Tree Wood has at last been decided. The derelict building is to be demolished after hopes of restoring it as a café were finally abandoned.

In 2012 'Pepe' Dostezad was granted a 25-year lease on the pavilion, with plans to open a coffee bar. In the interim, he took over Cherry Tree Wood's kiosk café, next to the tennis courts, which he now proposes to enlarge and enhance, making it suitable for use all year round.

Two years into Pepe's lease, restoration and repairs on the derelict building proved to be a greater problem than originally thought and, after the theft of valuable tools and equipment, major work ceased.

Settlement reached

There have since been protracted discussions between him and Barnet Council about the terms of the lease and condition of the premises. Pepe has told *The Archer* that he has surrendered the lease to Barnet and come to a monetary settlement with them. However, he maintains that all this has not been easy and has expressed his gratitude to Councillor Alison Moore for her help and support.

A Barnet Council spokesman confirmed that the surrender of the lease had been agreed, and a settlement fee had

been paid to its former lessee.

The spokesman said: "We are currently awaiting quotations for the building to be safely demolished. Once these have been received and evaluated we will programme the works for as soon as is practicable."

Past and future

The decaying pavilion has become a major safety hazard over the last decade and has been fenced off with metal barriers for several years. Its removal will enable the restoration of a large area of woodland alongside the entrance path into the park from the High Road.

Originally built in 1926 as an electricity sub-station, it was replaced with the building we see today in the late 1950s. It was used as a changing room for sporting activities when football matches regularly took place in the park and also housed a playgroup for some time.

There have long been differing opinions on what should happen to the structure. Whilst some favoured razing it to the ground and letting nature take its course, others hoped it



Days are numbered: The derelict pavillion in Cherry Tree Wood. Photo Mike Coles

could be put to good use, preferably in a way beneficial to the community. Over the years some suggested projects came to nought, whilst the amount of vandalism and dilapidation increased.

What are your memories of the Cherry Tree Wood pavilion? Email us: the-archer@lineone.net, or write to The Archer, PO Box 3699, London N2 2DE.

In appreciation of John Omar

Following our report last month that Manor Park Road shoe repairer John Omar has been forced to retire through ill health, a crowdfunding campaign has been launched to buy him a farewell gift.

Customer Darren Mitchell started the fund as a way of doing "a good deed for a gentleman". He hoped many in the community would be willing to make a donation to say a big thank you to John for his services over the years and to show him how much he was appreciated.

John ran his shoe and luggage repair shop from his tiny



John Omar workshop in Manor Park Road for 30 years. A recent sudden illness forced him to shut up shop permanently while he makes the slow road to recovery.

Donations can be made on the GoFundMe website by searching for 'John Omar' or you can drop cash into the special donations tin in the Galaxy Drug Store, Church Lane, N2, just a couple of minutes' walk from John's workshop.

In this issue

- Sainsbury's opens..... p3
- Safer Neighbourhoods..... p4
- Phoenix fight steps up..... p5
- AgeUK cookery TV stars..... p6
- Cause of Grange fire unclear..p7
- Grant for Community Souls...p7

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The Archer team wishes to thank all the generous people who give up their spare time, in all weather, to deliver the paper for us.

If you have a story for us, please contact us at the above address. Comments to The Archer may be published unless clearly marked 'Not for publication' within the text.

Copy deadlines – **February:** 11 January **March:** 15 February
April: 15 March

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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Barnet	Childline	0800 1111	Drugs Helpline	0800 776600	
Admin/Town Hall	020 8359 2000	Citizens Advice Barnet	0300 4568365	Health Info Service	0800 665544
Council Tax	020 8359 2608	Cruse Bereavement Care	0870 167 1677	MIND	020 8343 5700
Recycling & refuse	020 8359 4600	Disability Info Service	020 8359 7637	National Blood Centre	0845 7711 7711
Primary Care Trust	020 8201 4700	EF Advice Service	0300 4568365	Crime	
Benefits Agency	020 8258 6500	Lone Parent Centre	020 7021 4146	Emergency	999
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Haringey Council	020 8489 0000	National Debt Line	0808 808 4000	CrimeStoppers	0800 555111
		NSPCC	0800 800500	Victim Support	0845 303 0900
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		Alcoholics Anonymous	0845 7697555	Whittington	020 7272 3070
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BR Enquiries	0845 7484950	Cancer Support	020 8202 2211	Age UK Barnet	020 8203 5040
City Airport	020 7646 0088	Carers' Line	0808 808 7777	Independent Age	0800 319 6789
London Transport	020 7222 1234			Age UK (general advice line)	0800 169 2081
National Express	0871 781 8181				
Heathrow Airport	0870 000 0123				



Photo by Kostas Koutoulas

Sink hole in Long Lane

Emergency repairs were needed in Long Lane, N2, in December when a mini sink-hole appeared in the road just metres from the front doors of houses close to the junction with Church Lane.

The road was closed to traffic for three days while the deep hole, measuring about a metre across, was filled and repaired.

Signs of spring already

By Ann Bronkhorst
Good Gym have helped the Friends of Coldfall Wood and Muswell Hill Playing Fields again. Last year they collected sacks of litter from the pitches. At the end of November, for their final run of last year, they braved the rain to plant spring bulbs, supplied free by Haringey Council, around the play areas north of the Fields.

After running carefully through Coldfall Wood (trees looming through the darkness, sticky leaves underfoot) they liaised with Linda Alliston of the Friends group and set about their muddy task with trowels kindly lent by Stephens House and Gardens. Planting over 150 bulbs in wet soil and tussocky grass by the light of head torches isn't easy but this spring some lovely pops of colour from crocuses, tulips and daffodils should reward Good Gym's hard work. To find out more visit www.goodgym.org.

Help give a voice and choice

Advocacy in Barnet is looking for people with a couple of hours a week to spare who want to learn some new skills and meet new people.

The organisation provides a free, independent and confidential advocacy service to help those aged 50 and over who live in Barnet. Volunteers help to ensure people have a voice and choice in health and social care matters and have as much control as possible over their own lives and independence. They also support patients throughout the hospital discharge process, working with them to avoid readmission.

Advocacy in Barnet provides free training and ongoing support to all volunteers and no prior experience is needed. If you would like more information and an application form you can get in touch with india.edwards@advocacyinbarnet.org.uk or telephone her on 020 8201 3415.

Find out more at www.advocacyinbarnet.org.uk.



Tick the box: A volunteer helps with form filling

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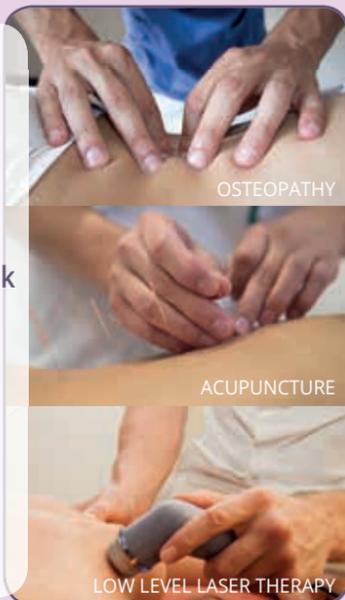
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Welcome to Probus!

