



A community newspaper for East Finchley run entirely by volunteers.

ECO-FRIENDLY EAST FINCHLEY + ECO-FRIENDLY EAST FINCHLEY

A new way to recycle all our unwanted stuff

An ambitious new recycling scheme called Bin There, Donate That is launching in East Finchley and it is asking for everyone's support to make it a success. Organisers Emma Frampton and Isabella Barbaro explain how you can help.

Every week we sort our unwanted stuff into 'charity shop', 'recycle', 'rubbish' like so many readers of *The Archer*. But we recently remembered that, as children, we donated ring-can pulls to one charity and tin foil to another, and it got us thinking. Why, when our oceans are full of plastic, and COP26 is telling us we must act, can't we start something similar in East Finchley?

We are a community that wants to support our local trad-

ers, so here's the plan: shops and businesses will become places to donate items. It's happening already to some extent with Amy's collecting Brita filters and Sainsbury's old batteries.

The aim is to extend this to enable us to upcycle, re-use and recycle a lot more than we do now. But what about old glasses, toothbrushes, bras, packaging? Well, it is possible to find new homes for this stuff and in some cases make money for charity too.



Don't bin it: Emma Frampton and Isabella Barbaro are starting the new recycling initiative. Photo Mike Coles.

Volunteers needed

We are just a few people with an idea and need your help, with researching what to send to where for whom. We

know that breast cancer charities take old bras, but how do we get them sent on? Our bins are full of polystyrene; which organisations will take that?

Are you a local business that can offer your shop as a collection point? Why not join the following shops/services already keen to help: The Cherry Tree Café; Oakdale Pharmacy; Stewart Duncan Opticians.

Local charities/playgroups/allotments, do you collect certain items, compost, or bits and bobs for crafting etc.? Are there any other ideas we have missed?

Our email is bintheredonatehat@gmail.com, and website is bintheredonatehat.wixsite.com/reuse. Please get in touch if you would like to help in any way with Bin There, Donate That! Thank you.

Lucky escape for driver as car hits tree

By Janet Maitland

This was the scene after a car collided with a tree in Twyford Avenue, N2, in the early hours of Saturday 2 October.

The London Ambulance were called at 2.18am and treated a man at the scene before taking him to hospital. His injuries were described as not life threatening.

"Leaving the road is obviously very serious at any time, but if that tree hadn't stopped the car it would have run along a normally busy bit of pavement that leads to the cut through by the church onto Durham Road," said a resident who lives close by. Police



Impact: The driver emerged with non life-threatening injuries from this collision in Twyford Avenue. Photo Mike Coles

informed us that there were no reports that the car had been stolen. Twyford Avenue is a 20mph zone for traffic.

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The Archer team wishes to thank all the generous people who give up their spare time, in all weather, to deliver the paper for us.

If you have a story for us, please contact us at the above address.

Comments to The Archer may be published unless clearly marked 'Not for publication' within the text.

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February: 14 January



Sunflower that just kept on flowering

Following our article about Teresa Harrison and her 19ft sunflower in last month's edition, reader Kam Kaur sent us this photo of daughter Rhea with the sunflower she grew in their front garden of their home in Fordington Road, N2... displaying an amazing 20 heads.

Kam told us: "We became green fingered during lockdown but sadly our attempts at growing sunflowers last year were unsuccessful. Rhea was eager to try again this year and the results were beyond anything we could have imagined. "We had to give it lots of additional support as it grew so tall! We were amazed to see it continuously grow new heads and

neighbours kept commenting on the 'incredible' 'super flower'. We've never seen anything like it and it's a fantastic memory of Rhea's first sunflower."

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New build: An artist's impression of how the development, centre, would look, looking south past The Bishops Avenue on the right.

Shop, offices and homes planned for substation site

By Diana Cormack

A planning application has been made to redevelop the disused substation site adjacent to 98 Great North Road, situated south of East Finchley tube station, almost diagonally opposite the junction with The Bishops Avenue.

It includes demolition of the existing building, erection of a part-five, part-six storey building and construction of a new retaining wall. This wall will replace the present one supporting the Northern line embankment, and is likely to be a significant piece of work.

The building is likely to have a shop or office on the ground floor, with nine self-contained residential flats above, for which the usual facilities for refuse storage, cycle (not car) and disabled parking spaces will be available.

The property is adjacent to the Great North Road where cycle lanes are in operation at the present time. The lack of parking draws attention to its proximity to East Finchley station and several bus routes.

Future use of part of the ground floor as a commercial unit, possibly a convenience store said to be mirroring those in East Finchley centre, has been suggested. Developers Combined Finchley LLP

say it is hoped that, with the building being set back from the road, most of the mature trees and bushes will remain, with landscaping works and sustainability being a feature of the whole development.

While the flats would provide a wonderful view over Cherry Tree Wood, some local residents and the Friends of Cherry Tree

Wood have expressed concern that there will be a view of flats from the wood where at present only trees are seen.

For more information and to give your feedback on the proposed development, visit Barnet Council's planning site at publicaccess.barnet.gov.uk/online-applications and search for application 21/5217/FUL.



As it is now: The development would replace a derelict substation site alongside the Northern line. Photo Mike Coles.

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Barnet Council

2A Bedford Road, N2

Demolition of existing building, and erection of two-storey building to provide 4 flats. Associated parking, site landscaping, refuse and cycle storage

25 Brackenbury Road, N2

Demolition of single-storey projection beyond the rear outrigger, and construction of single-storey side and rear extension.

18 Cecilia Close, N2

Rear canopy.

18 Church Lane, N2

Rear outbuilding.

24B Church Lane, N2

Conversion of ground floor shop/office into one self-contained flat.

260 East End Road, N2

First-floor front extension.

68 Hamilton Road, N2

Roof extension involving rear

dormer window with Juliette balcony and three front-facing roof-lights.

12-18 High Road, N2

Removal of condition 36 (vehicular access) of planning permission dated 17/06/2020 for new development.

154 High Road, N2

Single-storey rear extension. New side-collection window and canopy. Various internally illuminated signage.

3 King Street, N2

Part single part two-storey rear extension. Single-storey side extension.

4-5 King Street, N2

Details of conditions for cycle parking/storage and refuse/recycling store pursuant to planning permission.

51 Leicester Road, N2

Roof extension to existing outrigger involving rear dormer window with Juliette balcony, three front-facing conservation rooflights and new side window.

65 Leopold Road, N2

Single-storey rear extension.

19 Lewis Gardens, N2

Single-storey rear extension.

