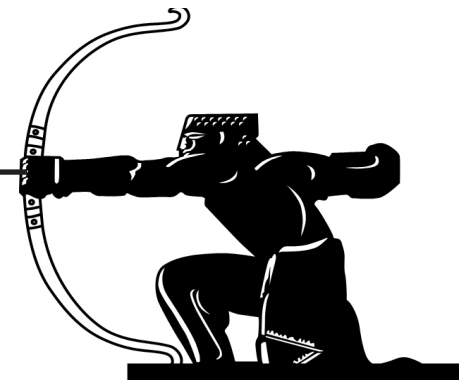


# The Archer

Local News is our Aim



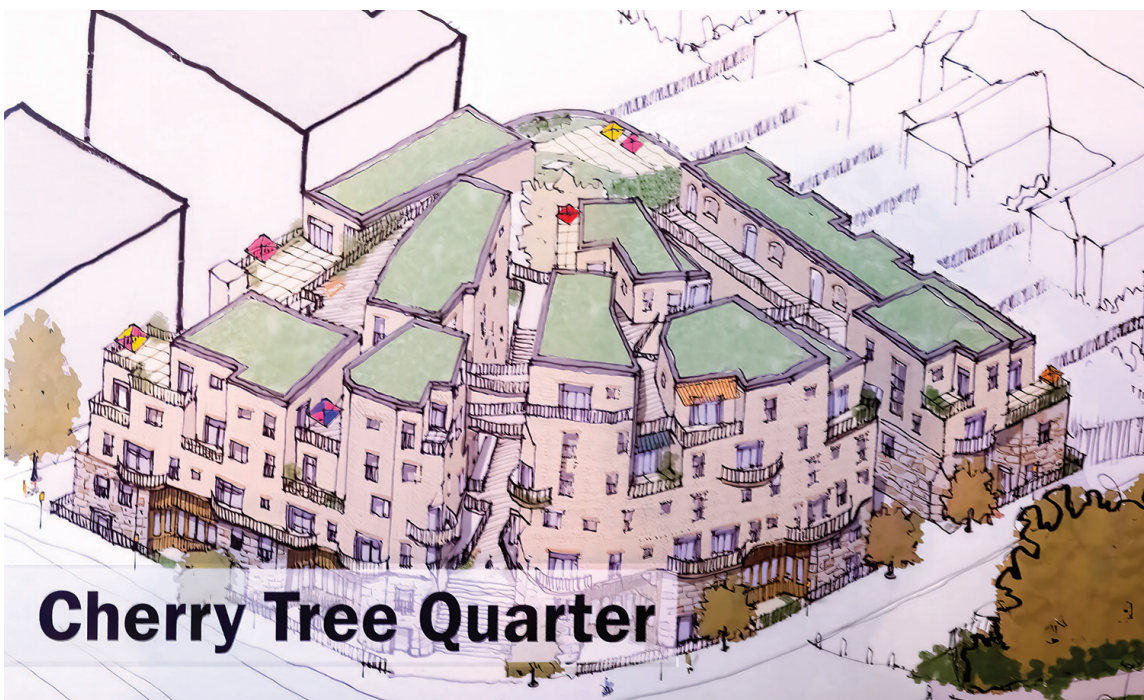
March 2025 No. 371

Delivered free to 10,000 homes and businesses across East Finchley

## Housing plan for prime site opposite station



Ripe for development: The Park House and Monkey Puzzle Nursery site seen from East Finchley Station, above, has been identified as a possible site for 70 homes in 12 blocks, below. Top photo Mike Coles.



**Cherry Tree Quarter**

By Nadia Savvopoulou

**A prime site opposite East Finchley tube station and alongside Cherry Tree Wood, which is currently occupied by the Monkey Puzzle nursery, could be developed to provide about 70 new homes under plans being put forward by Barnet Council in partnership with a group of private companies.**

The proposals for the new Cherry Tree Quarter project were presented by developers and architect representatives in a public meeting at the Old White Lion pub on Thursday 5 February. They showed the stone and timber-clad homes in 12 blocks of varying heights, some with balconies, in a ‘village’ layout accessed through decked paths, three pedestrian streets and a cobbled central square.

The project team engaged with attendees at the meeting, addressing concerns about parking, social housing, and the future of the nursery. The team said only four Blue Badge parking permits would be issued for the whole site and confirmed there would be no social housing, adding that profits from Barnet Council’s share of any house sales would be earmarked for other social housing projects in Barnet. The nursery would be temporarily rehoused until it could move back into new premises on the site.

