



Festival, we missed you... come back soon!



In any normal year, our July edition is the newspaper that carries two pages of photos capturing the atmosphere of fun and togetherness at the East Finchley Community Festival in Cherry Tree Wood. This hasn't been a normal year, as we all

know, and it was at the height of the lockdown in April that the volunteer team behind the festival reluctantly took the decision to cancel the event. So this image by our photographer Mike Coles taken in June 2014 is our way of marking what we've

missed this year and a reminder that the festival will be back when it's safe for everyone to get together again.

You can see more photos of past festivals, taken from The Archer archive, at: www.facebook.com/eastfinchleyfestival.

A strong light in East Finchley Stan Spinks, 1937 – 2020

By Roger Chapman

Stan Spinks, well-known and highly active in the East Finchley community for the past 20 years, died in Barnet General Hospital on Wednesday 10 June.

Stan was an imposing figure. Born in Bermondsey in 1937 he was evacuated during the Blitz in 1940 to Hertford Lodge in East End Road. He remained in Finchley for many years, marrying Robina and living in Hertford Road, N2. From there he went off to work in Zimbabwe and South Africa which he loved but it was a pleasure to come back to East Finchley in 2001.



Community life: Stan Spinks

Since returning, he was continually active in local community life. He was central in establishing the East Finchley Community Trust and a key organiser for 15 years of the East Finchley Community Festival held annually in Cherry Tree Wood as well as the short-lived but entertaining Christmas

festival held on the High Road around 2012-2015.

By early January each year Stan would have ordered all the equipment, stalls, stages, rides, owls, bins and the paraphernalia needed for the summer festival, taking a massive strain off the

shoulders of other organisers. He would check all equipment was delivered, sort out monies on the day and generally make sure everything was running smoothly.

He was the Chair of the Trust until last year and passionate about all things East Finchley, raising money for local causes, supporting the community on the Servite estate and raising funds for Martin Primary School's orchard, outdoor space and many other aspects of school life. He was also an active member of the Finchley Society.

He leaves his wife Robina, a son and a daughter, four grandchildren and two great grandchildren. A strong light in local East Finchley life has dimmed.

Travel in the pandemic

By Iqbal Ahmed

I phoned my mother in Srinagar to tell her about the threat of an epidemic in the UK. She suggested that I return to Kashmir as soon as possible so that if all the family have to die, we would at least die together.

She told me that they had been advised to wash their hands throughout the day. The valley had been in a state of lockdown for many months for political reasons. Lockdowns have been a frequent occurrence in Kashmir for the last 30 years. They take a mental toll on the population, something that is evident in every town in Kashmir.

A few days later, I have to travel to Paris. The concourse of St Pancras International train station is eerily quiet at mid-morning. Today, no one can be seen or heard tapping the keys of the public piano. The man checking passports is wearing clinical gloves made of latex.

Two American women on the train talk about a hand-

wash reputedly good for killing germs. A sharp-suited banker is making a frantic phone call, letting someone know about the perilous effects of coronavirus on his business. I think of the legendary American traveller in Africa who didn't learn until three months after the event that President Kennedy had been assassinated.

Green shoots of early spring are visible on both sides of the tunnel, but overcast skies make the landscape look cheerless. Electronic boards that usually display train times flash messages advising people to wash their hands regularly. Yet some soap dispensers in the Gents at St Pancras station are out of service, broken due to constant use.

In Paris, I board a Metro train. As it jolts, a lady hesitates to grab the vertical handrail, then takes a tissue from her pocket to wrap around the steel bar.

On alighting, I walk past a few porters standing at a street corner with their trolleys, waiting to be hired by shopkeepers. They look like broken men.

It is evening when Eurostar brings me back to St Pancras. A large pink neon sign, an artwork by Tracey Emin, reads: "I want my time with you." Such intimate words strike me as very poignant in this time of epidemic and self-isolation.

Taken from local writer Iqbal Ahmed's latest book, *An Ode to Europe*, out next year.

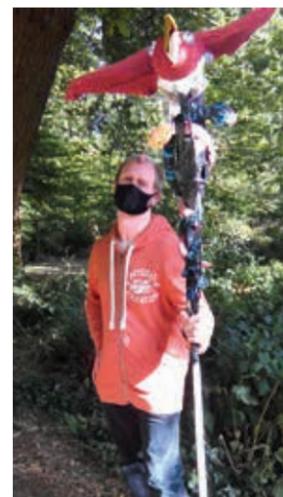
Flight of the nightingale

Many readers may recognise the name Jake Eiseman-Renyard from the chalk drawings which have been appearing regularly on the footpath in Cherry Tree Wood. Whether Jake's messages throughout the lockdown have been serious or amusing, they are invariably thought provoking.

Using another of his artistic talents, Jake has created something new to carry on the support for NHS staff evidenced by the Clap for Carers evenings. He says: "I love making and operating puppets in shows, but with all the theatres closed and festivals cancelled, I decided to use puppets to help this cause."

Created as an unofficial figurehead for the Nightingale hospitals, his puppet nightingale is carried on a former squeegee-mop stick, the mechanism for which now makes her wings flap. Two soft toy snakes decorate the pole and the ancient symbol of a doctor's winged staff effectively comes to life.

Jake hopes to use the puppet to help raise funds for the Whittington Hospital in Archway through street collections.



Jake and his puppet

RICKY SAVAGE ... "The voice of social irresponsibility"

A master storyteller

In our isolated world, the only thing to do after you have watched every box set and downloaded everything else is to read a book. And where to start? Maybe turn to the one British author everyone has probably heard of. I don't mean JK Rowling. I mean Charles Dickens, and not just because this year is the 150th anniversary of his death.

Everyone knows the basics: that his father was a navy pay clerk who spent some time in a debtors' prison and that 12-year-old Charles had to work in a blacking factory to help support the family. He worked as a journalist, wrote *The Pickwick Papers*, was famous by the age of 30 and became the man who created Victorian Britain, at least the way we like to remember it.

Except it was never as simple as that. Dickens didn't write novels; he wrote serials that appeared in weekly or monthly instalments in popular magazines. Each one ended with a suitable cliffhanger to make sure that people paid to read the next, a bit like a Victorian *Coronation Street*. Then the trick was that he could then put them together and publish them as a standalone novel, like downloading a box set.

All his great novels were done like that, from *Oliver Twist* via *A Tale of Two Cities* to *David Copperfield* and all the rest. It's probably why his last book, *Edwin Drood*, is unfinished.

And how does Dickens represent Victorian Britain? Well, Victoria came to the throne in 1837 halfway through *The Pickwick Papers* and just as *Oliver Twist* was getting going, so there's no way that these could be about her Britain. A lot of Dickens is set earlier than you might think and his world is always part what was current when he wrote them and part what he remembered it being.

Read his great works now and you probably won't notice that Jane Austen is more historically accurate. But maybe that's the art of memorable storytelling. So make use of the closed cinemas and pick up some Dickens. Trust me, he writes a good yarn.