



In loving memory of Viola Slodzinska

By Ann Bronkhorst

Within less than a decade after moving here, Viola Slodzinska had become known, valued and loved in East Finchley. Viola died at 58 from colon cancer after problems in accessing treatment (*The Archer*, October 2021). Her student son and carer William was by her side. On 19 October in St Pancras and Islington crematorium, with relatives and friends abroad watching remotely and to music by her beloved Ray Charles, Pavarotti and Prince, this community said goodbye to her.



Inspirational: Viola Slodzinska

Viola settled here in 2012 after working as a journalist in New York and in her native Poland. She faced many difficulties bravely, including her son's brain surgery, always encouraging his musical talents and constantly looking for ways to improve their lives. As William said: "It was just me and mom. We went through everything together."

To make a living she turned to cooking and to childminding.

In both she was a natural. She did cook Polish food, but was not defined by pierogi. Local outlets like Tony's Continental and Budgens sold her sushi and she presented exciting dishes from world cuisines at suppers in her tiny flat.

In recent years Viola also raised money for charities and when Covid struck in 2020 she was in the forefront of the N2 Food Project, producing vast quantities of meals for local people in need. Before long, however, she was suffering the first signs of the illness that would end her life.

In William's words it was a life of "giving and building". His moving tribute to his mother in front of friends and far-away family acknowledged her infectious energy but also her infectious gratitude for what the two of them still had. He said that after her death she would live on "in the impact she made on the people she met and with the work she did."

Kate Barnett, always a twinkle in her eye

Kate Barnett, a long-standing resident of East Finchley, sadly passed away on 27 September aged 72. Here her goddaughter Mariel Stringer-Fehlow remembers her.

Kate lived in East Finchley for the last 36 years, and was an active and well-known part of the community. She loved her neighbourhood and her neighbours, and made an impact on all those who knew her, with her warmth and humour and an ever-present twinkle in her eye.

She worked in the insurance industry for most of her career, breaking ground as a woman in that era, and building up a successful brokerage business on her own, before selling it to Lucas Fettes, and retiring 10 years ago to enjoy life with her partner Luigi, her family, and her many, many, friends. During her retirement, as well as enjoying long walks around Cherry Tree Wood, Highgate and Kenwood, Kate volunteered to deliver *The Archer*, and was steadfast and committed in all weathers, often braving the elements. She also volunteered at Northside Primary School to read with some of their young-



Much missed: Kate Barnett

est pupils in Years 1 and 2. In February 2020 Kate was sadly diagnosed with cancer, but underwent treatment with characteristic optimism, stoicism, and bravery; and all without losing her genuine interest in others or her ability to laugh. She will be tremendously missed by all of her loved ones, and by all those in the local community who had the pleasure and privilege of knowing her.



Book lover: Anna James with copies of her latest work for children.

Local author's literary life story

By Diana Cormack

In September, Anna James signed copies of the fourth book in her 'Pages and Co' series at the Muswell Hill Children's Bookshop. She intends to write two more of these featuring 11-year-old Tilly, who is a book wanderer. Young Tilly is able to meet and interact with characters and plots from other stories, which readers will undoubtedly recognise.

East Finchley resident Anna grew up in Northumberland and learned to love books and bookshops as a child under the influence of her grandfather. He also encouraged her to write, which eventually led to Anna working for a variety of publications in the newspaper and magazine world. She also worked as a school librarian and a literary scout.

Scheduled to speak at last month's Cheltenham Literature Festival, she chairs events at bookshops and literary festivals across the UK and writes for magazines, newspapers and online outlets about books, publishing, feminism and the theatre.

She has contributed to three other books, two of which are collections of short stories for adults; the other, *A Children's*

Literary Christmas, is an anthology which she edited for the British Library. It brings the joy of that festival through the words of some of our greatest writers.

Anna makes school visits to talk to her fans and, with her books being published all over the world, some fans are clamouring for a TV series.

Frost fair

The Finchley branch of the Women's Institute will be holding a Frost Fair at Stephens House, East End Road, N3, on Sunday 28 November from 11.30am to 4.30pm. Entry is free and everyone is welcome to go along for homemade cakes, gifts, arts and crafts, a tombola and more.

Fun day postponed

Grange Big Local's Fun Day, scheduled to take place on Saturday 6 November, has been postponed. Organisers are hoping to hold the event in the spring instead.

"Given everything we all went through during the pandemic," says board member James Masters, "GBL are aware that the needs, hopes and dreams of local residents may well have changed... so we're very keen for people to contact us with their thoughts about the Grange Big Local area, and get involved!"

You can send comments and suggestions to: info@grangebiglocal.org

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