



## Circus diverts to new site for winter shows

By John Lawrence and Fiona Macdonald

A circus that was taking bookings for performances in flood-prone Cherry Tree Wood is moving its big tent to a nearby location. As we reported last month, Revel Puck Circus was hoping to run a season of shows in East Finchley from 21 December to 7 January. It is now moving to Victoria Park in Finchley Central.

The Friends of Cherry Tree Wood group had warned that a circus residency could cause severe damage to the park at a time of year when its field is often flooded due to poor drainage. They also feared that neighbours and wildlife would be disturbed by the company's lighting and 24-hour generator.

Barnet Council told *The Archer* that Revel Puck had wanted to be in Victoria Park originally but were prevented by a prior booking. That booking has since been cancelled, leaving them free to make the switch.

A council spokesperson said: "The organisers have asked if they can transfer their application from Cherry Tree Wood to Victoria Park due to its transport links, visibility and proximity to their partner the Artsdepot. At this present time we are no longer processing an application for the Revel Puck Circus to take place at Cherry Tree Wood."

An Artsdepot spokesperson

said: "Our box office team are in the process of contacting everyone who's booked so far and we're updating all the website details as we speak."

### Relief

Roger Chapman, chair of the Friends of Cherry Tree Wood, said: "There is great relief that the location of the circus has been moved. The Friends will continue to campaign for changes to the council's events policy which allowed officers to put the Wood forward without any consultation locally."

East Finchley councillor Alison Moore told us: "I think the arguments about the potential for flooding... meant it was a sensible way forward. There are people disappointed that it won't be happening in East Finchley but of course Victoria Park isn't a million miles away. If you live at the northern end of East Finchley it's just a quick walk up Long Lane or for those further south perhaps a hop on the 143 bus."



Wet ground: Close to where the circus would have been sited in Cherry Tree Wood

## U3A enters new era with stress-buster

Business stress consultant and author Carole Spiers is the new chair of Hampstead Garden Suburb U3A. She gave a talk called 'Show Stress Who's Boss' at the Free Church in Central Square in September that was attended by more than 150 guests, the largest ever audience for the U3A.

Carole gave insights into the causes and effects of stress and shared her top 10 techniques and tips for reducing it. These included diet, hydration, sleep, mindfulness, exercise and time management.

She also outlined her ambition to help the learning and skills group for over-55s grow from 600 towards 1,000 mem-



New chair: Carole Spiers

bers and expand the number of groups and activities to match.

HGSU3A activities include computers, science and technology, food and drink, history and humanities, languages and literature. Find full details at [www.hgsu3a.uk](http://www.hgsu3a.uk).



Ground level: Ben Wilson working on his pavement art in East Finchley. Photo Mike Coles

## A bridge too far for chewing gum man Ben as his art is threatened

By John Lawrence

Chewing gum artist Ben Wilson is fighting to preserve the dozens of tiny artworks he has painted on the Millennium Bridge over the River Thames as the structure undergoes a major refurbishment.

Ben, who is often spotted at pavement level around East Finchley and Muswell Hill turning flattened chewing gum into mini masterpieces, has been taking his art into the centre of town for almost 20 years.

He has painted scenes of iconic London buildings along with personalised messages on chewing gum that has fallen between the ridges of the bridge's metal planks as part of



Landmark: Ben's painting of the Bald Faced Stag pub

a trail leading all the way from north London.

### 'Killjoys'

But now many of his unique pieces are expected to be blasted off as part of the clean-up, which is already under way. Ben says the authorities are 'killjoys' and hopes at least some of his work can be preserved.

"The art is lovely," he told BBC News. "There's something that people can discover

and often you'll see children jumping from picture to picture. They'll destroy that trail and I'm thinking they're killjoys. Please, please celebrate the art.

"I'm taking something that's thrown away and disgusting, and turning 'eugh' into 'mmm'. People kept coming up and saying 'Will you do one for me?' People from all walks of life, love messages, rest in peace pictures. There's 'Will you marry me?' pictures. They can't go."

## Christmas invitation from school

Bishop Douglass School will be holding their annual Christmas party for senior East Finchley residents again this year on Tuesday 5 December, from 5-7pm. Guests are asked to arrive by 4.45pm in order to make a prompt start. East Finchley residents who are over 65 are welcome and you should book your place without delay.

As usual, you will be welcomed with a glass of sherry by Year 10 students and enjoy a Christmas meal, followed by carol singing and entertainment by pupils and staff. Games of bingo and a gift from Santa Claus will round off the evening.

Transport can be provided for those residents who are less able. To book your place, phone 020 8883 0433, leave your name and a contact number and someone will get back to you.

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