### First reactions

Roger Chapman, chair of the Friends of Cherry Tree Wood, said his group did not support the development in its current form and called it a “gross overdevelopment of the site”.

“It does not retain the mature trees and open space at the front contrary to the new local plan that was agreed upon by

Barnet Council Cabinet on the same night as the consultation meeting,” he said. “We will campaign for the protection of all the mature trees, the open space at the front of the site, an improved entrance to the Wood, and for a development that respects the plan that Barnet Council has just adopted.”

### Building height

Other concerns raised at the meeting included the height and proportion of the housing blocks in relation to surrounding homes and the positioning of the courtyard square at the back of the site, rather than the front.

*Continued on page 6*

## Call-out for poems

As part of the refurbishment of the pedestrian underpass between Manor Park Road and New Trinity Road, N2, reflector panels are being installed for better visibility around the sharp corners.

These will be overlaid with poetry written by local people about the community and the underpass so project organisers are asking for submissions. They are also looking for someone to coordinate the poetry contributions. Email [info@grangebiglocal.org](mailto:info@grangebiglocal.org) or call project manager Karen on 07902 900639 to get involved.

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## Engineers brought in to investigate park flooding



Drainage problems: The main field in Cherry Tree Wood is prone every year to flooding in its lowest lying areas

By Debbie Linton

A civil and environmental engineering firm has recently carried out a study to find solutions for the flooding problems that continue to leave large areas of Cherry Tree Wood out of bounds.

Specialists Metis Consulting Ltd were called in to conduct a survey and found six areas of the park that were particularly prone to water-logging, including the 'lake' on the main playing field which is visible to all visitors. Last year a serious flooding incident had also emerged on the path alongside the tube line.

The AGM of the Friends of Cherry Tree Wood in January was told that some 'naturalistic' solutions for the general drainage of the park might be possible and that more information would become available this year.

The Friends were continuing to work closely with the Council to try to find a permanent fix. The East Finchley Festival organisers, who stage their event in the park every June, and other members of the community were also helping to find answers.

### New to the wood

New to the wood in the last 12 months were three nature recovery zones, the AGM was also told. Information on the flora and fauna in the wood is being collated and some new play equipment in the older children's play area has been installed.

A significant achievement in 2024 was that Green Flag status had been awarded to the wood, the only park in Barnet to receive this accolade. This was due in no small part to the efforts of volunteers attending monthly community litterpicks, tending to the new forest gardens, and maintaining flower beds and the orchard. Bat monitoring had continued, with at least three species again identified.

Other events included Bioblitz and citizen science days, a seed and plant swap day and two walks in collaboration

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- Stay anonymous and report information to Crimestoppers on **0800 555111**

## BE PART OF IT Volunteers wanted

Compiled by Lynn Winton

**The North London Festival** ([northlondonfestival.org.uk](http://northlondonfestival.org.uk)) is an annual event that takes place in the Free Church, Hampstead Garden Suburb, from mid-March to mid-May. It gives performance opportunities to help young musicians develop, all of whom receive feedback from an eminent adjudicator and a certificate. The organisers need help to staff the reception desk, direct performers and their parents/teachers and manage back-stage practice rooms. There is also the bonus of listening to some talented musicians. Please get in touch with Rosemary Cook: [enquiriesnlf@outlook.com](mailto:enquiriesnlf@outlook.com)

**Barnet Bereavement Counselling Service** ([barnetbereavementservice.org.uk](http://barnetbereavementservice.org.uk)) is looking for a Volunteer Fundraiser to help grow its online presence and support its work. Remote and flexible hours are offered, and could suit an A-level or Uni student in Business, Marketing, Events, or related fields. The role involves creating engaging social media content and promoting fundraising campaigns. Find out more by emailing Salli Cohn: [info@barnetbereavementservice.org.uk](mailto:info@barnetbereavementservice.org.uk)

**HGS u3a** ([hgsu3a.uk](http://hgsu3a.uk)) is a membership organisation for retired people; where you can learn new things and make new friends. They have more than 60 groups including History, Bridge and Cycling; all run by volunteers. There are currently two vacancies, the first for Volunteer Art Teacher to take Art Beginners and Art Improvement groups. You would need to be reliable and well-organised with some experience of teaching art to a mixed ability group. The second vacancy is for a Volunteer Tai Chi/ Keep Fit instructor. You would need to be reliable, well-organised and be able to work with a group of mixed ability members. For more information please contact Tina: [groupsorg@hgsu3a.uk](mailto:groupsorg@hgsu3a.uk)

