



Monumental: Archer writer Ruth Anders at the World Heritage Site in Ethiopia.

History and current affairs

In the 12th century in remote Northern Ethiopia the local ruler King Lalibela sought to recreate Christian Jerusalem. He built 11 churches in two clusters representing heaven and earth with a trench between them representing the River Jordan. The most famous church, and a UNESCO World Heritage site, is the Church of St George.

It was carved downwards into volcanic rock as a monolithic structure and is often referred to as the eighth wonder of the world. The hollowed interior contains a simple shrine to St. George and, behind a curtain (forbidden to view apart from priests) lies a replica of the Ark of the Covenant.

Archer writer Ruth Anders visited the church recently and while resting found it the ideal time to catch up with her favourite local newspaper.

Reflections on a well-known road... but which one?

By Daphne Chamberlain

Local author Iqbal Ahmed has just published his fourth book, described as “a love letter to London”. Do you recognise the London road he is describing in these extracts?

“[At night] it appears to be a ghost road. I look out for potholes when I cycle here in the dark, because the road is strewn with rubbish. The new buildings have tidy pavements, whereas the derelict houses have unkempt front lawns.

“It is a different scene during the day, though. Cars and vans are parked on both sides of the road, belonging to builders working on various sites. You can also see a few large coaches in an unmarked section of the road. The coach drivers park them there while waiting between jobs in town. And occasionally big lorries and caravans belonging to a TV or film company are parked in an adjacent road, since the empty mansions in the area are ideal for location shooting.

“Despite seeing building work going on, I have never seen a parked removal truck hired by someone who is either moving in or moving out. A few smaller houses seem to be lived

in. One afternoon I saw my GP outside one of these houses and she told me that she had been to see a patient in a care home there. I would never have guessed that there could be a care home among the derelict dwellings. You only find rude notices such as ‘KEEP OUT’ tied to the fences of houses around here.

“A new block of flats seems like an oasis in a wasteland because the lights of the flats are actually on.

I have noticed some of the houses being redecorated a few times, but no one ever living in them. There are actually only sixty-odd houses in the entire length... Some of these are in good condition whereas others are boarded up. [One was advertised as] ‘a magnificent freehold’. I think you have to be pretty audacious to describe a dilapidated house as ‘magnificent’ when a client can see plants growing in its cracks and the brickwork turned green



Author: Iqbal Ahmed

by the growth of moss on its exterior.”

The road in question is The Bishops Avenue. Iqbal, born and raised in Kashmir, has lived in London for 24 years, and in East Finchley since 2007. Readers of his previous books will be familiar with his deceptively conversational style and his skill in finding connections between past and present, and different people and places. Iqbal says that his new book, which covers many aspects of London, has more emphasis on his own thoughts.

An Open Book and Empty Cup (ISBN 9781527253216) will be published by Coldstream on 14 January, costing £15, and will be available on Amazon.

East Finchley ward escapes major change in boundaries review

By Daphne Chamberlain

East Finchley has emerged almost unchanged from a recent review of local electoral ward boundaries. The only change is that Howard Walk has been moved from East Finchley ward to the Garden Suburb, bringing it into line with its immediate neighbours south of East End Road.

Barnet Council has released details of the proposed new electoral ward boundaries, recommended by the independent Local Government Boundary Commission for England.

Boundary Commission's task

The Commission decides how many councillors are needed for each local authority, how many wards there should be, how many councillors should represent each ward, where the boundaries of each ward should be, and what they should be called. It also equalises the number of electors that each councillor represents.

The Commission is conducting a three-year programme of electoral reviews of London boroughs that have not been reviewed in the last five years. When it started work in Barnet in 2018, wards had remained unchanged since 1999.

Fairer representation

Commission Chair Professor Colin Mellors found that the number of electors represented by individual councillors varied considerably, which of course affects the value of votes.

To redress this, after three rounds of consultation, the Commission's final recom-

mendation is that Barnet should continue to be represented by 63 councillors, but that the number of wards should be increased from 21 to 24. There will be 15 three-councillor and nine two-councillor wards. East Finchley retains its three councillors.

Role of Parliament

Professor Mellors thanked people across Barnet who had taken part in the review, saying: “We believe these recommendations deliver electoral fairness for voters as well as reflecting community ties throughout Barnet. We are not part of government or any political party. We are accountable to Parliament through a committee of MPs chaired by the Speaker of the House of Commons.”

The proposed new arrangements must now be implemented by Parliament. A draft Order – the legal document which brings into force the recommendations – will be laid in Parliament in the coming months.

Full details of the Commission's final recommendations (including maps) can be viewed at: <https://consultation.lgbce.org.uk/node/15057>. Or: <http://www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/greater-london/greater-london/barnet>.

East Finchley Baptist Church

Just off the High Road in Creighton Avenue N2

Sunday Mornings at 10.30 am

Crèche and Sunday School during service

For more information please contact the Church Office

Email: office@eastfinchleybc.org.uk

www.eastfinchleybc.org.uk

(Minister: John Lowrie)

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Convivial Lunch Club

The North London Probus Club welcomes retired and semi-retired PROFESSIONAL & BUSINESS men and women on the third Wednesday each month for lunch and a talk at Stephens House East End Road N3 3QE. Next meeting 19 February: Professor Colin Jones CBE explores in his illustrated talk the fascinating culture and history of Paris from Roman times up to the present.

Details from Eveleen (8455 6431).