Convivial Probus Lunch Club with talks for semi- or fully-retired PROFESSIONAL & BUSINESS men and women on third Wednesday each month at Stephens House East End Road N3 3QE. Next meeting 16 January
Professor Colin Jones explores and illustrates the history and beauty of Versailles, also the site of two infamous treaties between France and Germany. Details from Eric (8449 0566).

Planning Applications

Barnet Council
East Finchley Underground Station Car Park
Minicab office.

3 Beresford Road, N2
Single-storey rear extension, depth 5.84m, eaves height 3m, maximum height 3m.

6 Brendon Grove, N2
Single-storey rear extension, including alterations to rear patio. Relocation of front door from side to front. Alterations to fenestration.

93 East End Road, N2
Conversion into three self-contained units, including first-floor rear extension. Alterations to fenestration and first floor terrace. Associated refuse and cycle storage.

230 East End Road, N2
Single-storey rear extension, following demolition of existing conservatory. Roof extension involving hip to gable, side/rear dormer window, two front facing rooflights and new side gable window.

22 Edmunds Walk, N2
Single-storey rear extension.

Alterations to fenestration, including one dormer window to first floor rear.

41 Gurney Drive, N2
Part conversion of existing garage into habitable room, insertion of double doors to replace existing garage door, insertion of side window, and replacement of rear window.

2 Heath View Close, N2
New front porch, following demolition of existing one. Roof extension, including one rear dormer window, three rear roof lights, and five front roof lights. New side doors and windows.

3 King Street, N2
Change of use from B1 (c) to C3 (2 units). Flat 4, second-floor unit, to be used as residential flat.

39 Manor Park Road, N2
Single-storey rear extension, depth 6 m, eaves height 2.7m, and maximum height 3.15m.

19 New Trinity Road, N2
Single-storey side and rear extension with new patio area.

5 Oak Lane, N2
Single-storey rear/side extension.



The opening of the new Sainsbury's on the High Road. Photo Diana Cormack

Sainsbury's store opens after a three-year wait

By Diana Cormack

Almost three years after announcing it would be coming to East Finchley, Sainsbury's finally opened its new Local store on the High Road last month.

The two long-empty properties on the corner of Leicester Road, occupied by Bike and Run and restaurant Mama Jack until early 2016, were a blot on

the landscape and people were beginning to wonder if the shop would ever materialise. Sainsbury's, who originally planned to open in the

summer of 2016, said it came across some obstacles which forced it to take its redevelopment plans back to the drawing board.

However, once work started last autumn, it was quickly finished and the time came for the opening ceremony, which was beautifully performed by a group of children from Holy Trinity Primary School breakfast club.

Store manager Ezmi Coutinho, who has 15 years' experience working for Sainsbury's, told *The Archer* that she had already had a warm welcome from people in East Finchley and said the store would love to help the community in any way it could.

Traders won't survive tough times unless we shop locally

By David Melsome

N2United, the business network for East Finchley, finished last year with a soiree at a packed Bald Faced Stag in the last but one trading week before the holidays. Representatives from local shops and businesses as well as from the Phoenix Cinema, No2Plastics and this newspaper, joined together to enjoy food and festive drinks and have fun, but also to reflect on a challenging year, particularly for independent traders.

Impact of

Sainsbury's Local

The soiree happened on the day the long-anticipated new Sainsbury's Local store opened, which many thought was likely to add further pressure to independent traders on the High Road and even further afield on East End Road.

Despite the good humour and merry environment, talk inevitably turned to the difficulties small businesses face and what can be done to reduce the downturn in trade seen over the past year. It's not just the retailers that are struggling. Restaurants in the area that have managed to stay open have had to cut prices to attract customers at a time when they should have been filled with festive parties.

Our custom counts

Chair of N2United and local businessman Nick Allan said: "Now more than ever small businesses and the shops in our community need the support and, more particularly the custom, of the wider community if we are to avoid small businesses closing and the loss of more local shops with the associated negative impact on our neighbourhood."

Government reports show this isn't just a local issue for East Finchley, as similar stories are reported across the country, but Mr Allan added: "Despite the changes in our shopping habits, local people can make a real difference to the local traders we all say we love by making more effort to 'shop

local' and by taking advantage of their special services to help our local trades thrive."

The N2United evening ended with thanks and the presentation of a handmade belt from Koko's to Johanna Vigilante for her service as the group's secretary over the past couple of years as she steps down from the role and heads for Watford to join the new home of the Bobath Centre, where she is interim fundraising and marketing executive.

For more information visit www.n2united.co.uk or follow @n2united.

No plans to improve 263 bus route

You may remember a letter from reader Anna Lowenstein in our October edition asking why the north end of East Finchley where she lives is served by only one bus service, the 263, and why it often has waiting times of up to 15 minutes.

Transport for London responded to Anna's complaint by saying there were no plans at present to provide more services on this route. Customer service adviser Lauren Bastable pointed out that the 263 was in fact a high-frequency service, claiming there were up to 10 buses per hour in the morning rush hour and around six per hour during the rest of the day.

Anna told us: "If that's their idea of a high-frequency service, heaven knows what the low-frequency services are like. The main problem is the lack of any other bus service on the same stretch of road. If there were other buses going to Fortis Green Road and East Finchley station, I imagine most people would be satisfied if the 263 only passed every 10 minutes, because there would be plenty of alternatives for most requirements."

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Tidy sum: The Suburb fundraisers and the grand total they've raised for Combat Stress.

A helping hand for those who served

Ten years ago, Ruth Smith and her neighbour Pamela Marenbach held a rummage sale in her kitchen in Hampstead Garden Suburb for Combat Stress, in memory of Ruth's soldier father. To their great surprise they found they had made over £300 and decided to move to a bigger venue in 2009.

From then onwards, what became their annual Winter Fair grew and grew, raising a total of £38,300 for the charity

over the years.

Peter Butterworth, community fundraising officer for Combat Stress, said the charity

spends the money to assist members of the armed forces recovering from the mental pressures of injury and service.



Slow stretch: Sunnah in the Cobra pose.

Take some time to slow down

By Sunnah Rose

Have you ever considered that doing slower and more mindful-based exercises may be beneficial to your health and wellbeing? For those who dread the thought of high intensity workouts or even those who love them there is a lot to be said for moving more slowly.

When we work in a softer and more relaxing way it gives us the ability to tune in and notice what our bodies need. Then we are able to start letting go of deeply held tension both in the body and the mind.