If you'd like your organisation to be included in this column please email [news@the-archer.co.uk](mailto:news@the-archer.co.uk)



## PLANNING APPLICATIONS

### Barnet

#### 20 Manor Cottages Approach, N2

Two-storey rear extension. Two-storey side infill extension

#### 85 High Road, N2

Vinyl signage on glazing above ATM

#### 12 - 18 High Road, N2

Submission of details of conditions 25 (Secured by Design) 32 (Landscape Plan) pursuant to planning appeal APP/N5090/W/23/3326949 dated 27/09/2023 planning ref 22/3419/S73

#### 62 Hertford Road, N2

Conversion of two flats into two semi-detached houses involving part single, part two-storey side and rear extension and alterations to the existing patio area with ramped access following demolition of the existing rear conservatory, new front access steps, extension to roof including increasing of ridge height, two rear dormers and five front roof lights, new side gable window and associated internal alterations. Associated amenity space, refuse and recycling storage

#### Strawberry Vale Play Space, N2

Submission of details of conditions 6

(Construction Environmental Management Plan) 7 (Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan) 8 (Ecological Enhancement Strategy) pursuant to planning permission 24/2933/FUL dated 27/01/2025

#### Martin Primary School, Plane Tree Walk, N2

Submission of details of condition 3 (Acoustic report) pursuant to planning permission 24/2205/RCU dated 05/08/2024

#### 11 - 59 High Road, N2

Submission of details of condition 4 (Demolition and Construction Management and Logistics Plan) pursuant to planning permission 24/1519/FUL dated 07/08/2024

#### 18 Trinity Road, N2

Erection of a garden shed

#### 28A Park Hall Road, N2

Roof extension involving rear dormer and outrigger dormer and two front-facing roof lights

#### 17 Bedford Road, N2

Roof extension involving rear dormer window and two front-facing roof lights

#### Archer Academy, Eagans Close, N2

Construction of new single-storey school building. Relocation of bicycle storage and refuse storage

#### 21 Church Lane, N2

Two-storey rear extension including two Juliet balconies and new rear patio. Insertion of new first-floor front and side windows. New front porch

#### 8 Manor Park Road, N2

Single-storey side and rear extension following demolition of the existing rear extension. Changes to first-floor side and rear fenestration. Addition of side and rear roof lights

#### 36 Sedgemere Avenue, N2

Replacement of existing front and rear windows with double glazed UPVC sash windows to match existing

#### 36 Bedford Road, N2

Single-storey wrap around side and rear extension with four roof lights

#### 6 Cherry Tree Road, N2

Single-storey rear extension. New front porch. Roof extension involving replacement rear dormer window with Juliet balcony and three front-facing roof lights following removal of the existing



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# Crumbling buildings are a lethal danger



Danger to life: Broken masonry lies on the pavement outside the community police office and outside another premises on the opposite side of the High Road after recent falls and, right, the huge block that fell off the roof of Amazing Grates in 2023

By Julia Lawrence

**Bouts of extreme weather over the winter have led to a worrying and potentially lethal spate of incidents in the High Road, N2, where chunks of masonry and roof tiles have fallen from buildings, and smashed onto the pavement below.**

Most recently after a cold snap in January, early morning commuters walking to East Finchley station noticed the pavement outside the Metropolitan Police office littered with lumps of crumbled plaster and concrete. Dr Claire Phipps, who lives in Bedford Road, chanced upon the damage, on her way to work. "I don't know how someone hasn't been killed,"

she told The Archer. "I make a point now of walking away from the shop fronts, and near the kerb. I appreciate it is up to individual owners to make sure their buildings are safe, but I think a collective process is needed, which is in the interests of everyone." About a year earlier, a similar thing happened on the opposite side of the High Road.

On this occasion, several large and heavy pieces of cornicing had come loose from a façade, thankfully overnight.

### Who's responsible?

Incidents of falling masonry often follow bouts of extreme weather: heavy rain seeps into cracks, freezes and expands, leaving concrete and plaster loose when the ice thaws. Structural work can also lead to damage.

