



Anti-social noise and litter mar woods and parks

By Janet Maitland

Residents living near Cherry Tree Wood have been kept awake by noise from people using it at night for barbecues and meet-ups with friends. Several local people have found the litter left behind so unsightly and annoying that they have cleared it up themselves.

"Young people shouting and screaming and having fires till one in the morning keeps me awake," said one resident, who lives near the park. "This has always been an issue during the summer. The last time the gates were left unlocked, as they are now, this went on for the whole summer. "Some young people would still climb over locked gates, but it would be more difficult to bring in barbecues and alcohol. They would definitely deter older people, like an accordion player recently who was so noisy I called the police."

Jan Lovell from the East Finchley Safer Neighbourhood Team said they had received one

complaint of people gathering at night in the picnic area by the Fordington Road entrance. Jan said: "It's a shame as people leave rubbish and disposable barbecues on the grass. It's a difficult one as none of the Barnet parks are being locked. It's not ideal, but we're only speaking of handfuls of people."

Police and councillors comment

Local councillors Arjun Mitra and Claire Farrier met with Barnet Council officers a few weeks ago to raise residents' concerns about anti-social behaviour in the woods.

"The council stopped locking the gates because of financial constraints and although they are seeking community volunteer support to help with issues like maintenance and locking up, this is very early days," said Cllr Mitra.

Patrolling to increase

A Barnet Council spokesperson told us: "We've suspended the locking of parks in consideration of Covid-19 and this is being reviewed on a regular basis. Our officers and police regularly patrol parks and will be stepping up patrols in this area."

Residents can report anti-social behaviour on the 101 police number or online at www.met.police.uk/ro/report. In case of emergency, always dial 999.



Open water: The Men's Pond on Hampstead Heath now needs to be booked and paid for in advance

Ponds swimmers kick out against new booking system

Archer reader Lucy Zanetti welcomes the return of swimming at Highgate Ponds on Hampstead Heath but laments the introduction of compulsory charges to enjoy the waters.

Like many locals, I'm a year-round swimmer at Highgate Ponds. The Ladies' and Men's Ponds are treasures, each an off-grid oasis where you can relax (phones hardly work there), admire the pond life, commune with nature, and meet friends or enjoy solitude.

Thousands visit the ponds through the summer and some hardy folk swim on into the winter, when you might be in the water for only three or four minutes but the life-affirming lift this provides is incomparable. We can turn up when we like, no planning ahead necessary, just slip in, swim about and head off. What a dream.

Our ponds have been closed during the Covid-19 crisis but are now reopening. Up to this

point, tranquillity has reigned, payment has not been compulsory, and so, like the zoo at Golders Hill Park, the playgrounds and the Heath in general, the public right of access has continued unabated.

So it is with heavy hearts that we learn the City of London Corporation (one of the wealthiest local authorities in the country), which manages the Heath, is intent on spoiling our respite from the frenetic world we now live in.

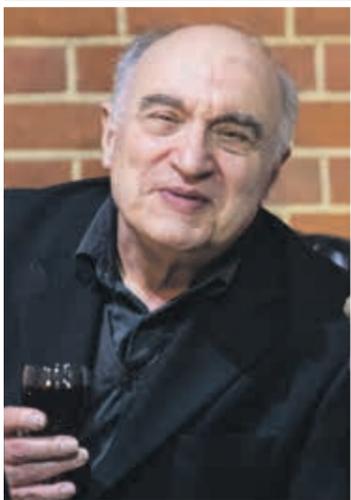
Payment: voluntary or compulsory?

Last month they introduced a system whereby swims must be booked via an online system, at a cost of £4 or £2.40 for just

one precious hour of access. We hope the booking requirement won't outlast the Covid-19 restrictions, but the idea of commercialising this historic enclave makes me weep.

If only the Corporation had listened to the voices of the swimmers, the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee and the locals who resolved to cooperate with a viable alternative option for encouraging more voluntary payments, then all could have remained equal and undivided.

For more about this debate, look at the Kenwood Ladies Pond Association website at www.klpa.uk and consider the implications for local democracy.



Music man: Geoffrey Hanson

Geoffrey Hanson

Daphne Chamberlain
The Archer team was very sad to hear of the death of East Finchley Arts Festival founder and director Geoffrey Hanson. He was found at his home last month by a friend when he failed to keep a virtual appointment. We understand that ambulance paramedics said he had died quickly and peacefully.

A church organist and prolific composer, Geoffrey was also the Director of Music at All Saints' Church in Durham Road for 30 years. He celebrated his 80th birthday with a special concert there last December. This year's Arts Festival had already been postponed indefinitely because of Covid-19. The Archer will bring you a full appreciation of Geoffrey Hanson next month.

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SAFER NEIGHBOURHOODS

LOCAL POLICE, LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

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.

Roofing scam

This is a resident's account of a roofing scam that happened in East Finchley. They tell it very well in their own words. Please be on the alert and spread the word.

"I avoided paying the scammer any money (apart from £250 to a scaffolding company for scaffolding which I'm having removed). I'm still going to incur expense reinstating the roofing tiles that were unnecessarily removed but the cost should be hundreds rather than thousands of pounds.

"You may wish to warn local residents that aggressive and very professional sounding roofing repair scammers are operating in the area, offering an initial cheap repair service and then claiming major roofing repairs are needed costing thousands of pounds to remedy when the repairs are unnecessary.

"In my case they caused damage to the roof by ripping off tiles and throwing them to the ground pretending that the condition of the roof was dangerous when it wasn't."