425B Long Lane, N2

One non-illuminated fascia sign. New front entrance door.

13 Thackrah Close, N2

Change of use from residential to office space.

Haringey Council

27 Aylmer Road N2

Demolition of existing property and construction of detached home, comprising basement with lightwells, ground and first floor, plus roof space with front and rear dormers.



ECO-FRIENDLY EAST FINCHLEY + ECO-FRIENDLY EAST FINCHLEY



Clockwise from top left: The No2PlasticsN2 sign displayed by shops reducing the use of plastics; Aida Khaledi at Aliya J Boutique does not use plastic bags; Josephines florists use biodegradable cellophane; Coffee shop and deli Dan & DeCarlo uses paper cups and encourages customers to bring their own. Photo montage Mike Coles.

Hooray for our plastics heroes

By Maxine Klein, of No2PlasticsN2

I usually do my food shopping locally: no parking, no travelling, and friendly service. But twice recently I shopped in a supermarket and was horrified at the amount of plastic used to cover or bag up the fruit and vegetables.

Grapes and salad leaves need to be bagged in order to contain them but apples, carrots and onions? It made me appreciate our local shopkeepers, many of whom have made a big effort to reduce single use plastics.

Through No2PlasticN2's initiative of speaking to shopkeepers and asking them to put a sign with our logo in the window we found much admirable good practice. This is not a definitive list but it gives inspiring examples of what can be achieved.

Tony's Continental is one of the many greengrocers selling nearly all of its fruit and vegetables loose and asking customers if they have brought their own bags. My wonderful string bag folds up into nothing in my handbag but will expand to encompass a large amount of shopping.

Coffee shop and deli **Dan & DeCarlo** display a "Refill" sign, are enthusiastic about removing all single-use plastics and return plastic delivery packages to discourage companies from using plastic wrappings.

The newly refurbished **Cherry Tree Cafe** offers 10p off the price of coffee if the customer brings their own cup; they provide plastic tops to their own cups only if requested.

Josephines the florist is enthusiastic about removing

single-use plastics and uses biodegradable wrapping for flower displays. Likewise **Aliya J. Boutique** has no single-use bags, encouraging customers to bring their own and wrapping merchandise in tissue paper, as well as wherever possible buying natural fabric clothing to sell.

Budgens has a plastic-free section where you can get a loofah scourer amongst other things, and **Amy's** have many plastic-free products such as bamboo cutlery and stainless steel straws.

Charging 10p for single-use plastic bags has made a tremendous difference to the high street. It may seem small fry in the bigger picture of plastic waste but every little helps. No2PlasticsN2 believe that public awareness of plastic pollution will influence those in government with the power to make changes.

No-plastic shopping on the street

By Ann Inglis

Charlie the electric float made a visit to the county roads on a gloriously sunny Saturday in September and left customers wondering if this was a covert revolution for shopping in N2, as well as being the easiest way to live plastic-free.

Charlie comes from north London-based Fair-Well with no plastic packaging and the added convenience of goods being brought to you with a liberal dose of neighbourly chat thrown in.

Charmed by driver Jerilee's description of the six different muesli combinations they offer, I was fascinated to see her weighing a customer's container, before refilling and re-weighing. Not a beat missed, weight, cost, totalling items bought, tapping to pay, would you like a receipt emailed to you, done.

Fair-Well sell going on for 200 products including dried fruit, household cleaners, oil, vinegar, pasta, spices, rice, pulses, nuts, seeds, toiletries



Made to measure: Jerilee, right, talks through the goods she has on sale with customer Ann Inglis. Photo Mike Coles.

and body care products.

When you next run out, don't throw that container away, wash it and bring it along to the next visit for a refill. Charlie will be back from 11am to 1pm on 6 November, 20 November, 4

December, and 11 December, parking up outside All Saints church on Durham Road.

Editor's note: See last month's issue for details of another local mobile refill shop, The People's Pantry

Re-boot

This month's Muswell Hill Indoor Car Boot Sale takes place on Saturday 27 November from 10am to 1pm at Hornsey Parish Church Hall, at the foot of Muswell Hill on the corner of Cranley Gardens and Park Road, N10 3AH.

Admission is 50p with refreshments available. Phone 020 8368 8180 for information.

Pasture calendar

The 2022 calendar from Long Lane Pasture is full of beautiful nature shots and is available to buy with cash from the volunteer team at the pasture, close to the fire station in Long Lane, N3, on Saturday mornings from 10am to 12 midday.

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Court action: Players enjoy a match in the sports hall at the Archer Academy.

No-pressure netball club for women

By Diana Cormack

A new term of netball for women of all ages and fitness levels began in September at the Archer Academy, Eagans Close, N2. Sessions take place on Tuesday evenings between 7.30 and 8.30pm.

So far participants have been between the ages of 19 and the late sixties. A warm up, then some ball skills are followed by a no-pressure game, with

rules being remembered as play goes along.

The club is the brainchild of Avis Johns who, as one of the main instigators of the Archer

Academy, believes in its facilities being available for locals to use.

In telling *The Archer* about her love of netball, Avis's obvious enthusiasm was matched by that of club coach Navinda Snell. Both have been involved in the game for many years, with Navinda playing or coaching every day of the week. "It's just my life now," she said. "I'm being paid to do something I love."

Avis herself has plans to gain training qualifications and continues to enjoy watching people interact in the game that she loves. Netball has gained greatly in global popularity over the last few years, with talk of it being featured in the Olympics.

The sessions cost £5. For more information contact Sophie.Johnson@englandnetball.co.uk or just turn up and join in the fun.

SAFER NEIGHBOURHOODS

LOCAL POLICE, LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

Jan Lovell, of the East Finchley Safer Neighbourhood Team, updates us on the latest crime news. Jan and the team can be contacted by email at: EastFinchley.snt@met.police.uk, or by phone on 020 7161 9014. Follow the team on Twitter @MPSEastFinchley.

Team changes

Our tri-team of East, West and Finchley Church End has a new but temporary sergeant at the helm since last month. APS Aaron Weatherly comes to us from leading a tri-team in the High Barnet area, so is very experienced in the ways of SNT policing, and we look forward to working with him.

East Finchley has two new PCs: Gulsum Cengiz who joined us in late July with nine years' experience on Response teams; and Katie Rees who has just joined us and will be here for six months as part of her probationary rotation. We are an all-female team and are looking forward to supporting women and girls in the community in as many ways as possible.

