



Objects of desire: Just some of the works and displays from the East Finchley Open Artists Open Weekends where visitors could browse and buy. Photo montage Mike Coles.

Two weekends of artful browsing

By Mike Coles

Hot on the heels of this year's East Finchley Community Festival in Cherry Tree Wood were two weekends when local artists opened their houses to show and sell a large variety of original art and crafts.

Hundreds of visitors followed the trail in gloriously warm weather at the end of June and start of July, confirming East Finchley

as one of London's notable artistic communities. The East Finchley Open Artists group is planning more exhibitions for later in the

year and will be back with its Open House Weekends again next summer. Keep up to date with the artists and events at www.eastfinchleyopen.org.uk



Lisa Jones and Stephen Thomas pictured with 'Ernie' at East Finchley Festival. Photo: Mike Coles

Ernie earns innovation award

A Muswell Hill wife and husband have won a national award for the way they have grown their small business selling refill goods from a restored vintage milk float.

The People's Pantry, set up by Lisa Jones and Stephen Thomas, were crowned winners of an innovation category at the Small Awards, hosted by comedian and radio host Sue Perkins.

Their mobile refill shop, otherwise known as Ernie the milk float, is a well-known

site at north London markets and festivals and has regular neighbourhood stop-off points around the area, selling food and household items to customers who bring their own containers.

They reduce plastic use even further by offering a doorstep delivery option where customers can order precise amounts

online and leave their used containers out for collection, sanitation and reuse, just like traditional milk float deliveries.

The People's Pantry has also been awarded a £500 Community Carbon Fund grant from Haringey Council to make this system even more sustainable.

Why I've become a soldier in the battle against dementia

By Diana Cormack

Recently there have been more reports of hopeful news regarding the development or treatment of dementia. I may be noticing them because my mother spent the last years of her life living with Alzheimer's, a cruel disease which inevitably affects other members of the family.

The feeling of helplessness as the person you know and love gradually disappears is unforgettable. However, some time after her death I did find a way of helping when I became a volunteer at the Dementia Research Centre in Queen Square, central London.

Testing for comparison

Participants need to be healthy 50 to 75-year-olds who are asked to perform a series of tests, the results of which can be used as a comparison to those of someone with dementia. They usually take place on a one-to-one basis and involve answering spoken questions, some paper and pencil work, along with computerised responses. These increase in difficulty and some are timed.

Over the years I have participated in new tests being developed to help better inform the understanding of different types of dementia. More recently the research has been on working to understand how people's thoughts, feelings and behaviour change with a diagnosis of dementia, and how this relates to the brain. The focus is on the perception of speech and other sounds such as music and different acoustic environments.

The Brain Behaviour Group

Led by Professor James Warren at the UCL centre,

the BBG is interested in how hearing impacts people living with dementia, particularly those with Alzheimer's disease and frontotemporal dementia. With hearing being crucial to everyday communication and because we hear through a complicated process in our brains, they want to explore the impact on cognition, hearing and everyday life dementia might have in relation to the brain. This research provides the groundwork necessary for developing treatments.

Any information about volunteers is kept strictly confidential. Should you wish to participate, google Dementia Research Centre, Queen Square and click on 'Get Involved'.

Flower arranging

Meanwhile here in Barnet a community project has been launched which uses flower arranging to support people with dementia. Flowers sourced from retailers and venues which would otherwise dump them are used to make floral arrangements at more affordable prices. They are then sold for weddings, funerals and other specific events.

Organiser Ursula Stone, who has won a Barnet Civic Award for her work, says such activities are particularly suitable to those living with dementia and their carers. To find out more visit www.theflowerbank.org.uk

From the heart

By Diana Cormack

*I thought I saw you then, Mum,
When you looked at me,
Looked and saw and knew me.
Before your eyes filmed over
I caught a glimpse of you.*

*Then you were gone once more,
Dragged back by that invisible invader,
Back to that parasite of your brain,
To that dictator of your being.
I didn't see you go.*

*Imperceptibly over the years
Cruel claws have tightened their grip,
Slowly, silently stealing you from us.
Where do you go? Why do you obey?
Oh Mum, I wanted you to stay.*

*I wanted to hold you tightly,
For you to feel the power of my love,
To feel my strength pulling you back
From that unseen enemy within.
But it remains, invincible.*

*I thought I saw you then, Mum,
When you looked at me.
I caught a fleeting glimpse
But, as I looked at you Mum,
You couldn't see me any more.*