Cobra Pose

Try this slow exercise for yourself. It's a simple back bend that encourages us to open our heart and lungs, strengthens our spine and helps relieve stress and fatigue.

Start by lying on your belly and bring your hands to just by your rib cage, elbows facing the ceiling and hugging in to your body.

Extend both legs out behind

you and press the tops of the feet down.

Start to allow your lower back to lift your head and chest off the ground.

Your arms should stay hugged in to your side; try not to push in to your hands too much. The move should feel as though you are working the back a little but should not be painful.

Gaze at the floor in front of you so as to keep the neck neutral.

Stay here breathing for three to five breaths. The breath creates space and will possibly even lift you up a bit further.

Smile and let that smile

radiate from your heart centre.

To rest, lie back down on your tummy, relax your arms down to the side of your body and enjoy.

Sunnah Rose teaches a variety of weekly General, Pregnancy & Postnatal Yoga classes in East Finchley including a 'Slow Flow' class that is suitable for everyone. For more info visit www.stretchingpeople.co.uk.

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Jan Lovell, of the East Finchley Safer Neighbourhood Team, updates us on the latest crime news. Jan and the team can be contacted by email at: EastFinchley.snt@met.police.uk, or by phone on 020 7161 9014. Follow the team on Twitter @MPSEastFinchley.

Distraction burglaries

Please make sure you know who it is before you open your front door. Use a window or peep hole. If you don't know the caller there's an excellent chance that you won't want to. Even if it is a genuine sales caller it's much easier to say "No, thank you" through a window.

One local resident answered the door to a man dressed in work clothes who said he needed to check the water pressure after fitting a washing machine next door. He asked the resident and his cleaner to empty the cupboard under the kitchen sink and watch the tap running to check for any change in the water flow.

While they were occupied, he stole a wallet from the bedroom and the cleaner's handbag from the hallway. In a similar incident, the "workman" wore surgical gloves and frightened the household with claims that the house might flood if he didn't check the water pressure. Two British Gas vans were stolen recently. They've been recovered but all the equipment has been stolen, including fleeces and jackets with British Gas logos. These may be used for distraction burglaries, so if anyone comes to your house apparently from British Gas, even if they've made an appointment, make sure you check with British Gas on 0800 0481000 before letting them in.

High Road scams update
May we remind folk that, although there has been a drop off in the incidents of cashpoint/parking meter scams on the High Road, please remain vigilant as there are still skilled fraudsters operating all over the borough who are gone in an instant.

At cashpoints they may put a newspaper over the machine to distract you while they take your card. If you can't take someone with you, use a machine inside a shop or bank, or get cash-back while shopping.

The very elderly or disabled are being approached at parking meters and told there's now a charge for Blue Badge holders, or a spot fine for having a wheel over the parking bay line. The council do NOT take any spot fines.

A big thank you to the retailers on the High Road who have supported us and the community by keeping a very sharp eye out.

What do you think of Capita?

What do you think of the services you receive from Barnet Council through its contracts with Capita? These include road maintenance, management of the council's land and property, regeneration, cemeteries and planning.

A public consultation exercise is under way, where you can give your views online. The council will consider the results when deciding whether to bring some services back under its own control. Capita has already agreed to pay Barnet £4.2 million for under-performing in some of its services.

To take part in the consultation, go to engage.barnet.gov.uk and search for 'Capita'.



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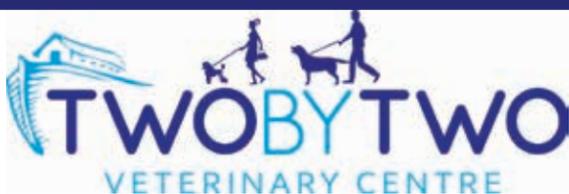
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Director backs the Phoenix as fight steps up for independence

By John Lawrence

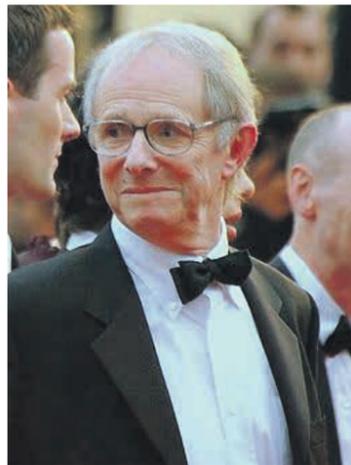
Veteran film director Ken Loach has thrown his support behind the efforts of the team at the Phoenix Cinema to keep the picture house independent by urging everyone to watch movies there and to back the fundraising drive.

The director of *Kes* and *I, Daniel Blake*, himself a patron of the cinema, said he was delighted that staff and trustees had joined forces to boost the cinema's finances by £50,000 before the end of March after calling off a deal to hand operations to the Curzon Cinema group.

Mr Loach said: "The Phoenix, one of the oldest cinemas in the country, has a unique identity which combines quality programming with education and community activities for all ages. Please help the Phoenix rise again with your donations and support, and enjoy visiting this special cinema."

The Phoenix Cinema will this month merge its crowdfunding campaign with that of the Save the Phoenix group, originally set up last September when news of the potential Curzon deal was first announced. Donations are extremely welcome at uk.gofundme.com/savethephoenixcinema and look out for updates on the cinema's website: www.phoenixcinema.co.uk. Save the Phoenix said in a statement: "We understand that many people feel there has been little action since the

it will remain independent, we now believe they are committed to doing all they can



Cinema patron: Ken Loach

to ensure that it remains so." A fundraising screening of *It's a Wonderful Life* in December and a raffle added cash to the coffers. At the same time, James Kessler's term as chair of the Phoenix trustees has ended after nine years and he has been succeeded by existing trustee Alison Gold. Significantly, the board has announced it will be drawing on the expertise of its former chief executive Paul Homer, who left the cinema seven years ago after leading it through its hugely successful



Fundraiser: Trustee Margaret O'Brien introduces a film classic at the Phoenix.

pause [of the Curzon deal] was announced and no changes have been made but much work has been done behind the scenes.

"We recognise that the cinema is under large financial strain and needs a significant amount of money to remain solvent. Whilst the cinema cannot guarantee 100% that

£1.1 million centenary restoration project in 2010.

A team of dedicated local volunteers are working with the cinema, co-ordinated by long-term Phoenix supporter Jacky Fairfax. If you would like to join them, contact phoenixvolunteers2018@gmail.com.



Palace of delights: How the Phoenix first looked in 1910, when the screen was at the High Road end

Four incarnations of the Phoenix

The Phoenix Cinema has had four different names and many owners in its 108-year lifetime. Here's a potted history of the much-loved screen on the High Road

The Picturedrome (1910-1923)

Built in 1910 by Premier Electric Theatres as part of a wave of new cinemas, the Phoenix looked very different in its early years, with two large turrets either side of the main entrance on the High Road. Financial difficulties meant it didn't actually open its doors to filmgoers until 1912, showing a film about the recent sinking of the *SS Titanic*. The Picturedrome, as it was known, had an orchestra pit and twice as many seats in its auditorium as it does today, all sloping towards the High Road to take advantage of the lie of the land.

