



Team work: left to right, Maria, Bilal, Riad and Sofaine at La Gourmandise. Photo Mike Coles

Brothers transform butcher's into baker's

By David Gritten

These are trying times for N2 shops and businesses. Some have closed down, and many of those remaining are feeling the pinch.

But the recent opening of one new business has proved cause for cheer and has clearly put a spring in the step of several High Road shoppers.

A patisserie named La Gourmandise, occupying what was formerly the butcher's shop Boucherie Moderne, has proved an instant hit, attracting rave reviews on social media.

Changing the plan

The two brothers, Riad and Sofiane Achour, who also ran the Boucherie, simply transformed their business plan. "We decided to convert," says Riad.

"We wanted to create somewhere that was a Continental-style bakery, a coffee shop and also a patisserie. We do quality foods and we've worked hard to expand our range."

Their ambitious plan

for the business has taken a long time even to get to this stage, with the pandemic making life more difficult. Riad recalls: "We had nine months of basically doing nothing. In the end, we had to make a difficult decision: to open up during lockdown and just do takeaway. So we can't let customers come in and sit down to eat yet."

Pleasing the customers

Yet this long wait may prove useful for whetting customers' appetites, judging by the online enthusiasm of those who have dropped by. "It felt like being in Paris," one of them enthused. Others have raved about the "gorgeous" coffee, "amazing" baguettes, sourdough bread, carrot cake and chocolate caramel tart.

The brothers, originally from Algeria, moved to France and then to the UK. Riad is a hugely experienced chef; during a spell in New York he studied under Marco Pierre White and in London he had a senior role at Sophie's Steakhouse.

"We love what we do," he says. "It's a family business and it's been 26 years. Now we've taken a risk. It's a big challenge to open when it's so risky, but what can we do? Now we can't wait for customers to be able to come in for crepes and breakfast – and see what food of ours they like the most."

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Health club to the Manor re-born

By Diana Cormack

Last March, before the first lockdown was announced, the Manor Health and Leisure Club at 140 Fortis Green suddenly closed. This led to comments on social media from disgruntled members complaining about the lack of communication in addition to their disappointment at being unable to exercise.

Subsequently notices appeared on the front door, followed by an explanation online, stating that the closure was due to work being undertaken by outside contractors which was out of the club's control (page 5, *The Archer*, April 2020).

Recently plans to build flats on the site surfaced, then disappeared. Now it seems that the club is to come under new management. At the time of writing a message on their website states:

"The club will shortly have a new owner which is a very positive move for the club and

the community. The new owner will look after all existing and new member requirements. We would like to thank all our members for your support and loyalty over this difficult time."

In reply to their enquiries some members have been told of plans for renovation to take place during lockdown which include improvements to the décor, equipment and showers. With it still being closed and the phone unanswered at present, *The Archer* hopes to bring you more information as and when the club can provide it.



Under new management: The Manor Health Club

N2United: The importance of a strong community

By Ruth Anders

Zoom has proved a very effective medium via which N2United has held spirited monthly get-togethers and February's meeting was no exception. Familiar faces were joined by new ones, all passionate about identifying ways in which businesses, organisations and individuals can come together to make East Finchley the best possible place to live and work.

Roger Chapman, representing The Finchley Charities, stressed the importance of local discussion and consultation of the type facilitated by N2United.

Those attending heard from Giuseppe Sollo about East Finchley Neighbourhood Support's fast expanding Food Project, which distributes free food from the foyer of the Phoenix Cinema every Tuesday morning.

The meeting noted the move of a popular florist from its Fortis Green premises and the closure of the Polish grocer near the Phoenix. However, business updates also included the very positive activity of many other shops. The arrival of the new Gourmandise patisserie on the High Road was also welcomed.

Visit N2United.co.uk to find

out more and share your suggestions and ideas. Or join the next meeting on Thursday 11 March. N2United would love to hear from you.

Helping hand

Disability charity MyAFK, based in Crouch End, has been awarded £100,000 by the Barclays 100x100 UK Covid-19 Community Relief Fund to support its work with disabled young people and their families through the pandemic. AFK, formerly Action for Kids, is using the funding to move its education and employability programmes online.



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