On 10 January 10, the UK had one of its coldest nights in 15 years, with temperatures plunging in some areas to minus 19C. On 11 January, Heath Street, in Hampstead, was closed off following reports of rubble falling from a roof.

Many of the buildings on the High Road in N2 were built around the turn of the last century, and property law states that it is the responsibility of the freeholder, not individual leaseholders in flats or shops, to ensure that the building's edifice and roof is of a safe and acceptable standard.

Surveyors from Barnet Council carry out site inspections when incidents are reported, but identifying who is the freeholder is not always straightforward, as a management company can often be responsible.

### Regular calls

In November 2023, as reported in The Archer, the owners of the Amazing Grates fireplace shop, which dates back to 1905, had



Emergency service: Firemen check the safety of the Amazing Grates rooftop following the incident there last winter. Photo Mike Coles

a similar incident when a large section of one of the 'corbels', or decorative supportive structures, sheered off its frontage and landed on the High Road pavement.

Freeholder and owner, Liz Tew told us: "I immediately sectioned it off, so that people couldn't walk under it and rang the fire brigade who came and removed the rest of it. When the council surveyor came he said they get a call once a fortnight around the area, as a lot of these buildings are so old."

The building was declared safe by the surveyor, but Liz says she's still very anxious about it. "I would like the other corbel removed. We have had such extremes of wind and rain, if it has happened once, it strikes me as reasonable that it could happen again, which is a horrible thought."

### Report concerns

Kate Brown, chair of the East

Finchley Town Team group, which promotes the use of local shops and businesses in the High Road, said: "The legal position is clear. The responsibility for maintaining properties rests with the freeholder. It is vital for everyone's safety that they do so."

"It is excellent that The Archer is raising this issue and as a Town Team we would encourage anyone who has a concern about a building to use the proper reporting process."

### How to raise the alarm

Reports can be made by going to [www.barnet.gov.uk](http://www.barnet.gov.uk) and searching 'dangerous building'. Alternatively, email via: [building.control@barnet.gov.uk](mailto:building.control@barnet.gov.uk). Otherwise, call the Building Control department on 020 8359 4500, Monday to Friday between 9am and 5pm and out of hours on: 020 8359 2000 or in an emergency dial 999.

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## Friends join forces in anti-nuclear protest

**Three East Finchley residents have set up a new branch of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.**

Kate, Ruth and Sally met by chance on the bus to a national demonstration outside the US Air Force base at Lakenheath in Suffolk to protest against the siting of US nuclear warheads in Britain for the first time in 15 years.

"We discovered a shared concern about the increasing threat of war in Europe," said

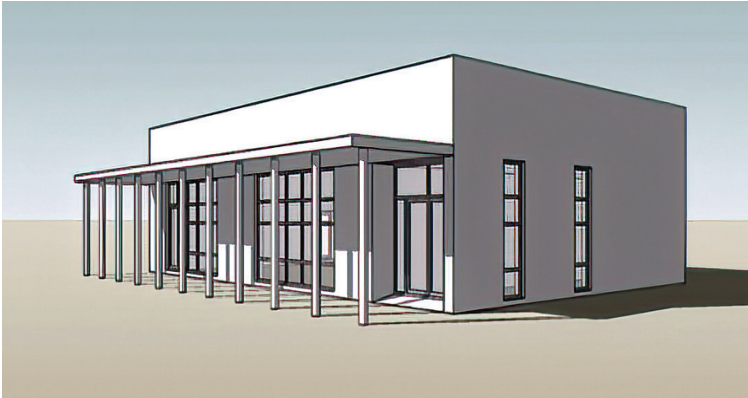
Sally. "We were surprised to see each other on the coach. After chatting, we realised that if three of us are this concerned about having nuclear warheads sited within 80 miles of our home, there are probably other people equally disturbed, or maybe they just don't realise yet this is happening."

An initial meeting to see if

there was an appetite for forming a new branch led to others joining, including two friends and campaigners from the former days of CND. If you are concerned about these issues or would like to know more email [info@londoncnd.org](mailto:info@londoncnd.org) and write Finchley in the subject bar.



# Final push for performing arts studio fundraiser



Purpose built: How Archer Academy hopes its new performing arts studio will look

**Actors Matt Lucas and Nicola Stephenson, and comedian Ian Stone, who all live locally, are backing Archer Academy's push to build a new performing arts studio, with construction set to begin this June.**

The aim is to raise £150,000 through an online crowdfunding campaign running from 21-23 March. A generous donor has pledged to match every £1 raised, bringing the total fundraising goal in this final stage of the Raise the Roof project to £300,000.