The Coliseum (1924-1936)

In 1924 the cinema's name changed to The Coliseum and a year later it was sold to Home Counties Theatres. In 1929, it was the first screen in the area to show a talking picture, Al Jolson's *The Singing Fool*, as the age of silent films came to an end.

The Rex (1937-1975)

With no need for an orchestra pit any longer, the cinema was completely redesigned in an Art Deco style and renamed as The Rex. The frontage of the building changed and the audi-

torium was reversed with the screen moving to the opposite end. It faced tough competition from the big cinema chains ABC, Gaumont and Odeon but fought its corner as a small independent with a more varied programme of films. In 1973, it was acquired by the Granada Group.

The Phoenix (Since 1975)

The cinema took its current name in 1975 under the

ownership of Contemporary Films. In 1983, with audience numbers falling, a developer applied to Barnet Council to build an office block on the site. The council approved it but the Greater London Council and local people opposed the sale. The GLC gave the charitable Phoenix Cinema Trust a grant to buy the building and it was saved from demolition. The trust has continued to run the Phoenix on a not-for-profit basis.

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Kitchen duo: Chef Ainsley Harriott with Age UK beginner Kanti.
Photo Karen Williamson

Cookery lessons dish up a plateful of friendship

By David Melsome

Learner cooks taking part in Age UK Barnet's easygoing kitchen lessons for older men have turned into TV stars, just as a new cookery course starts in East Finchley.

ITV News spoke to Don, 86, about attending cooking classes when his wife fell ill. "I was looking after her and it gave me a break in the day to come here for a couple of hours and then to cook," he said.

BBC Breakfast spoke to Frank, 90, at home where he looks after his wife who has Alzheimer's. "I pick up cooking skills to help me care for my wife and it's the highlight of my week," he told them.

Volunteer cook Nancy, who runs sessions and was interviewed live on the BBC Breakfast couch, says the classes have helped cultivate and nurture countless friendships over the years.

Celebrity chef Ainsley Harriott spent a day cooking with the men for BBC's Holding Back the Years show and entrepreneur Levi Roots dropped in to show the men how to make his famous jerk chicken.

A complete beginners' course is starting on 4 February at the Ann Owens Centre, Oak Lane, East Finchley, for men who have never cooked before. At the end of the course they will have a handful of dishes they can cook confidently at home.

For men's beginners and all other cookery courses for over 55s, contact Karen Williamson on 02081500967 or email karen.williamson@ageukbarnet.org.uk.

Pizza of Napoli on the doorstep

By Diana Cormack

A change of management late last year at Bufi, the pizzeria at 84 High Road, heralds a new look to the Italian restaurant which opened five years ago in the former Barclay's Bank building.

Sandra Razzano told *The Archer* that all will be revealed after a short closure in January for the necessary work to be done.

The business, she said, is something she and her husband Enrico had been wanting for their three sons. It is a truly family affair for, despite Antonio and Federico having full time jobs and Lorenzo being at university, they all work at Bufi during the evening and at weekends.

Enrico is a native of Naples, so it is not surprising that the menu includes the traditional Neapolitan pizza, made with Italian flour and prepared by a chef who is also from Naples. Food they serve has already been praised by bloggers.

Keep an eye on the A-board outside and on social media



The new team at Bufi - Sandra Razzano centre with chef Domenico, left, and Pizzaiolo Luigi, right. Photo Mike Coles

to see what is on offer in Bufi, which is family-friendly too. An opening time of 5.30pm caters for children. On Friday,

Saturday and Sunday it opens for lunch. If you can't make it to the restaurant, there is a Deliveroo service.

Don't give up on your New Year resolution just yet

By David Melsome

A recent poll revealed that losing weight and eating more healthily is in most people's top three New Year resolutions... but 80% of people have given up by February. So, should we just not bother and open that last tin of Quality Street? Of course not!

Nutritional therapist and long-time East Finchley resident Thalia Pellegrini has started her own business and is on hand to give some motivational and practical advice.

"Most people go hell for leather on 1 January," says Thalia. "They're determined to make changes. But making change is more challenging than we realise. That's why most of us give up and return to familiar habits. Small changes, made consistently, and, most

importantly, with support, are much more likely to endure."

Thalia specialises in helping women to find ways of improving their health and well-being. She says women are fantastic at looking after everyone around them but often push their own health to the bottom of their to-do list. Long term, this can affect their

weight, sleep, energy levels, hormonal health and mood.

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Nutritional therapist: Thalia Pellegrini.

hacks, all given with weekly support and no calorie counting.

Thalia sees clients one-to-one in East Finchley. Readers of *The Archer* can quote GOODHEALTH for 10% off all plans booked in January. And if you're not sure if nutritional therapy is for you, call Thalia for a free wellbeing call on 07939 516512 to find out more. You can find her online at www.thaliapellegrini.com.

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Cause of Grange estate blaze may never be known

By Janet Maitland

The cause of the fire that engulfed the roof of Willow House on the Grange Estate in November may never be known for certain.

As we reported last month, 60 people were lucky to escape with their lives when flames took hold of the block off Oak Lane, N2, in the middle of the night. Quick-thinking neighbours managed to raise the alarm and residents fled, but many were left with just the night clothes they fled in.

Damage prevents investigations

Commenting on the possible cause, a spokesperson for the Fire Brigade told *The Archer*: "It's most probable that the fire started due to an electri-

whole building.

We were informed that there are no fire alarms in communal spaces such as stairwells and corridors as these are not legally required. We also asked if all the flats had smoke alarms and were told that these are only required by Barnet Homes tenants. For the flats sold on a long term lease it is the leaseholder's choice, unless they are subletting.

Fire doors at Grange Estate

The most recent fire risk assessment of the block was carried out on 15 May 2017.



The flames take hold in Willow House. Photo Ximenita Pachon

cal episode in the loft space, not necessarily a fault as they can't determine this, but due to the extensive damage, further investigations are unlikely to take place."

A post fire safety audit has also not been carried out by the Brigade for the same reason, but a fire safety officer who attended at the time of the fire did not note any deficiencies.

Smoke alarms

We understand that while the fire involved an area of common roof space, it was divided by partition walls at regular intervals. These breaks performed as they should and there was 'no unusual fire spread'.

Given that residents managed to escape Willow House before the Brigade arrived only because they were alerted to the fire by neighbours banging on their doors, we asked Barnet Homes about fire safety in the

These are undertaken every three years in Willow House and in other blocks with the same risk rating.