Crime trends

We are seeing an increase in all kinds of vehicle crime. Halfords and other motor shops sell specialized nuts to prevent the theft of number plates. Do make sure you lock your vehicle, even for short periods, and don't leave any items of value on show inside. Vehicles have been stolen too, so a good old-school crook lock is a valuable addition and is surprisingly effective.

Darker evenings

As the days get shorter we often see a rise in tea-time burglaries. Do check the basics: have lights coming on with timer switches to make your home appear occupied, always lock up well and employ your house alarm. If you don't yet have an alarm do consider getting one fitted, they are a very good investment.

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Christmas cheer

The Christmas Fair at St Mary's Catholic Church, 279 High Road, N2, is back. You can come and soak up the festive atmosphere on Sunday 28 November from 11am to 3pm with something for everyone, including carol singing, fiddle players, hot food and beverages.

There will also be a Santa's Grotto, home-bakes, tombola, Advent wreath-making and much more. Entry is free, and everyone is encouraged to protect each other by wearing a face mask.

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Campaign group calling for safer streets in Barnet

By Daphne Chamberlain

Many households recently received a letter from MP Mike Freer asking for views on the experimental bus and cycle lanes on the A1000, which includes our High Road in East Finchley. Set up provisionally last November, for a period not exceeding 18 months, the lanes have provoked strong reactions both for and against.

Backing them is a new campaign group called Better Streets for Barnet. The group's stated aim is to work within the community to encourage action that reduces air pollution, improves safety in the streets, and introduces a wider range of travel options.

Backing the bike lane

Spokesperson Jess Gold told *The Archer*: "We have all been writing to our councillors to let them know how important we think the lane is. A few of us have been in touch with the officer who implemented the bike lane, and we have prepared a report to the Council on how it can be improved."

It needs a good couple of years to bed in. Most people who use the lane don't realise it is under threat, and so won't have written to their councillors. They are just delighted that finally there is one."

Safety concerns

One criticism of the bike lane is that it is being under-used. Jess said that a number of people in the Better Streets for Barnet group are too frightened to cycle, which is why they are campaigning to make the bor-

ough safer for both cyclists and pedestrians. Since she spoke to us, she has herself been knocked off her bike.

She said, "To make roads safe for cyclists and pedestrians bring car speeds down to 20 in densely populated areas and build protected cycle tracks. The Greater London average is 4.1% of roads with protected cycle tracks. City of London has 21%. Barnet is 3rd from the bottom of the list, with just 0.7% which will go to zero if this lane is removed."

Better Streets for Barnet's review of the cycle lane contains appraisals of each section. Recommendations include better road maintenance; replacing pedestrian refuges with zebra crossings; priority green lights for cyclists turning right; clearer segregation for cycle lanes, with wands replaced by immovable barriers; and redesigning of bus stops and parking bays, to prevent cyclists being forced into the main traffic flow.

Better Streets for Barnet meet every Monday night online for an hour. For further info, search BetterSt4Barnet on Twitter and Better Streets for Barnet on Facebook.

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One year on, Food Project feeds hundreds every week

By John Lawrence

Every week a quiet miracle happens in the heart of East Finchley. People give up their time to buy fresh ingredients, cook them up into delicious dishes and then hand them out as free meals that make a difference to the lives of hundreds of people and families in need.

It's known as the N2 Food Project and is run by East Finchley Neighbourhood Support, an organisation formed during lockdown to help those who were not getting the support they needed. All the cooking happens on weekends at

sound financial footing for a while but they still desperately need new volunteers to help keep the operation running smoothly each week.

"We'd welcome anyone with time to spare at the weekend or on Tuesdays," she said.

the food is getting to people who need it," said Fiona. "The meals are designed by our chefs to be nutritious and delicious, and they are restaurant quality. The feedback we get is that people really look forward to receiving them."



Stir it up: The weekend kitchen team get busy

To find out more, to donate or to get involved, visit www.ILoveN2.co.uk/Food-Project, follow @N2FoodProject on socials or email EFNSFoodProject@gmail.com.

Tribute to Viola

The N2 Food Project team asked to pay special tribute to volunteer Viola Slodzinska, who passed away from cancer at the end of the summer (*The Archer*, October 2021). Fiona Doyle said: "Viola offered us her kitchen as our very first cooking space and was a dedicated volunteer, passionate about food and helping those less fortunate. The Food Project owes her a debt of gratitude for her kindness in opening her home to us and helping us to get started."



Portions: Restaurant quality



Ready meals: Two hundred servings are packed, sealed and labelled, ready for distribution

the Martin School kitchens and meals are available to anyone every Tuesday morning from 10.30am to 12.30pm at the Phoenix Cinema in the High Road.

"No experience is necessary, just the willingness to work as part of a team. The kitchen team has fun making the meals and hands are always needed to get them to the people who need them."

Restaurant quality meals

The N2 Food Project makes around 200 meals each week. They are available free at the Phoenix on Tuesday mornings, no questions asked, and can also be bought there to help fund future menus. Any leftover meals are delivered to charities for homeless people in the area. One visitor even collects 20 meals each week to take to rough sleepers in central London.

"It's a great feeling to know



Street food: A grateful recipient

Birthday present

Last month, the project celebrated its first birthday with a special present, a £10,000 grant from the National Lottery that will keep it running well into 2022. Until now, it has been entirely self-funded thanks to cash donations from supporters and from passers-by who choose to pay for the meals they pick up from the Phoenix foyer.

Fiona Doyle, one of the Food Project team, told *The Archer* it's a relief to be on a



Table service: Free meals are handed out from the Phoenix Cinema foyer on Tuesday mornings

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A place for teenage girls to talk safely

By Ruth Anders

One of the issues especially relevant to our troubled times is the wellbeing of our teenagers. In Kitty Nontle Dube's case, this is particularly true of teenage girls, as she has two of her own. Seeing the challenges faced by young people today, Kitty is launching an online and in-person programme called Live Well Teen Well that aims to tackle them head on, including bullying, social media pressures and bereavement.



Forum: Kitty Nontle Dube

"Covid has thrown all this into sharp relief," Kitty told *The Archer*. "Young people need a forum where they can share ideas and get professional advice about a raft of issues. They often find it difficult to talk to their parents, and I believe that talking to a professional and also in peer groups can really help to reassure and inspire them."

She added, "If I had had some one to talk to, a place to go with my problems, I would have made better life choices. I would also have had more understanding for other people's problems."

Acknowledging that teachers don't have time to deal with the very common issues

faced by young people, Kitty plans to run private sessions, family sessions and hopefully sessions in local schools.

