



Problems pile up and put pressure on our traders

By Ruth Anders

Over the past few years, the “death of the high street” has featured on every form of media imaginable, even long before the advent of Covid-19. And it’s certainly true that our N2 shops and businesses, like many around the nation, are feeling the pressure.

In East Finchley, creeping double yellow lines, new cycle lanes, the unheralded overnight moves of loading bays and lockdown-enforced shop closures have all made things much harder for local shopkeepers trying to earn a living.

Traders have no choice

It is the small things that mount up. Staff at Tony’s Continental were recently alarmed to see the notices posted by Haringey Council in Twyford Avenue and neighbouring roads proclaiming that the Controlled Parking Zone will shortly be extended there. Because shop workers are deemed traders rather than residents, they will now have to pay £525 per year for each vehicle they leave parked there while they work.

Elsewhere, the requirement for pavement studs, exacted by Barnet Council for shops with goods or tables and chairs outside to delineate the three-

metre mark from the kerb line, seems to have been applied inconsistently. Some have more studs per frontage than others, some none at all. And the council charges our traders for every stud.

Shopowners have little choice but to accept these additional costs. As Elliot Jacobs, who runs UOE and the Post Office, told us: “Businesses don’t have a vote!”

Further south along the High Road, Loui Doukaki at Everything Electrical was incensed about the cycle lanes preventing customers from parking, while Chris Stavrou from shoemakers Kokos commented: “The absence of cycle lanes doesn’t stop people cycling, but cycle lanes actively prevent customers from parking.”

A few pluses

All this has been happening as Barnet Council has been displaying posters imploring residents to “Shop Local”. On the plus side, Barnet Council has waived business rates until March and lifted parking charges on Saturdays during December.

Everyone thought that the arrival of supermarkets in the 1960s spelled the end for small independent shops. They are still here but they need our constant support and perhaps fewer obstacles thrown in their way.

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Float on: Albert and young helpers on his East Finchley round in the 1980s

Albert was the cream of the crop

By David Gritten

Albert Leon was a popular milkman in East Finchley’s streets for 20 years, starting in 1973. He laughed and joked with customers, knew all their names (and their children’s) and now looks back on that era as the happiest in his career.

Idly wondering if anyone from those days still remembered him, he posted a message on the East Finchley Community Facebook group. He was astonished by their enthusiastic replies; people were crying out to see him again.

A local journalist spotted the conversation and asked Albert if he would be willing to be filmed. So with an ITV news crew, he returned to part of his old patch, which included Long Lane, East End Road as well as Trinity, Leopold and Leslie roads, and reunited with overjoyed ex-customers.

They swapped jokes and anecdotes. He met youngish people who he had last seen as children, begging him for a ride on the back of his milk float. He reunited with neighbour Sallie Rose, who recalled he had given her 35 Bob Dylan cassettes because she had told him she was a Dylan fan.

“I remember a lot of laughs,” Albert recalls about those days. “There was a gentleman who always asked me for ‘two pints of semi-skilled milk’ – not semi-skimmed. I never told him he got that wrong.”

Raffle for a faraway town

Albert, now 76, has another reason for cherishing N2. He was born in Colombia, where in 1985 a volcano erupted, killing 23,000 people in a small town. Determined to help, Albert raffled his Fender Stratocaster guitar to raise money for them and told his customers about it. “Everyone bought tickets off me. I’d been hoping for £500. But they raised £1,100. They were brilliant.”

Retiring as a milkman, he spent 17 years as a bus driver: “Even that route took me through East Finchley, on the



Albert still has his old order book Photo Mike Coles

way to Brent Cross.”

Now Albert continues to stay in touch by posting in the East Finchley Community group: “I met such lovely people there.” And for their part, they think

of him as the world’s greatest milkman.

Footnote: You can join East Finchley’s online community at www.facebook.com/groups/eastfinchley

Hampers spread cheer

By Pravashini Ramsamy

The Finchley Community group is a group of volunteers connected to Finchley and its vicinity, created during the first lockdown to help our neighbours with different services such as meals, groceries and prescription pick-ups.

In November we launched Operation Christmas Hampers, to take the edge off the financial burden that Christmas can be and put a smile on people’s faces after a really hard year.

Once more the community stepped up to help in the form of donations. People brought in bags of toys, books and presents, to go with the food hampers. A local running club called More Than Mums also

helped with donations and it was such a success that each hamper contained more food than just for Christmas and we also included craft activities for the families to enjoy.

Together we delivered hampers to 20 families and hope to be back in 2021 with more community projects. If you would like to join us here is the link: www.facebook.com/groups/657957791673470