In July 2018, following the Grenfell fire investigations, the government advised the owners of buildings with Manse Masterdor or Masterdor Ltd fire doors to review their fire risk assessment and consider how quickly these doors should be replaced as they do not meet the 30-minute fire resistance standard.

Fire doors are not required at Willow House as the front entrances open onto a balcony area. However, there are 167 Masterdor Ltd fire doors fitted on blocks in the rest of the estate. Barnet Homes informed us that they are "committed to replacing them" and are "working with the contractor who supplied them to seek a suitable solution for these doors".



No barriers: Rickardo Stewart helps vulnerable young people into employment. Photo Damian Frank

A deep connection with the soul of the community

By Toby Chapman

A grant of £15,000 has been awarded to Community Souls, the local social enterprise company founded in 2011 by Rickardo Stewart to tackle the issues he encountered while working with people living in the most deprived estates in Barnet.

Rickardo, who grew up on the Grange Estate in East Finchley, is a trained youth practitioner and life coach with over ten years' experience of working with some of London's most vulnerable young people.

Turning nothing into something

He got the idea for Community Souls after watching many of his friends going in and out of prison.

He said: "My peers, people that looked like me, people that lived in my area, none of them were interested in pursuing the 'normal' path. What I learned from the people I grew up with was that hustler ambition, of turning nothing into something. I just decided to turn that into creativity."

Rickardo set up the socially-conscious commercial cleaning division of Community Souls in 2014. Each employee is paid the London Living Wage. They also receive one-to-one mentoring and help with their personal and professional development.

"It's about more than just providing financial support," he said. "We're a community interest company and we want to deliver social value to our

community. It's not about restoring the soul of the community, it's about connecting with it."

So far, 19 people have been employed, 15 of whom have gone on to further employment or education. The new £15,000 grant will be used to reach and

employ more people in 2019. It was awarded by UnLtd, a charity that funds social entrepreneurs.

Rickardo's work with the charity Art Against Knives was recognised in 2018 with a London Youth Practitioner of the Year Award.

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YOUNG ARCHER

A new way to see the world

By Oscar Graham

At the start of this academic year, I joined year seven at the Archer Academy in East Finchley. There, I discovered a subject I'd never come across before: Thematic Learning, which is a synthesis of all subjects.

It is thought that young people see the world in interesting and different ways, and make connections that an adult brain may not so easily make; essentially, thinking outside the box. Thematic learning aims to cultivate fresh and original thinking, making links between subjects.

Improving East Finchley

Our topic for this term was East Finchley and how we could make it a better place. We began by discussing amongst ourselves our own personal experiences and how they affected what we would like to see changed.

This included things such as cycling accidents, too many flats being built, air pollution, police presence and the library. We looked at facilities and amenities found in East Finchley and how the provision impacted the community. We also looked into crime levels and how they compared to other areas of London.

Surveys and interviews

We then wanted to obtain local residents' opinions on these important local matters so each of us designed a ten-question survey which we distributed to family

and friends of all ages who reside in N2. Additionally we went out on the streets of East Finchley, talking to the public to find their opinions and investigating in particular the derelict pavilion in Cherry Tree Wood.

Following this trip we began to think about how we could use our data in a helpful, productive and useful manner. We came up with some very exciting plans for the pavilion and each wrote and delivered a speech to our classmates stating what we would change if we were councillors of East Finchley.

One thing is clear: the future relies on thinking outside the box.



Power pose: by Johana, one of the winning entries in the Dreams of Tomorrow competition

Dynamic young art

Multi-talented young people showcased their creativity with a poetry, photography and art competition culminating in an awards ceremony at Finchley Youth Centre in the High Road.

The Dreams of Tomorrow competition, which coincided with 70 years of the Centre, was organised by Barnet Council's Early Help 0-19 Service. All the entries were displayed at the Centre as part of this year's East Finchley Open Artists' Winter Artists Fair.

Actor and writer Carolyn Pickles, photographer Tark Butler, artist Peter Hale and Archer photographer Mike Coles were the local judges who described the entries as "impressive work, powerful and dynamic".

School computer appeal

A local primary school is appealing for help to buy laptop computers for its pupils learning technology and computer science. Tudor Primary School in Queen's Road, N3, says it is struggling with a shrinking budget, like many schools, but desperately wants to deliver the computing curriculum.

Computing coordinator Arti Jaitly says they are hoping to buy eight versatile Chromebooks costing £180 each to replace the laptops they have at present. The first 20 schools to raise £250 before 18 January will have their fundraising matched

pound for pound by the schools crowdfunding platform Rocket Fund by Nesta. Anyone can donate at <https://spsr.me/vx1>.

Headscratcher

Word ladder

By Oliver Skanberg-Tippen
Find a way to change 'Bowl' to 'Gnat' in five steps, changing just one letter and making a new word each time. See page 9 for the solution.

bowl
gnat

Animal magic at school fair

Hundreds of visitors helped Holy Trinity School pupils and staff raise more than £2,500 at their Christmas Fair last month. Star guests were the petting animals from Freightliners Farm plus the Finchley Fire Station crew and their fire engine.

Organisers thanked the businesses who donated raffle prizes: Haven, Monika Lizak Personal Stylist, MLife, Ask Italian, The Phoenix Cinema, Hollywood Bowl, La Rugoletta, Italian Hug Thai at The Windsor, A. Scott & Son Fishmonger, Pilates Nation, Jennie Mann, Tony's Continental, Campbell and Syme, Chorak, Imperial

Café, Poseidon, Galaxy drug-store, Amici Deli; and also Domino's for providing pizzas.

You can follow the school's activities and news on its Facebook page HolyTrinity-SchoolN2 and also choose to support it financially by using www.thegivingmachine.co.uk and selecting it as your charity on Amazon.



Hugs Bunny: Fergus and Bridget at the Holy Trinity Fair.

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Plastic not fantastic: The No2Plastics street champions meet. Photo Ruth Anders

Street champions take up the campaign against plastics

By Ruth Anders

The neighbours must have thought Ann Inglis was throwing a party, when the doorbell rang time and again, and the dripping umbrellas were brought through to the living room.

The first meeting of the No2Plastics Street Champions had taken months to set up and on a cold wet autumn night, we didn't expect many to turn up. Imagine our excitement when we finally had a group of nine round the table exchanging ideas and lively commitment to the campaign.

With two apologies, No2Plastics has a team of eleven, all united as a result of Ann's original letter to *The Archer* in May and subsequent reports.

Each street champion was allocated a section of High Road shops to visit with a questionnaire ascertaining their interest in the campaign to reduce and one day hopefully eliminate single-use plastics in East Finchley.

Already making waves

Many stories are expected when we meet again in the New Year, but in no time we had some notable successes. Michael Doukaki, owner of Josephines Flowers, was the first to contact us unprompted to lend his support.