Experience and qualifications

Born in Johannesburg, Kitty moved to England when she was 15. She worked for the NHS at Highgate's Mental Health Centre, at St Pancras Hospital and at the Whittington Hospital, where she ran three physio clinics. She recently completed a Postgraduate MSc Psychology of Education at UCL and a psychodynamic practice at Birkbeck. She is now concentrating on working with schools to develop a viable in-house programme which from January will be offered to schools in East Finchley alongside those in other areas of North London.

Contact

Talking to Kitty is a very cheering and uplifting experience. Her enthusiasm and energy are infectious, and the passion she feels for her subject shines through. Find out more about Live Well Teen Well on Facebook by searching 'YoungPersonWellbeingCircle' and by email: kitty@livewellteenwell.onmicrosoft.com

Take a seat for a simple form of talking therapy

By Diana Cormack

Two years ago, Cardiff resident Allison Owen-Jones came up with an idea to help people let others know that they were open for a chat. She made notices for public benches which said: "Happy to chat bench. Sit here if you don't mind someone stopping to say hello".

Her simple idea to tackle loneliness soon spread all over the world. Now hopefully it could be adopted in N2 with the help of the East Finchley Community Trust (EFCT).

Covid-19 prevented the group's previous plans coming to fruition, but they are now asking advice from Barnet Council's Streets and Environmental Team on the feasibility of having a designated bench somewhere on our High Road.

Sam Tarjan, of EFCT, told *The Archer* it would be easily identified by its yellow colour with an explanatory plaque and

clearly marked seating spaces. Questions about funding and upkeep as well as position need to be answered, as well as any health and safety issues.

However, with loneliness being recognised as a significant result of the pandemic situation, a chat bench might be the means to a happy ending. As Allison said: "All of a sudden you're not invisible anymore."

If you have any comments, thoughts or ideas about a happy to chat bench (or can think of another name) please email them to eastfinchleycommunitytrust@gmail.com and/or send them to *The Archer's* Letters page (contact details on page 2).



Quiet, please: The cameras roll during filming for *The Beautiful Game* in Cherry Tree Road. Photo Mike Coles

Football comes home... to the perfect corner house

By Diana Cormack

A film crew set up lights and cameras outside a house at the junction of Cherry Tree Road and Summerlee Avenue, N2, to shoot scenes for a new Netflix movie.

Householder Heidi Allsop told *The Archer* that their house had been chosen by a location team needing an end house for a particular scene. It was the last one of the shoot so, upon completion, other cast members bearing bottles turned up to celebrate.

The film crew had gradually

moved in with all their paraphernalia to an area close to the park entrance on the afternoon of Saturday 9 October. By dark, little action seemed to have taken place. One onlooker later saw actor Callum Scott Howells (*It's a Sin*) walk to the front door and have brief exchanges with a lady who answered it.

Callum plays Nathan alongside some other up-and-coming young actors in the Netflix film *The Beautiful Game*. Based on a true story, it is about a team of homeless English footballers managed by Bill Nighy who takes them from London to Rome to compete in the annual Homeless World Cup.

Laptop loan scheme for older adults

A laptop loan scheme for older people has been launched by Age UK Barnet, which lends laptops to older residents and supports them to get online.

"We're excited about reaching out to those older people who have not bought a computer, maybe out of fear or simply because they can't afford one," said Mandy Hong from Age UK Barnet, who is coordinating the laptop loans. The idea is that getting con-

nected online will help improve physical and mental wellbeing as well as social lives, hopefully reducing feelings of loneliness. "Once someone's been set up on their computer, they can come along to one of Age UK Barnet's digital inclusion sessions where they'll be shown how to manage

everyday tasks such as paying bills, and we will also link them up to online exercise and social activities," added Mandy. If you or someone you know would really gain from the laptop loan scheme, phone 020 8432 1415 or email mandy.hong@ageukbarnet.org.uk.



The Finchley Charities have been providing quality sheltered housing in a supportive community environment, across three sites in East Finchley and Finchley Central.

If you have lived in the Borough of Barnet for at least five years of your life, we can provide homes for individuals and couples aged over 55, in need of sheltered housing and able to live independently.

If this sounds like you or someone you know in need of a new home, please contact us on: 020 8346 9464 or email: info@thefinchleycharities.org to discuss eligibility.

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Libraries return to pre-pandemic opening hours

By Daphne Chamberlain

From 25 October, core and core plus libraries in Barnet will be back to their pre-pandemic opening hours for weekdays and Saturdays.

For East Finchley, this means: **Monday** 8am-8pm -Staffed 9am -12.30, Self service 8-9am and 12.30 -8pm. **Tuesday** 8am-8pm. Self-service all day. **Wednesday** 8am-8pm. Staffed 2-8pm. Self-service 8am-2pm. **Thursday** 8am-8pm. Staffed 2-5pm. Self-service 8am-2pm and 5-8pm. **Friday** 8am-8pm. Self-service all day. **Saturday** 8am-5pm. Staffed 9am-12.30. Self service 8-9am and 12,30-5pm.

Barnet says it may take slightly longer to reinstate all the Sunday opening hours, but we will be informed as it happens. Some baby and toddler groups have been restarting since early October. Study space should be reinstated from 1 November.

Safety measures

Wipes and hand sanitisers are retained throughout Barnet library buildings and at all computers. Perspex All screens, NHS test and trace QR codes and face covering requirements are also still in

place. All face-to-face activities will have slightly reduced numbers and study tables have been spaced out.

The Mobile Library is being reinstated, and the Home Library Service will continue to visit housebound individuals. Visits to care homes will be reinstated in liaison with each organisation.

Looking healthy

Barnet Council reports that use of the digital library is very high. Many of the new digital services will be retained, including email and telephone IT helplines. E-audio books and electronic magazines and newspapers will continue. Online reading and cultural activities will continue via YouTube and Microsoft Teams.

Alternative provision

Hampstead Garden Suburb community library has already reinstated its standard opening hours, as have Haringey's libraries in Highgate and Muswell Hill, all of which are open to East Finchley residents.

Five years on and N2United is thriving

By Chris Stavrou

After more than a year of virtual meetings on Zoom, N2United finally met again in person at the East Finchley Constitutional Club, with the October meeting being a lively mix of new faces, pre-lockdown faces and faces until now only seen on-screen.

The meeting also marked the fifth anniversary of the local community network, which has been dedicated to bringing all types of people in the N2 area together, from businesses to local community groups as well as residents who are passionate about all things East Finchley.

We were lucky to have top retail consultant Sara Gatoff as guest speaker talk passionately about her journey through retail's changing landscape and how local businesses and groups can work towards their goals.

