



Picking up a new thread

By Lizzie Tomlin

Costumier Celia Grenville has set up her own online embroidery shop, selling everything from Christmas tree decorations to home décor, and even personalised napkins.

When her work was put on hold with the start of lockdown in March, Celia says that she “needed something to do to keep my spirits high”.

She began by drawing on her experience of working in fashion houses, London theatres and TV and film to make 36 sets of protective scrubs for Barnet General Hospital, in addition to

fund-raising over £500.

Next, she began making clothes out of recycled fabric,

and started to stitch surprise embroidery projects as gifts for her theatre colleagues, to help “spread a little joy”.

From there, she began to embroider more and more for herself and, as many people who have turned to creative outlets during the pandemic have discovered, it turned out to be a sort of calming therapy, as well as helping her stay mentally healthy.

What began as a lockdown-hobby has blossomed into a small business. Celia says it is a wonderful thing that there has been a recent movement to support small and local businesses, which she supports 100%.

Celia updates her Etsy account and website frequently and is happy to offer bespoke and personalised creations if contacted. Find out more at www.embroiderybycelia.co.uk and www.etsy.com/uk/shop/embroiderybycelia



Sew festive: Celia Grenville at work. Photo Mike Coles

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.



Let's go shopping ... sustainably

By Greta Brambilla

Now that most of us are spending more time at home, I feel like it is a prime time to reflect on what we could be doing to improve, whether for the community, the environment or our wellbeing. Due to the peak of online shopping that is happening at the moment, clothing is a particular area of consideration for us all.

While we can agree it is easy to get cheap, swift deliveries from popular brands without paying too much attention to the small print, we are often disappointed with what arrives and the excess packaging that it arrives in. Not to mention this type of mass shopping can be very damaging in so many ways.

Making the switch to sustainable fashion, however, can turn this around with an internationally beneficial impact. It only takes a few simple steps to shop consciously.

First, I would advise using local charity shops to their fullest. They're convenient, for a good cause and often full of hidden gems. Boutique by Shelter, in Muswell Hill, is a particular branch that I would recommend as they tend to offer high-end pieces for reasonable prices and are kept organised for easy browsing like regular clothes shops.

Online there are certain sellers like People Tree that are both style and sustainability focused, offering clothes that are made in recycled or biodegradable materials or durable, luxurious fabrics. Even if the price tag means you cannot buy as much, think of these pieces as mini investments. Not only will they look and feel better but also last longer as well as preventing the usual wardrobe clutter.

Make every garment count rather than simply filling up space. Additionally, in trying to find new pieces, it is really important to consider the materials as much as the aesthetic. Look for all things natural, like wool (especially merino), bamboo, linen and cotton which are noticeably breathable against the skin. Try to avoid synthetics where possible such as acrylic and polyester; not only are they bad for overheating but also contribute to ocean pollution due to their use of plastic fibres.

You might also already have items that you love at home but with little issues like holes or rips, too big or too small. Rather than turning to cheap, poorly made alternatives and fast fashion replacements, don't forget there is always the possibility for repairing or revamping. Whatever your shopping habits or budgets are, make sure to give the sustainable approach a go to make a difference to both you and the planet.

Letters

Abuse of shop staff

Dear Editor,

I realise we're all living through difficult times, but in recent weeks I've been alarmed to overhear customers of shops on the High Road voicing bad-tempered or rude complaints to staff.

On several occasions I've heard people grumbling loudly about having had to queue outside a store before being served, even though this measure is completely sensible and well within current health guidelines.

The genial staff at Tony's Continental, who are responsible for its friendly, often light-hearted atmosphere, have recently had to put up with several such examples of boorish behaviour. I have also witnessed similar incidents at Budgens and Sainsbury's. And recently at the High Road Post Office, a young manager politely asked a woman to don her face mask, as per regulations, only to be greeted by a torrent of dreadful abuse from her as she stormed out.

This is terribly unfair on N2 shop workers, the vast majority of whom are hard-working and genuinely helpful. The conditions they have to impose on shoppers are aimed at keeping people as safe as possible.

Let's remind ourselves: more than 50,000 people in Britain have died from this terrible virus. We're in the worst crisis since World War II. Surely it's not too much to ask shoppers to exercise patience and restraint, and maintain some perspective.

The High Road is usually a delightful place to shop, largely due to friendly, hard-working staff who are so helpful to customers. Let's get behind them and be supportive when they're confronted by such behaviour.

Philippa Humphreys,
Address supplied.

Send your correspondence to: "Letters Page" The Archer, PO Box 3699, London N2 2DE or e-mail news@the-archer.co.uk

Shops under pressure

Dear Editor,

Our small independent High Road shops are being hit by so many restrictions and charges levied by local councils and TFL that the owner of at least one of them has told me he is seriously considering closing.

They've all been badly affected by the limitations imposed as a result of the pandemic, and now increased and expanded costs relating to waste disposal, unloading and parking for customers and staff area threatening to make their businesses unviable.

And that's without the difficulties inflicted on them by the introduction of the new cycle and bus lanes. I fear our local high street is seriously at risk.

Isobel Grant
Huntingdon Road, N2.

Silence on the libraries

Dear Editor,

I'm wondering if there is a devious scheme to get rid of public libraries by just not mentioning them. I assumed this second lockdown would be like the first, when all libraries were closed. I scanned all lists of who was doing what, but found no mention of them anywhere. Then a thought occurred: with schools and universities open, had 'non-essential' become 'essential'? Still no mention anywhere.

I checked with friends in other boroughs, personally and online, and as far as we know in many authorities not even library staff knew what was happening until the day before.

The decision seems to have been left to each local authority, with some closing all branches and some operating 'select and collect' at the main branches. Barnet is selecting and collecting, and offering computer use. They did have prior messages on its website and phone, but just saying that that was happening 'now', which was confusing when the lockdown hadn't even started (no mention of the lockdown as such.)

Finally, when lockdown had started, I found my first mention of libraries on the Covid-19 app on my phone. All very mysterious, and extra baffling when libraries' online services are doing so well.

Vicky Stevenson,
Address supplied.

Backwards walker

Dear Editor,

A couple of days after the clocks went back I got up just after dawn by mistake, drew the curtains and saw that my street was on fire. A split second later I realised it wasn't full of smoke, but a thick autumnal mist. Then a man walking backwards appeared, not even glancing behind him as he paced quickly up the street.

He was slap bang in the middle of the road and was slim, about 30 and wearing a suit, which was how I knew he wasn't someone exercising. Perhaps he's trying to replace the local man who walked backwards for years who died recently? Has anyone else seen him in East Finchley?

Lindsay Gabriel,
Address supplied.

All Saints' Church, Durham Road, East Finchley Church of England

At the time of going to press, public worship is currently suspended at All Saints' but you are welcome to join us for our live-streamed services via our Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/allsaintsef/>

Sunday mass at 10.00 a.m.
Weekday masses and times when the church is open for private payer are as advertised on the website.

Details of Christmas Services will be published on our website and on Facebook as soon as they are available.

Prayer requests are gladly accepted.

For more information, contact the Vicar, Fr Ian Chandler, on 020 8883 9315
Email: vicar.saintsabounding@gmail.com or check out our website: <http://www.allsaints-eastfinchley.org.uk>