And a visit from street champion Deb Scott to charity shop All Aboard so fired up local manager Leslie Cavendish that, after some pondering, he wrote to the charity's CEO with a proposal that all 18 shops across London and Manchester be asked to unite in banning single use plastics from their outlets. This is big news indeed.

Leslie said: "My chat with Deb really made me think, and All Aboard needs to lead the way as a charity. I'm

determined to see what we can all do."

Reader-power

No2Plastics needs you, readers of *The Archer*, to encourage our shops and to join the groundswell of customers wanting to make a difference. It is important that both retailers and customers embrace this change.

Please add your voice to the N2 campaign by joining our 'No2Plastics - East Finchley' Facebook group or by writing to no2plastics@gmail.com and telling us what you think.

Headscratcher

From page 8: Bowl, Fowl, Foal, Goal, Goat, Gnat. Please note there may be more than one solution.

RICKY SAVAGE ...

"The voice of social irresponsibility"

Un-rock 'n roll rebel

Three things make a rock 'n roll star: sex, drugs and, well, rock 'n roll. The problem is that the perma-tanned star of *Summer Holiday* claims that he's the real deal because he doesn't do that kind of thing, the sex and drugs bit anyway. So let's start celebrating 60 years of Cliff Richard's career with the sex... and I don't mean anything sordid.

In fact, there's not much to say. Back when he was just starting out he broke Delia Wick's heart, later he had a thing with his co-star Una Stubbs, he nearly married Jackie Irving and got seduced by Carol Costa. Most blokes get into bands to get laid, but Cliff didn't. Sex just isn't something that drives him.

And now to drugs. Simple, he doesn't do them, except he was so nervous before he did Eurovision he tanked himself up on valium.

Finally to the music. There's too much of it to take in and most of it isn't rock 'n roll. Shame, really, because it all started so well in 1958 with *Move It*. Written by his then guitarist Ian Samwell, not on the hood of a Dodge but on a bus, this was Britain's first real rock 'n roll record. It made the Top 10 and gave us an answer to Elvis.

The problem was that Cliff followed the same path and by 1961 was well on the way to films and family entertainment. In this pre-Beatles world he was the biggest star of 1962 and 1963. By 1965 he'd had 23 consecutive top 10 hits but the next decade wasn't too good for Cliff. He turned into a semi-magic Christian, doing light entertainment TV shows and Eurovision and joining in Mary Whitehouse's back-behind-the-net-curtains campaign.

Then in 1976 some coke-crazed genius decided that now was the time to reinvent Cliff as Rock Cliff. Suddenly we got guitar-driven rock, the *I'm Nearly Famous* comeback LP and the likes of Elton John wearing Cliff badges. This proved that either irony was dead or Cliff had produced something worth listening to.

For some weird reason the reinvention worked. Even I don't need to feel embarrassed about liking *Carrie* or *Wired for Sound*. These are seriously good songs and even if he hasn't matched them since it doesn't matter. As Tony Parsons wrote: if you don't like at least some Cliff, you can't say you like pop music.

Get your rocks off

The Amateur Geological Society is a friendly group based in north London which welcomes new members of all ages, amateur and professional.

The society meets on the second Tuesday of each month in Finchley Baptist Church, East End Road, N3, at 7.30pm, when a guest speaker is invited to give an illustrated talk on a topical geological subject.

Talk topics have ranged from Essex geology, Darwin as a geologist, minerals of the Natural History Museum through to One Million Years of the Human

Story. Guests are welcome but there is a small charge of £2 per adult. Refreshments are available after the talks.

The Society also organises geological field trips in London, Hertfordshire and further afield. Membership is £15 a year for ordinary members, £20 for a family and £10 for a student. Find more details at www.amgeosoc.wordpress.com.

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- ⊙ **Tai Chi & Qigong** in N2, Weds 12pm, 1pm, 6pm & 7pm. James 8883 3308/07836 710281 or james@taiji.co.uk
- ⊙ **Tennis club** with four clay courts off Southern Road. Call 8883 7723.
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- ⊙ **Yoga**, pregnancy yoga, meditation classes. Call Sunnah 07941 321 772 www.stretchingpeople.co.uk.
- ⊙ **Women's kick boxing**, Thursdays 9.30am, East Finchley Combat Academy, Church Lane, N2. Contact 07956 340540.

Music, Dance & Creative Arts

- ⊙ **The Archer Community Choir**, Tuesdays 7-9pm, The Archer Academy, Eagans Close, N2. Email: archercommunitychoir@gmail.com.
- ⊙ **Art Classes**. Call Henry on 8888 5133.
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- ⊙ **East Finchley Writers Group**, Weds at the Old White Lion. Contact Ralph 8444 5903.
- ⊙ **East Finchley Poetry Writing Workshops**. Monthly on Saturdays. Contact Dennis Evans 8346 9528.
- ⊙ **Jazz Club** at the Bohemia, North Finchley. Call 020 7998 6217 or 07957 347411 for more information
- ⊙ **Memory Lane Singing Club** - friendly singing club meets every Friday in Finchley. Call Valerie 8458 4508.
- ⊙ **Learn to sing** at Finchley Methodist Church, Ballards La. Call 8888 4412.
- ⊙ **Muswell Hill after school ukulele club**, Wednesdays 4.15-5.15pm, ages 6-10. Contact Margie 07909 439513.
- ⊙ **Rock 'n Roll dance lessons**, 8pm every Weds at the Constitutional Club, The Walks. Drop-in. Call Kav 07721 489489.
- ⊙ **Traditional tunes** @ TOC Highgate Hill, join in playing by ear - 1st & 3rd Tues monthly from 8.30pm. Free. 07958 282898.

Clubs & Social

- ⊙ **Bingo evening**, 8pm Sundays, at the Constitutional Club, The Walks, N2.
- ⊙ **Bingo Club** Mondays 7-9 pm, Green Man Centre, Contact: Jan 8815 5452
- ⊙ **French conversation** in small friendly group with native speaker. 8444 9395.
- ⊙ **Friends of Cherry Tree Wood** www.cherrytreewood.co.uk or 8883 7544.
- ⊙ **Haringey Recorded Music Society** informal meetings locally. Call David Moldon on 8361 1696.
- ⊙ **Muslim Ladies Lunch Club** 1st & 3rd Weds, Ann Owen Ctr., Oak La. Call 8432 1415 to book.
- ⊙ **Bridge Club**, Thursday & Saturday afternoons, Age UK, Oak Lane, N2 8LT. Contact Ray Tiano 07944 562180.



Massed voices: The Big Choir is ready to make music in East Finchley. Photo Joe Forbes

Sing out loud for cancer research'

The Big Choir is coming to East Finchley! It is a community fundraising choir, raising money through monthly subscriptions and ticket sales for the work of scientists at The Francis Crick Institute in Kings Cross who are seeking cures for 200 different types of cancer.