A lot of the discussion revolved around community matters, with Julia Hines and Ashley Grossman speaking from Better Streets for Barnet and their hope for more active travel around the borough, and Councillor Alison Moore speaking on some concerns local residents contact her about.

Another topic that garnered a lot of interest among the

members is the planning application to develop the site of the substation, south of the bridge on the High Road, into a retail, commercial and residential building.

Get involved

The next meeting, on Thursday 11 November, will feature an autumn budget roundup from resident tax advisor Drazen Coric of Tax Assist, news of the East Finchley Pollination Programme from Roger Chapman of Friends of Cherry Tree Wood, plus Gail Coles will share plans for a seasonal gathering and tree lighting.

Free and open to all

Meetings are free and open to all residents, traders and community groups in N2. Visit N2United.co.uk to find out more and share your suggestions and ideas. Or even better, join the next meeting on Thursday 11 November at 8pm.



Raw ingredient: Author Michael Leventhal with a cacao pod containing the seeds used to make chocolate.

Chocolate recipes hope to earn a chunk of change for caring charity

By John Lawrence

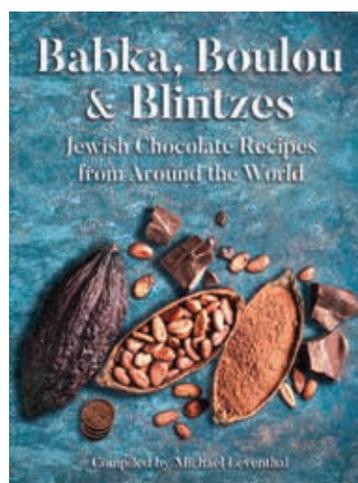
Assembling a book of delicious chocolate recipes from around the world, and trying them out, sounds like most people's idea of heaven but publisher Michael Leventhal hadn't realised quite what he was letting himself in for.

On one weekend he had around 100 friends and assistants testing the recipes and more than 20 of them brought samples to his home in Bedford Road, N2, to taste. "I eat a lot of chocolate," said Michael, "but that was quite a challenge."

His new book *Babka, Boulou & Blintzes* is a collection of chocolate recipes from 50 of the world's best-known Jewish writers and cooks, including a Spanish hot chocolate, a chocolate almond cake and a dark chocolate and roasted beetroot ice-cream. Contributors include local chefs Rachel Davies and Fabienne Viner-Luzzato, as well as Michelle Eshkeri, who runs the Margot Bakery on East End Road, N2. All profits from sales will be going to the Chai Cancer Care charity, which has a base in Hendon and is currently caring for Michael's mother while she has treatment for cancer.

Sweet and savoury

Michael, whose publishing company has majored in military history up to now, said he wanted the collection to stand out by having recipes with a story behind them. "For instance, there's American writer Joan Nathan's chocolate



Mouthwatering: Michael's book

almond cake, which is actually 400 years old," he said. "It comes from Bayonne in France where Spanish and Portuguese

Jews fled to escape the Spanish Inquisition and where they pretty much set up the chocolate industry in France. So you can learn a bit about the history of chocolate too."

As well as recipes for sweet-toothed readers, savoury dishes include a chocolate chilli and a Sicilian caponata, traditionally made with aubergines and vegetables. There are also gluten-free and vegan recipes.

You can buy *Babka, Boulou & Blintzes* at Tony's Continental in the High Road or direct from www.chaicancercare.org/chocolate. It is also available in Waterstones and on Amazon, although the charity will get a slightly lower return via those sellers.

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We are a Church of England church, working alongside the local parish churches in the Diocese of London. We don't have our own building, but meet in the community centre, homes and other spaces. We can take weddings, funerals, baptisms and confirmations and regularly celebrate communion at our Sunday services.

FIND US ON

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND



Festive gathering: The crowd sings carols at the last Christmas lights ceremony in 2019

Christmas and Hanukkah lights

By David Melsome

After missing out thanks to the isolation rules last year, the East Finchley community will once again be able to come together for two festive lighting ceremonies early next month. The Christmas tree outside Budgens in the High Road will be lit up on Saturday 4 December at 5pm. Everyone is welcome to come along to enjoy seasonal music and carols from The London Metropolitan



The menorah is prepared for lighting

Brass Band, Brookland School choir and Fixation Academy, along with free mulled wine and mince pies from Budgens.

The next day, Sunday 5 December at 4pm, Chabad of Finchley will light up a public menorah on the same corner outside Budgens on the final night of the eight-day Hanukkah holiday. The ceremony will be open to the entire community and will feature music, refreshments, gifts for children and festive fun.

Fruit from the orchard... and news from the wood

By Roger Chapman

The first fruits of the Cherry Tree Wood orchard trees have been sampled. Provided free by the London Orchard project two years ago the five fruit trees adjacent to the tennis courts have been developing nicely. There are three apple trees, one pear tree and a plumcot (a cross between an apricot and a plum)

They need time to develop a strong root system and so fruit is usually removed in the first few years of growth. Our trees had a stressful first year, including the hot dry spring of Lockdown One, and only survived with the great help of a lovely band of volunteers watering them each week.

Watering hasn't been such a problem this year. However, we removed most of the young fruits on the apple trees except one. It was from this tree that our group of litter pickers tasted at the end of the October litter pick.

The crunchy red apple we tried is called the Core Blimey. Bred to be strong, resilient and suited to London clay it does not suffer from any of the problems associated with the traditional Cox. We are looking forward to another good crop next year when in October 2022 we will hold our



Core Blimey: A Cherry Tree Wood apple

first Apple Day in the wood.

Litter picks

In other news from the Friends of Cherry Tree Wood we are reviewing the frequency of litter picks over winter because it has been difficult to find lots of litter on our last few dates, which is a very good thing. We will have a deep clean session when the undergrowth has died back in mid-late February 2022, and do other ad hoc litter picks as required.

Wildflower meadow

We will be planting a new wildflower meadow around the orchard trees and will need to protect the plants to allow them to establish themselves so you will see a barrier around a part of the orchard over winter.

Wood entrance

Our online petition to Barnet Council to extend Cherry Tree Wood, reported in *The Archer* last month with details also on our website, is going well. If you agree with this idea please sign the petition at <https://bit.ly/3vi9smx>. We will be presenting the petition to the Finchley and Golders Green Residents Forum in January 2022.

Substation site

A planning application by a property developer for a new shop, workspace and flats on the substation site on the High Road, on the other side of the railway from the wood, has been submitted to Barnet Council. We are concerned that because of its height the upper parts of it will be prominently visible from the wood and green area. We will be making comments on the application. You can make comments on the planning application on the Barnet website using reference 21/5217/FUL.

