



Circus skills: Trapeze artists perform at Jacksons Lane in 1988

Fifty years of a thriving community arts centre

By Jessica Holt

It was 50 years ago that a small theatre opened in a converted Methodist church opposite Highgate tube station and the Jacksons Lane centre has thrived ever since, delivering programmes of music, dance and plays with a special focus on circus skills.

At its heart are its outreach programmes to schools and young people. It also opens its doors to charities and offers the theatre as a rehearsal space to commercial concerns such as the BBC's Strictly Come Dancing.

A special evening to mark the anniversary highlighted new projects the creative team are embarking on. For example an archive is to be housed in Bruce Castle Museum in Haringey, a memory project involving anyone with a memory of

a visit to the theatre which I was particularly charmed by.

It also showcased future productions, among them Handful of Nothing starring Tilly Lee-Cronick from Muswell Hill, who studied drama and theatre studies at Fortismere School. This one-woman show, a combination of storytelling, poetry, song and dance, is at Jacksons Lane on Thursday 6 February and will be truly fascinating if her short extract performance was anything to go by.



Still shining: The arts centre as it is in its 50th year

Jackie Briggs, a friend to families facing hurdles

Gay rights advocate Jackie Briggs, who died in October at the age of 77, had lived in East Finchley since 1983, mainly in Edmund's Walk. Here her son Robert Briggs recounts her life and achievements in using her own experience to help other families.

My mother Jackie Briggs dedicated much of her later life to helping parents understand and accept their children's sexual orientation or gender identity, a cause deeply personal to her after both of her own children came out.

Born in London in 1947 to a middle-class Jewish family, she was proud of the fact that she had much personal and professional success despite leaving school in Harrow at 15 with only one O-Level. After training as a secretary, she worked in various roles, including at the BBC and Cadbury Schweppes, while enjoying an active social life in London.

In 1982, Jackie married John Briggs, a barrister, with whom she had my sister Anne and me. Alongside her family life, Jackie pursued her passion for acting. She participated in local improvisation drama classes and amateur theatre. She later studied at the Central School of Speech and Drama and acted professionally, with notable roles including an appearance as a Ministry wizard in Harry Potter.

Community volunteer

Her natural warmth led her to community work. This included volunteering as a companion to elderly people through the East Finchley Neighbourhood Centre and taking her beloved whippet Coby to primary schools as part of a 'pets-as-therapy' programme, helping children to build their confidence in reading. But it was her work with Families Together London (FTL), a support group for parents of LGBTQ+ children, that became her defining cause. For nearly 20 years, Jackie provided invaluable support to families, offering encouragement to those struggling with their children's coming out and serving as a vocal advocate on the radio and at conferences.

She was also a long-time member of the Community Advisory Board for Pride in London. She was as comfortable talking with fellow parents in the church hall where the group met every month, as she was marching down Oxford Street in the Pride parade, tannoy in hand and waving a banner.

Deep connections

In her final months, as she endured a debilitating stroke and brain tumour, Jackie continued to form deep connections and friendships with fellow patients in various hospitals and



Campaigner: Jackie Briggs fought to support families bringing up LGBTQ+ children

later a nursing home. Her ability to reach out, even in the face of her own challenges, reflected the deep empathy that defined her life.

Jackie is survived by her

husband John, her brother Howard, her children Anne and Robert, and their partners Elodie and James (Jimmy) who she loved as her own.

ANY READER WHO FEELS STRONGLY ABOUT ANY MATTER IS INVITED TO USE THIS "SOAP-BOX" COLUMN. PLEASE NOTE THAT OPINIONS EXPRESSED ARE THOSE OF THE WRITER ALONE.



Avenue is appalling

By Isobel Grant

These too are now being demolished and replaced with flats, large ugly houses some of which resemble masonic temples, and an enormous old people's 'retirement facility' that towers above tree height, has no pretension to beauty and recalls a stranded liner.

This long-term N2 resident used to enjoy looking at the different houses with their huge well-kept front gardens open to view. Now I sigh with despair at the continued destruction and the gates, hedges and fences designed to stop one seeing anything.

Regular drivers up the Avenue cannot fail to be annoyed at the appalling state

of the upper end of the road created by the many heavy lorries that deliver concrete and heavy building materials to multifarious building sites.

Traffic is frequently stopped by large vehicles turning and reversing whilst making deliveries. Many of the building workers seem to travel by car, as the road is usually fully parked on both sides, making it too narrow for cars to pass the constant stream of trucks.

Even with the need for planning consent, this once attractive street has been degraded. What will happen with even more deregulation remains a mystery, but it won't be pretty!



Glebelands
indoor bowling...at its best

Why not book a
30min taster session
no charge

What are you
waiting for?
just call, email or
visit the club



a game for all ages
100 years v 16 years

**Glebelands Indoor
Bowls Club**
Summers Lane
Finchley
London
N12 0PD
020 8446 2090
glebelandsibc@gmail.com
www.Glebelandsibc.co.uk