The choir is looking for new members, of all ages and genders, to go along to their first East Finchley session at The Constitutional Club, The Walks, N2, on Monday 7 January at 7.30pm. There is a bar too, for anyone who wants to socialise afterwards, as singing can be thirsty work.

You don't need any experience, as long as you love to sing. Members range from first-timers to experienced, and everything in

between. There are many performance opportunities and organisers say they are always looking for those brave enough to take on solos. Their repertoire is mainly pop, with some gospel, in fact anything that makes the heart pump a bit faster.

Find out more at www.thebigchoir.org. To book a free January taster in East Finchley, contact Sharon on 07971 957188, or by email at info@thebigchoir.org.



Tina McNaughton presenting the prizes to Peter Bloom. Photo Tam Hughes

A fitting memorial to Neil

For many years Finchley Manor Tennis, Squash and Health Club has held a Christmas tennis tournament. A highlight of their tennis calendar, it was organised by Archer team member Neil McNaughton, who sadly passed away in June 2018.

Only the previous year Neil had donated the Neil McNaughton Trophy for the winner of this event, all of which is now to be renamed in his honour, reflecting the hard work he put into organising it.

This year the winner also received a signed copy of The

Beatles' Hairdresser) on which Neil collaborated with Leslie Cavendish, manager of All Aboard on the High Road in East Finchley.

The presentation was made by Tina, Neil's widow, who will be returning to the club in the spring for the unveiling of a bench dedicated to his memory.



World premiere: Composer Eric Wetherell with organist Jennifer Bate OBE at All Saints'. Photo Marian Harris

Composer hears first performance at All Saints

By Fleur Adcock

A memorable celebration took place at All Saints' Church in Durham Road, N2, late last year with the first performance of the *Missa Brevis* by Eric Wetherell at the parish mass.

The 93-year-old composer himself was present, with other members of his family. His daughter Pauline sings in the church choir, and helped to arrange the event – a factor that spurred her father on to finish his beautiful piece. The choir was augmented by additional singers in order to do full justice to it.

Wide-ranging musical career

Eric Wetherell has had a distinguished career as a composer and in many other fields of music. He studied composition under Herbert Howells, and has been a professional horn player, conductor for several important orchestras, associate musical director with Welsh National Opera, and a senior musical producer for the BBC, among other positions.

His inspiring and revelatory new work shows his powers to be undiminished. From the melodious and expressive Gloria through the lovely, ethereal Credo to the hypnotic Agnus Dei, its changing moods skilfully

reflect the contrasting emotional content of successive parts of the Mass.

Music and All Saints

The occasion of its first performance marked two important days in the church calendar: the feast of Christ the King and that of St Cecilia, patron saint of music. All Saints has a carved wooden statue of this saint, donated in memory of the late viol maker Dietrich Kessler by his widow Jane, who died recently. It symbolises the gift of music, which is such an important part of church life at All Saints.

The church is also the home of the East Finchley Arts Festival, founded 21 years ago by retired organist and choirmaster Geoffrey Hanson. It was his successor, Mark Denza, who rehearsed and conducted the choir for this special performance, while the celebrated organist Jennifer Bate played the accompaniment. The whole event was a showcase of talents.



Get the performing bug

Fixation Theatre Company's Festive Showcase was a huge hit at the Finchley Youth Centre in the High Road last month. Young performers aged four upwards staged a dynamic selection of songs, dances and acting pieces they had created, and played to packed audiences at two shows.



The Fixation Theatre's Festive Showcase at the Youth Centre. Photo Mike Coles

Artistic director Laura Davitt said: "We would like to thank all of the amazing talent for taking part in the show, and the parents, audience members and all of our

staff and volunteers for continually supporting our shows."

Fixation is starting to rehearse for its production of *High School Musical* this month

and is always looking for fresh talent to join in. Find out more by emailing Laura at info@fixationtheatre.com or phone her on 07708 608570.

'Super charger' creates parking headache in the Suburb

By Ruth Anders

Increasing petrol prices and concerns about the environment have led to a rise in sales for electric vehicles. This in turn has led to a proliferation of charging stations on our high streets. But who could have anticipated the rise of the 'super charger' or the questionable opportunity their installation affords Transport for London (TfL) to generate income from parking penalties?

Large and unsightly

A case in point is Market Place, in Hampstead Garden Suburb. Problems began there with an application to Barnet Council by TfL to install two chargers in parking bays dedicated for the purpose, one on each side of the road.

Traders and residents claim that the image of the chargers that accompanied the application suggested a much more discreet structure than those that finally appeared.

Members of the Hampstead Garden Suburb Residents Association are objecting on the basis that not only are the

'super chargers' unsightly, but also that they are scarcely used and stop bona fide shoppers from parking.

'Months of misery'

Jitendra Dave, who runs the local newsagent, said: "We have endured months of misery over the installation of a completely unwanted electric charging point. All the traders had power accidentally cut off for 12 hours on one occasion and now a perfectly good parking space will be restricted to only a tiny number of users, which is very bad for trade."

Unfair charges

As if that weren't bad

enough, drivers appear to have been unfairly charged for parking in the bays whilst they were under construction. The bays have been up and running since the beginning of July, but work began some months previously on an 'on/off basis' resulting in periods of suspension during which they were off limits for parking. However, the suspension was inadequately advertised at times, and many residents and shoppers have received hefty fines.

During the last suspension period, we are told that TfL's signs were fitted with blank pieces of paper, which should have made the restrictions unenforceable. For now, TfL have refused to cancel the fines.

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.



Our schools are out of tune

By Jane Cutler

I am the co-founder of a 27-year-old music education charity and Saturday Music Centre based in Finchley, and have seen the subject eroded over the past three decades from respected and well-funded to almost non-existent in many schools.

It started with budget cuts and the removal of specialist music teachers from schools; the introduction of the National Curriculum meant there was an expectation that primary teachers would teach music, despite having had as little as nine hours in their B.Ed training in preparation.

The DfE put aside money for the First Access courses so that primary children have a one year (although it's sometimes one term) experience of playing an instrument while in primary school. One year or one term of playing an instrument cannot be counted as a 'good education in music'!

The lack of interest in music shown by OFSTED when inspecting a school and the fact that music nearly disappeared from the curriculum in 2013 all result in many children having no musical skill or knowledge when they enter secondary education. This impacts hugely on what secondary teachers are able to do in their classes and results in the loss of school orchestras, bands, choirs and so much more. And with the introduction of the Baccalaureate many schools no longer offer A-level music.

I would like to see music education rebuilt from the bottom up. Let's start again with quality Early Years' music teaching, moving on to a properly structured and detailed curriculum treating music as an important part of a child's education.

Letters

Plastic puzzle

Dear Editor,

I wonder if any of your readers have had similar experiences when it comes to cutting down plastics.