The Friends are always on the look out for new ideas and people to get involved in a wide range of activities. Do get in touch with us via email: friendsofcherrytreewood@gmail.com or have a look at our website <https://bit.ly/3IKqJS9>

RICKY SAVAGE ...

"The voice of social irresponsibility"

Still arguing, boys?

Just when you thought it was safe to wallow in Adele's latest misery-fest, two old blokes at the bar decide to have a row about who's the most rock 'n' roll of them all. Yes, folks, Mick and Paul are at it. So very 1960s, so very The Beatles v The Stones.

Back when The Beatles had just been invented, The Stones were the new kids on the block. Unlike the clean-cut and smartly suited Fab Four, the Stones were the scruffy gang you wanted to join because they annoyed your parents.

The thing was, The Beatles weren't the goody-two-shoes that their image suggested. They were as much a gang as the Stones would ever be, but it was Paul and his pals who got invited to the Palace for their MBEs, and I guess that didn't help relations.

What helped even less was McCartney describing The Stones as just a blues cover band and Jagger saying that The Beatles couldn't talk because they'd never done an arena tour. Just like two old blokes jostling in the pub.

In these mean and vicious times, does it really matter? Adele has just bared her soul and her divorce for a fourth mega seller, Cliff has just finished his Look Out I'm 80 tour, and Coldplay's next tour will be all about carbon-neutrality.

So let's get down to reality. The reason why The Beatles didn't do arena tours was because they hadn't been invented then. But they did play the largest gig for its time at the Shea Stadium in 1966. Others have played to more people in other arenas since but The Beatles got there first.

And what about the blues covers? We have to go back to the beginning, because The Beatles started off playing rock 'n' roll and then got into American soul and R 'n' B. Their first albums are stacked with songs like *Twist and Shout* and *Money*, and some of their early hits sound like they are only a chorus away from Motown.

The Stones? They started out as blues purists and only got creative in about 1965. After Brian Jones died, they decided to go back to the blues and become the best bar band in the world. It sure as hell worked for Mick and the boys, and even if there's only Mick, Keith and Ronnie left, they've stuck to the same riffs ever since.

Ok, they've finally decided that playing *Brown Sugar* is no longer cool. But Paul doesn't do the *Frog Chorus* either.



Motley crew: The band of pirates helping to raise funds in Madden's. Photo Mike Coles

Yo, ho, ho and a bottle of... lemonade, please

Why are pirates called pirates? Because they Arrr. That joke may well have been told a few times during the Talk Like A Pirate family fun day run at Madden's Bar in the High Road, N2 on Saturday 18 September. Mums, dads and children all turned up in various combinations of eye patches, striped shirts and pirate hats to help raise money for Marie Curie Cancer Care.

Madden's manager Niall O'Connor said: "Shiver me timbers! It turned out to be a fun day for all concerned and we hope to do it every year."

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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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Artist Marc Craig with his finished mural on the former New Local Cafe building. Photo: Mike Hughes

All eyes on pop-up gallery

By Alison Roberts & Mike Hughes

The former New Local Café building at 42 High Road, has undergone a transformation into a pop-up art gallery.

London-based street artist Marc Craig, whose work has been seen everywhere from Tate Britain to the Leake Street Tunnel, was asked by owner Alida to paint a mural on the front of the empty cafe, but when he saw the space inside he realised there was potential for much more.

Marc has collaborated with a group of fellow artists to produce an exhibition of abstract art, entitled *The Externals*, which will run throughout November. The gallery is open daily from 10am to 4pm and features work by Marc Craig, Zach Walsh, James Green, Damn Sung, Rod Atkinson, William Kwaku Amo, Krudspen and David Iain Brown.

Leave your mark

Visitors to the gallery will be encouraged to get creative and add to a community doodle, which will be displayed publicly when finished.



The Externals: Some of the works on display in the pop-up gallery at 42 High Road.

What happens when a book makes it to the big screen

By Diana Cormack

An East Finchley artist has been signed up to host a podcast as part of a series that examines how books are translated to the big screen.

Craig Johnson, of Sedge-mere Avenue, N2, is hosting *The Kings of Horror* series on the Literary Licence Podcast (LLP), which carries the description “We compare the book to the screen and everything in between”.

The podcast is now in its fifth year, with a worldwide following of more than three million dedicated listeners and subscribers to its monthly newsletters.

LLP was the brain child of Dr Keith Chawgo, of North Finchley, an editor, producer and director, who had the original idea of reading a book, then watching a film and having a discussion about the two.

Basically it was a show about books to screen, but gradually changes were made to the format and, as the project developed, approaches were made by international radio stations. Now 26 of them air the broadcasts, including in Japan, the Philippines and Brazil.

Craig's horror season

Covering all manner of genre, various monthly and weekly themes are planned and hosted, with specific co-hosts being chosen from all over the world. This is where Craig, a



Podcaster: Craig Johnson

long time devotee of the horror scene, came in.

His horror season started in September with *The Dead Zone* by Stephen King, followed by Clive Barker's *Cabal* in October. Craig told *The Archer*: “In November I'm comparing *Ghost Story* by Peter Straub versus the movie, and the musical *Little Shop of Horrors* vs *Green Thoughts* by Peter Collier.”

Craig is a key worker in mental health care, with his work as an artist and photographer playing a large part in his life. Accompanied by musician Dayvid Granthe, he can be heard on Fridays at 6pm. Visit www.llpodcast.com for more information.

An epic at St James

By Marian Bunzl

The roof of St James Church, Muswell Hill, still needs repair work in the north aisle and the chapel and so a second Raise the Roof fundraising concert took place on Saturday 2 October.

It was a performance of *Die Wintereise* (Winter's Journey), a collection of songs by Franz Schubert, set to poems by Wilhelm Muller, on the theme of lost or unrequited love; in effect a dramatic monologue that is rarely performed in its entirety.



Curtain call: Baritone James Cleverton, left, and pianist Nigel Foster. Photo Yvette Bonner

Muswell Hill resident and internationally acclaimed baritone James Cleverton was accompanied by renowned pianist Nigel Foster, director of the London Song Festival, to perform this epic work.

The lyrics tell the story of a lonely traveller in the snow on a journey to mourn a lost love. One could understand all through James expressive baritone, now dark with anger or despair, now gentle and tender with sorrow and regret.

