



Tina McNaughton presents a new CD player to Laurence McGonnell, manager of The North London Hospice. Photo Mike Coles

## Gift of music in memory of Neil

Family and friends of the late Neil McNaughton, who wrote for *The Archer* for over ten years, gathered at the North London Hospice on Thursday 14 February. After suffering a brain tumour, Neil passed away there last June. In gratitude for the loving care he received and in memory of our colleague, the *Archer* team gave a CD player to the hospice's quiet room.

This gift was the suggestion of Patient and Family Support Manager Laurence McGonnell, who welcomed it as a useful addition to many aspects of the hospice's activities. The presentation was made to him by Neil's widow Tina. In a very moving occasion, both she and Neil's son Philip praised the wonderful work that is carried out by devoted staff there.



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](mailto:EastFinchley.snt@met.police.uk), or by phone on 020 7161 9014. Follow the team on Twitter @MPSEastFinchley.

### Team update

We are happy to inform you that we now have a new Police Sergeant, PS Chris Thompson, who will look after all three of the Finchley teams: East Finchley, Church End and West Finchley. He'll bring them a lot of experience from his time leading response teams in the borough of Harrow.

In March, we'll also be getting an experienced Police Constable for East Finchley who, with PC John Kenny, will bring our little team to full strength. Once the warm weather arrives (hopefully) and the ward becomes busier, there'll be two PCs, a third of a PS and one Police Community Support officer (PCSO) in the team.

### Theft from motor vehicles

It's been a quiet start to the year, with only one burglary in January. The main crime issue is theft from motor vehicles where windows have been smashed. I am loath to remind you good folk not to leave nice things on display, but in nearly all the thefts there were phones, iPads and even handbags on view, and in some instances left in unlocked vehicles too.

### Van security

There is a steady number of break-ins to work vans to steal power tools which can be very expensive to replace and work often has to stop until they are replaced. If you need to keep a van loaded with tools, take a look at forensic property marking kits such as SelectaDNA, Smartwater and Selectamark, which are all approved by the police.

Kits specifically aimed at work vans include bright stickers for the van windows which state that the van contents are marked. Marked tools are much harder to sell, so your van is much less likely to be targeted. There are also extra locking devices available from Thatcham, especially designed to secure work vehicles.

## Playground greenery stripped in 'scorched earth policy'

By John Lawrence

Parents have expressed their horror at the loss of dozens of shrubs and bushes in and around the children's playground at Market Place and Park Road, N2. Workmen sent in by Barnet Council were seen reducing established shrubs to ground level one day in early February, leaving behind bare earth and shorn stumps.

Almar Haflidason, who has two young daughters, said one of their pleasures was to create their own worlds in the shrubbery. In previous years, the greenery had been carefully trimmed before growing back.

### Short-term thinking criticised

"There will be no more of this thanks to an extraordinary exercise in razing everything down to the ground," said Almar. "In what seems to be a scorched earth policy all of the shrubs, bushes and trees have gone in an act of callous vandalism that has turned the playground into one giant open space of nothing but some ancient equipment. It looks really depressing."

Local resident Julia Cassells said her children got more fun weaving through the paths in the bushes than they did from the playground equipment, which is "tired and very uninspiring". She said: "On an environmental level I'm also very distressed at the lack of consideration for the biodiversity which these bushes will have



Cut backs: Shrubs and bushes at the playground have been sliced to ground level.

harboured. I can only assume this is one of Barnet Council's cost cutting exercises but in my opinion this is a very extreme and unnecessary response which typifies this council's short-term thinking."

### Council's reasoning

A council spokesman told *The Archer* that the shrubbery has been cut back to prevent anti-social behaviour in the playground by making it more

visible from nearby roads. "It was also identified that some of the shrubbery was made up of thorny pyracantha and hawthorn shrubs, unsuitable for a children's play area," said the spokesman. "We will be grassing over the areas where the shrubs were. We will also be removing the ivy from the fencing, as it's damaging the fence, and the fence will then be replaced with a new one."

## Girl injured in High Road collision

By Janet Maitland

A 12-year-old girl was rushed to hospital with a head injury after she was in collision with a van in the High Road, N2, on her way home from school.

The accident happened at 3.15pm on Thursday 24 January when she was crossing from the Bald Faced Stag to the Fortis Green side of the junction.

The driver had just turned right into the High Road from East End Road. He stopped at the scene, parking outside Amici's café, and was questioned. No arrest has been made. Police have taken CCTV footage for investigation.

People from the café and Sorbet nail bar helped the girl to a chair on the pavement and comforted her till the ambulance arrived. Her head wound was fortunately not serious and she was later discharged from hospital.

### Timing of lights

This junction is notoriously difficult to cross. Comments on social media after the accident cited drivers jumping lights or not signalling, and pedestrians not looking properly or taking a chance. The timing of the lights is thought

to be the main problem.

Our writer Diana Cormack, who uses the crossing daily, said: "The hang-over between lights and signs changing is unfathomable and encourages locals like me to cross, knowing I have the time ... or do I?"

Councillor Arjun Mittra and his East Finchley councillor colleagues have raised the timings of the lights with Transport for London a number of times and have

requested an Oxford Circus-style 'X' crossing.

Councillor Mittra commented: "TfL said it would require additional time on the pedestrian filter, which would have an impact on traffic flow elsewhere. But we will keep pressing for this."

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