I have contacted several dairies that supply milk in glass bottles to households in East Finchley, but was told they don't deliver to my address, even though, on one occasion, I spoke to one of the milk men who was just delivering to the road neighbouring ours.

I was told that it wouldn't be possible to deliver to blocks of flats, a reply that baffled me. Why not? On our estate we have off street parking options, and there are plenty of us here who would be interested in ordering milk in glass bottles.

Perhaps local supermarkets or smaller grocery shops such as Tony's Continental could be persuaded to offer milk in glass bottles? Or a vending machine, such as the likes you could easily find in Germany, where farms sell their produce directly from the road, could be installed in East Finchley?

Yours faithfully,
Christine Hoenigs,
Address supplied.

What's On...

E-mail your listings to: the-archer@lineone.net

Sunday 13 January

• Ramblers Association walk on Hampstead Heath (7 miles/12km). Meet 10.30am at Hampstead Lane Car Park, NW3 7JP (car park near Kenwood House) with free parking on nearby Bishops Avenue or Winnington Road. This circular walk passes Highgate Cemetery to enter Waterlow Park, finishing at Kenwood House. Leaders: Jane Gibson and Mike Lees (020 8343 1463 or 07727 26 2519).

Saturday 19 January

• Launch of N2 Poetry Issue 7; East Finchley Methodist Church, 197 High Road, N2, at 7pm. Entry £5 includes a copy of N2 Poetry Issue 7.

Monday 21 January

• 1960s Film Club presents an episode of *The Prisoner*, plus *Fahrenheit 451*; 7pm at Friern Barnet Community Library, Friern Barnet Road, N11 3DS. Admission by £3 donation.

Saturday 26 January

• Muswell Hill Indoor Car Boot Sale, 10am to 1pm at Hornsey Parish Church Hall, Cranley Gardens, N10 3AH; info from 020 8368 8180 or 07708 152354; admission 50p; refreshments available.

Until Sunday 27 January

• Nice Work If You Can Get It, a screwball musical comedy with music and lyrics by George and Ira Gershwin; Upstairs at the Gatehouse, Highgate; details and box office at upstairsatthegatehouse.com or 020 8340 3488.

Coming soon to arts depot



Sat 19 Jan // 2pm & 7.30pm

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The sequel that should never have been written

By John Lawrence

Adam Blain never expected to write a sequel to his first book. The father-of-three self-published *Pear Shaped* in 2015 to bring dark humour to his awful situation of being diagnosed with an aggressive brain tumour and being told he could reasonably expect to live 15 months at most.

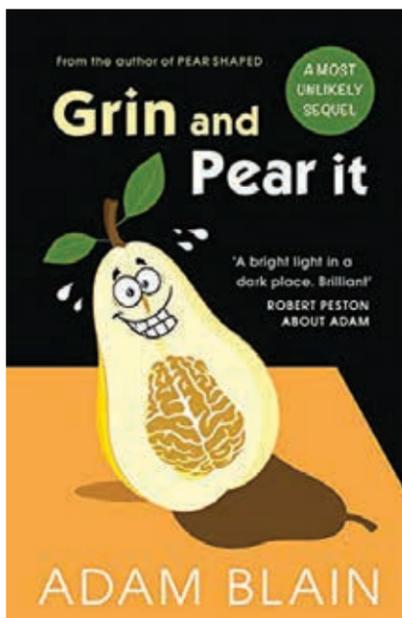
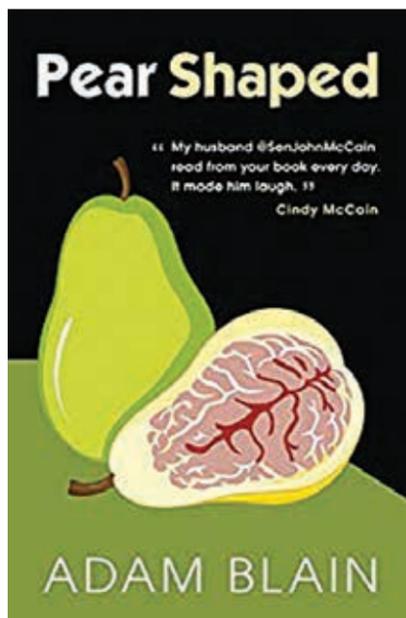
Now in 2019 Adam has written that sequel and called it *Grin and Pear It*, lifting the lid on a year in his drastically-altered

the widow of US senator John McCain, who died from brain cancer last summer, sent Adam a message saying her husband

they are going through. There's no other agenda, except hoping the books will make a little pot of money for my family when I'm gone."

New career

Adam, 49, lives in Bedford Road, N2, with his wife Lu and their three children Jonah, Sacha and Thea. Surgery and his short-term memory loss have forced him to give up his job as a lawyer, so becoming a published author has been a welcome new career. Lu described the new book as being very much about the survivor mentality. She said: "There are very few long-term survivors but Adam is



The story continues: Above, Author Adam Blain and his wife Lu; left, the covers of his two self-published books.

world as he goes through scan after treatment after scan, and musing on what life means for someone who didn't expect to be alive.

Still laughing

The first thing to say about the second book is that it is just as funny as the first. Cindy McCain,

had laughed his way through *Pear Shaped* in the final stages of his illness.

"Making people laugh means everything to me," says Adam. "I've written it for anyone with any kind of cancer or who's going through an operation. I hope they will laugh and get through what

one of them. He describes the uncertainty of it all, and at the same time having to cope with all the normal little things that go wrong in daily life."

Adam puts this down to acceptance. "The disease doesn't own you," he says. "You must adjust your approach to life and take each day one at a time. You move your horizon in and come up with your own

copied strategies. One of mine is acceptance, rather than trying to change everything all the time."

Publisher sought

One of Adam and Lu's big wishes is that a publisher takes his two books into print. Publishers can contact us here at *The Archer* and we will put them in touch. Currently, both titles are available as downloads on Amazon, where they are getting five-star reviews.

Soothing songs for busy commuters

By Marian Bunzl
For our last performances of 2018, North London Chorus sang carols at two London underground stations: East Finchley Station on behalf of Noah's Ark and St Pancras on behalf of The Parent House.

At East Finchley we were stationed in the elegant, tiled hall facing the homecoming passengers, who were greeted with traditional carols in unaccompanied four-part harmony (and descant).

St Pancras International, one of London's greatest Victorian buildings, is now, in part, a shopping mall as well as a station. We foregathered outside Starbucks, to be escorted to our designated spot. The station has a collection of pianos for public use, and we had the honour to be allocated the piano donated by Sir Elton John to accompany our performance.

As always, the much-loved tunes and words worked their magic. The stress of the rush hour and Christmas shopping calmed down, faces relaxed and smiled, people stopped to listen, (and photograph or record) and donated generously.

Carols are a wonderful institution. They carry a beautiful message, they give great pleasure to performers and listeners, and worthwhile charities are enabled to continue their work.

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