Nigel's piano accompaniment required great virtuosity to accomplish changes of rhythms and cascades of arpeggios. He never allowed it to overwhelm his singer but sympathetically supported and enhanced his baritone's every nuance

St James is also very blessed in its audience. In spite of an appalling evening of high winds and pouring rain, the church was full to bursting, the applause was thunderous and the roof was raised.

Pets bring love into our lives

By Caroline Broome

The Finchley & District branch of the RSPCA organised a pet blessing service at Holy Trinity Church in Church Lane, N2, on Friday 8 October. St Francis Tide: Blessing of the Pets provided a welcome opportunity to give thanks for our beloved pets, for their loyalty and unconditional love.

Considering the combination of dogs and cats that attended the service with their owners, the congregation was very well behaved! We took two of our six cats, who were very happy to sit in their wire baskets near the radiators, observing from a safe haven, whilst the dogs sat obediently at their owners' feet, looking up at them adoringly for the most part.

Fr Marius Mirt conducted the service with a selection of hymns and prayers, celebrating animals as man's companions, acknowledging our responsibility to all animals, and asking for forgiveness for those who have abused and exploited animals

The reading, from the Book of Genesis, told of the creation of animals to accompany man: “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner.” Hymn 662 sang about the integral part animals play in our lives. One member of the congregation,



Pet blessing: Two dogs make friends during the service at Holy Trinity Church. Photo Mike Coles.

who brought her dog, spoke her personal prayer out loud, and I said a few words about a very special cat in my life, WinkyWoo, now sadly departed, whose unwavering love and companionship buoyed me up immeasurably through a tough time in my life.

By the time Fr Marius said the

Blessing of the animals, one or two dogs were getting a bit frisky, but still the cats sat stonily aloof. I found the whole service deeply touching, not only for its humble acknowledgement of the vitally integral part the animal kingdom plays in our world, but also for offering the recognition our pets deserve for enriching our lives.



Letters



Meal message: Sophie Thompson (see letter, below right)

Jab shambles

Dear Editor,

I was fortunate enough to be called for a Covid-19 booster vaccination and my appointment was on the afternoon of Saturday 16 October at the Torrington Park Health Centre in North Finchley. I arrived 25 minutes early to find a queue of at least 30 people.

After about an hour I eventually reached the entrance and had a brief respite sitting on a plastic chair. Soon afterwards, I joined a second queue for registration, then a third queue to enter the actual vaccination area, which added another 15 minutes. I am pleased to say that I received the vaccination, albeit 50 minutes late.

However, at no time was there any explanation or apology for the delay. I am fit if not young and perfectly capable of standing in a queue for an hour. It was boring but not distressing.

For some of the people attending, it was an ordeal. Numerous attendees clearly had mobility problems, some quite serious. All had to queue for an extended period. For one very elderly lady this became too much and she had to leave without getting a jab.

Quite a number of others were obviously distressed, but at no time was any help offered to those unfortunate people. There were at least a dozen unused chairs in the waiting area beyond registration that could have been employed to provide relief to those who needed it.

When I finally left, the queue had not diminished one iota. All in all, it was an inexcusable shambles.

Lawrence Robinson,
Address supplied.

Torrington Park Health Centre was given the opportunity to respond to these comments:

We're sorry to hear this individual's experience at our vaccination clinic didn't meet their expectations. We are always looking to improve the experience patients have when they visit us, and will take on board the feedback provided.

Vaccination remains the best way to protect you and your family, and in coming weeks we'll be calling in thousands of patients for both COVID boosters and flu jabs. We thank everyone for their patience at what

is a really busy time for our team.
Barnet PCN2 and PCN3 Covid 19 Vaccination Team

Meals for millions

Dear Editor,

It was World Porridge Day on 10 October and while for some this might conjure up images of *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, or those famous old porridge adverts, there's also a more important meaning to this day, one that can, quite literally, change lives.

Mary's Meals feeds more than two million children in 19 countries around the world every school day. In the countries where the charity works, including Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe, children are normally served steaming mugs of porridge, known locally as likuni phala, enriched with vitamins to help them learn and grow.

Providing a daily meal in a place of education is helping even the most vulnerable children to attend school and concentrate in lessons, giving them the freedom to learn and fulfil their potential. And the average global cost to feed a child with Mary's Meals for a whole school year is just £15.90.

Your readers can learn more about the work of this charity, and how a mug of porridge is helping to transform young lives, at marysmeals.org.uk

Sophie Thompson,
Former East Finchley resident,
actor and former winner of
Celebrity MasterChef

Organic fruit and veg shop

By Diana Cormack

Does East Finchley really need another fruit and vegetable shop? Many may have wondered this when the Cherry Tree opened last month at 36 High Road. However this one is quite different.

Owner Mahmut Kelec also owns the N2 Food Centre only a few doors away at number 46. After seven years of running that, he decided to concentrate the fruit and veg part of the business within a shop selling wholly organic products. The former premises will continue to be an off licence and will still sell a range of goods in the grocery line.



As well as delicious looking fruit and vegetables, Cherry Tree has an impressive range of organic goods on display. This includes toilet and kitchen rolls, cleaning, beauty and health products, a wide variety of teas and coffees, organic powders and herbs, sweets and chocolates, vegan biscuits, tinned and frozen goods.

The best way to find out what's there is to go and take a look. You could get yourself a freshly squeezed orange juice at the same time. Cherry Tree is open daily from 7am -9pm.



Top gear: Kitchen and serving staff in the Engine Rooms dining space. Photo Mike Coles

Foodie destination with a side order of classic cars

By Mike Coles

Most readers will be familiar with Hexagon Classics, the specialist car showroom just south of East Finchley station, but many may not be aware of the new developments there. In 2015 Paul Michaels, the Hexagon chairman, was inspired by a visit to Petersham Nurseries to consider expanding the site into a foodie destination. Petersham, a garden centre in Richmond, south west London, is now as well known for its restaurant as it is for its plants.

Working on the project with his late wife, the first phase to open 18 months ago was the gourmet shop called Bottles 'N Jars (*The Archer*, January 2021), a food emporium where you can get ingredients and wines carefully sourced from all over Europe.

The next phase was the most ambitious: a top class restaurant and wine bar serving Mediterranean inspired food. With a staff of 25 and James Harrison as Head Chef, The Engine Rooms restaurant opened a few weeks ago.

Hailing from Manchester, James came down to London and built up his reputation at several top restaurants. He is particularly keen on the creative use of fish as an alternative to

meat-heavy meals and uses at least 80 per cent of fresh British produce in his cooking.

