



# Comings and goings on the shop front

By Diana Cormack

Last month news that two long established businesses in Muswell Hill are to close caused consternation amongst their customers. Social media carried comments about Fagins Toys and Muswell Hill Bookshop, both of which have traded on Fortis Green Road for several decades, with people concerned not only about their loss, due to their joint owner's retirement, but also wondering what could replace them.

Around the same time in East Finchley there have been comings and goings on the local shop front. Various High Road premises which had been closed for months began to take on a new lease of life.

At 70 High Road, site of the former Pizza Hut take-away, workmen busy with renovations told *The Archer* it was going to be an Italian pizza place. Nearby a shop previously occupied by Josephines florist is to be a nail bar.

Higher up at 117, something is happening at what was The Big Chef café and, further afield at 42 Church Lane, work is progressing on the former Boyden's Pantry. At the time of writing there was still speculation about which businesses are to appear at those two places.

However, it has already been revealed what the renovations at

130 East End Road are preparing for. Here Niny, a beautician who worked at Sorbet on the High Road which closed last year, is setting up her own beauty salon.

Sadly, Tomato Tutors at 174 High Road is having to move. Despite all her hard work Laura Alvarado has not been able to make it work because of rent and rates on the High Road. The doors will close this summer but Laura hopes to relocate to somewhere else in N2 and is looking for suitable premises.

### Use them or lose them

Unfortunately other businesses are facing similar problems which will undoubtedly be exacerbated by the covid19 situation. N2United, East Finchley's community and business network, continues to exhort us all to support our local shops and traders for otherwise we are in imminent danger of losing them.



Ground level: Ben Wilson, inset, creates a new artwork outside the Offshoot Gallery. Photo Mike Coles.



End result: Ben's finished piece featured a cigarette butt and a globe. Photo Mike Coles.



Street scene: Another of Ben's tiny paintings shows East Finchley's High Road and the Bald Faced Stag pub.

# Woman arrested for holding up shop with imitation gun

By Janet Maitland

A woman was arrested just minutes after holding up a shop on the High Road in East Finchley with an imitation gun in early March.

Specialised firearms officers tracked her down and arrested her so quickly because an officer from our Safer Neighbourhood Team (SNT) on the High Road had been able to identify her. The woman has been charged and remanded in custody for theft and having an imitation gun intended to cause fear of violence. The shop and the victims she targeted have not been named.

### Serious offences

Two other people were arrested in connection with serious offences in East Finchley last month, thanks to SNT intelligence.

A 16-year-old boy, a prolific offender in this region, was arrested and charged with carrying an offensive weapon, aggravated vehicle taking and four driving offences. Jan Lovell from the SNT said: "We worked in conjunction with county officers outside London to obtain the evidence to secure charges and hopefully a conviction at court."

A local man was also arrested after an SNT officer identified him from CCTV footage. He has been charged with burglary and is on police bail while police investigate further.

# Miniature painter uses the pavement as his canvas

By David Melsome

Street artist Ben Wilson, known as Chewing Gum Man, created some of his trademark miniature works on the pavement outside the Offshoot Art Gallery in East Finchley at the start of an event

exploring climate change. Ben has become famous for decorating chewing gum left discarded on pavements around Muswell Hill. The pieces he painted outside Offshoot on Thursday 5 March showed a High Road scene featuring the

Bald Faced Stag pub, and a discarded cigarette butt encased next to an image of the Earth. The gallery's #FakeNews exhibition displayed works that asked questions about sustainability, inequality and immigration.

# Bicycle bandits

Police have launched an operation to combat a rise in the number of crimes carried out by people riding bicycles. The Met says they have seen an increase in instances of pedal cycles being used for offences like robbery.

The numbers are not as high as the stream of crimes of carried out by thieves on mopeds, scooters and motorcycles, which themselves are being reduced by the Met's Operation Venice. Police say they will target their patrols on hotspots, particularly in central London, to cut off the rise in bicycles being used to ride by and rob pedestrians.

# Roof destroyed in house fire

Four fire crews worked for two hours to get a blaze under control in Park Hall Road, N2, on the afternoon of Friday 27 March. The fire destroyed the loft conversion and a large part of the roof.

Part of the first floor of the three-storey home was also damaged. All four residents escaped uninjured. The cause of the fire is under investigation.

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