Special surroundings

Apart from food, the building itself may well find fame for its architecture and interior decoration strongly influenced by Paul's late wife, a designer. And that's not to forget the collection of classic cars that gleam through Hexagon's huge showroom windows.

Although Covid initially presented a few problems for the restaurant seating, it was possible to cover and heat a large exterior courtyard to comply with restrictions. The restaurant is now taking bookings and the coffee shop is open all day.

Garden gold lines the streets

By Piers Reilly

As we head into the darker, wetter, bleaker days and once more (voluntarily) retreat into our homes to shield from the non-stop downpour that November in London brings, we should take note of that most divisive of activities: composting. Truly, this is one of those subjects that has divided gardeners for as long as we have gardened. Roughly 12,000 years of contention, therefore whatever is said next someone will heartily disagree; more brown matter vs more green material, bacterial additions vs native fungi, hot vs cold... the clash is truly endless. Today we shall ignore all of this and take heart that one does not need to weigh in on the fiendishly complex world of compost in order to create black gold.

Leaf mould is the easiest method of creating compost that exists, short of accidentally leaving a huge pile of nutritionally dense garden waste somewhere and coming back in a few years.

Grab all the fallen leaves you can find on pavements and paths, make a cylinder from chicken wire (or grab a couple of bin bags with a few holes) and pack them

all in, wet it and then you're done. Come back in 6-12 months and use it to start seeds, add to plant pots to improve water retention, or use as a readily broken down mulch for flower beds. You can speed up the process enormously by chopping the leaves up a bit via lawnmower or disturbing the pile every fortnight to add in some oxygen, if you want it ready for spring.

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Bacchus is back! International Cat Rescue saves the day

Vishay Naidoo was left heartbroken by his beloved Bengal cat Bacchus going missing shortly after they moved to East Finchley and his sister Tash-mika was desperate to help. Trouble was, she lived 8,000 miles away in Cape Town, South Africa. Undeterred, she jumped online and discovered an amazing network of helpers ready to join the search. Here, Tash tells the story of an international cat rescue operation with a happy ending...

When it was confirmed that my brother's Bengal, Bacchus, had gone missing shortly after their move from Queens Avenue in Muswell Hill to Aylmer Road in East Finchley, I joined online

community groups in both areas to create awareness.

My brother and I followed all the advice tips: litter box outside, used clothes in a box outside the old home... we even

set a trap in the garden of one of the cats he used to know. With no luck but unquenchable hope, we forged on.

On the way I befriended extremely kind people such as Russell Topalensky Turner who, with his wife, walked Muswell Hill's streets relentlessly in search of Bacchus. In the East Finchley group I came across the most amazing woman, Celia Green, who led me to two more wonderful souls, Ramu Karunakaran and Zara Lim. Their tenacity and immense kindness was truly profound.

From Cape Town on the other side of the world I felt quite useless in the situation but they got together to print pamphlets galore, dividing and conquering distribution across East Finchley and Muswell Hill. I, myself, have never been to East Finchley so they educated me on their routes and relevant roads through Google maps over our group Facebook chat.

In contrast, might I add, I also came across a strange man who, amid my distress, suggested my friends and I video call to watch him run up and down his passage in his underwear. No joke. However, he too distributed my poorly designed pamphlets and, for that, I am grateful.

Myself, Celia, Ramu, Zara and my little brother Mikarl (the poor pamphlet designer



Never gave up: Tash-mika Naidoo co-ordinated the search from her home in South Africa

I roped in) endured many false leads including tabbies, collarless cats, dead cats, a dead fox who

in Eastern Road and Lynmouth Road, N2, terrorising the neighbourhood cats and stealing their food, much in line with the new outlaw life he must have become accustomed to.

But then another four months passed and we began to resign ourselves to the possibility of Bacchus being too wild to capture. Regardless, we set up a cat trap at the house in Lynmouth Road. Bacchus actually managed to get into this cage for food numerous times without setting it off, then one night at 9.30pm South Africa time we were finally told he'd been caught.

Thank you to Ruth and her parents for never giving up on the cat trap, and to Celia for assisting to bring him home. My brother has never been happier. Bacchus fended for himself for seven months but he's absolutely thrilled to be home. Vishay says he's never seen him so grateful for food.

We could never have found him without the kindness, help and support of the East Finchley and Muswell Hill community. Sending you all so much love from Cape Town, South Africa. We pulled off a cat-finding campaign, two continents apart. That is pretty amazing!



Reunited: Vishay Naidoo and his beloved Bacchus back together

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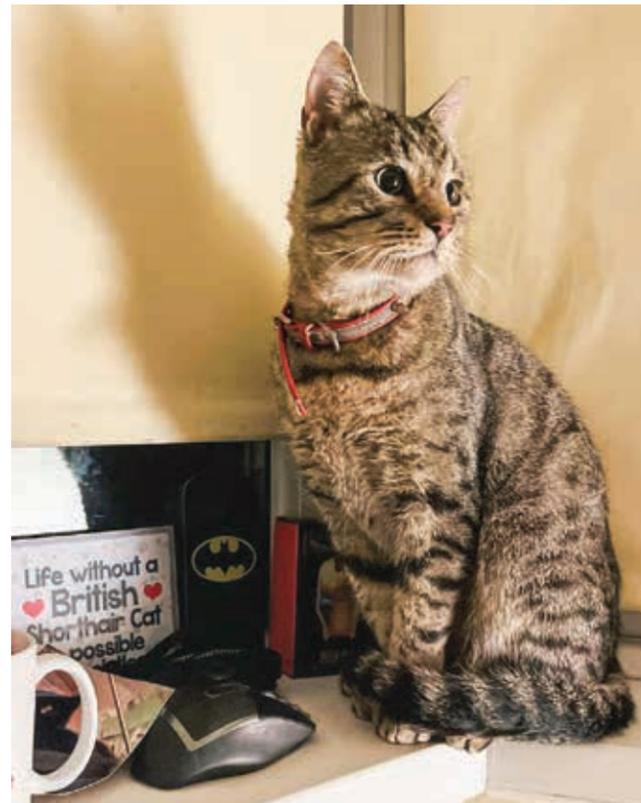
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Missing for months: Bacchus is glad to be home again

someone thought was our cat, and a cat who looked exactly like our Bacchus but, alas, wrong collar.

Whilst we knew he would likely be alive as he is extremely capable outdoors, we had no idea if or when he'd ever be home. Needless to say a feeling of hopelessness did arise as the weeks and months passed.

It was in May, two months after Bacchus went missing, that we got our first and only two real leads. He was confirmed through clear images to be frequenting two homes

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