The new performing arts studio will provide essential rehearsal space for students and will be available for community use outside of school hours. The project comes at a time when many schools are cutting performing arts from the curriculum.

Transformational Matt Lucas, who first visited

the school in 2022 (The Archer, March 2022), has been a strong advocate for the project. He spoke movingly about how performing arts transformed his own school experience and expressed his desire to help future generations benefit from similar opportunities.

To date, Archer Academy has raised £320,000 through a grant from the Wolfson Foundation and various fundraising events, including sponsored school walks, its own Archella Festival, and a comedy night in 2023 hosted by Ian Stone.

The school has enlisted a group of 'Champions' to share the campaign link, enabling donors to contribute in just seconds and track the campaign's progress in real time.

To donate or learn more, contact Katie Ruback at [kruback@thearcheracademy.org.uk](mailto:kruback@thearcheracademy.org.uk) or visit the school's fundraising page <https://thearcheracademy.org.uk/archer-raisetherooft>.

## Romantic concert

Finchley Symphony Orchestra's next concert includes two great Romantic masterpieces and a rarity. Scriabin's rarely performed *Rêverie* is a short, languid evocation of dreaming, while Dvorak's well-loved concerto for the cello is typically packed with melodies and punchy rhythms. The soloist will be Peteris Sokolovskis, a winner of the Royal College of Music Cello Competition.

Another favourite to be performed is Brahms' Third Symphony. The concert takes place at Trinity Church, Nether Street, N12, on Saturday 15 March, starting at 7.30pm. Tickets are £18, £15 for those under 26 and over 60, £2 for those under 18 and you can save £1 per ticket by booking online at [www.finchleysymphony.org](http://www.finchleysymphony.org).

## Gardeners wanted

The Grange Big Local team is looking for volunteers to help plant vegetables and grow flowers at the Tarling Road Community Hub in East Finchley. Find out more at any of the Warm Spaces mornings that run at the hub on Thursdays from 9.30am to 12pm (except Thursday 13 March).

## Car boot

The monthly Muswell Hill Indoor Car Boot Sale will take place on Saturday 29 March from 10am to 1pm at Hornsey Parish Church Hall, on the corner of Cranley Gardens and Park Road, N10 3AH. Buses W7, W3 and 144 stop nearby. Admission is 50p and refreshments are available. For information, call 020 8368 8180.



High standards: Headteacher Lucy Harrison and Archer Academy students celebrate the school's Ofsted rating

## Hard work pays off at secondary school

**The Archer Academy in East Finchley has again been awarded the status of Outstanding following an Ofsted inspection in January, a judgement initially given to the secondary school in 2019.**

Among the strengths highlighted in the inspectors' report are "Leaders are highly ambitious for all pupils", "Pupils

receive an exceptional education at the Archer Academy", "The school fosters a happy, welcoming, and inclusive environment where academic excellence and personal development hold equal importance" and "Behaviour is highly positive. The school fosters a calm and productive atmosphere."

Lucy Harrison, the school's headteacher, said: "I am absolutely delighted that Ofsted

have recognised that the Archer Academy continues to be an Outstanding school. My thanks go to my fantastic staff for their incredible hard work and dedication, and also to our students, governors and parents who demonstrate such ongoing pride and passion for their school."

## From The Archer archives...

By Jane Marsh

**10 years ago: March 2015**

A mass 'read-in' took place at East Finchley library as part of the campaign to save it from closure. It was organised by the East Finchley Library Users Group. Library manager Sim Branaghan was impressed by the turnout, but emphasised the importance of using the library regularly as the best way to ensure its future.

**15 years ago: March 2010**

Local residents faced 18 months of severe disruption on the Northern line, with services shut down at weekends and early on weekday evenings. The closures were necessary in order to install a new computerised signalling system, which would eventually increase capacity by 20 per cent.

**23 years ago: March 2002**

After only five weeks of playing the National Lottery, 20 members of a local syndicate struck lucky. They won a total of £74,000, which gave them about £3,650 each. They were all members of the East Finchley Constitutional Club in the Walks where, no doubt, much celebration of their good fortune took place.

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# Lone parent charity comes to sudden end

Family support: One of the Barnet Lone Parents sessions at the Green Man Centre on Strawberry Vale before the organisation was forced to shut down

By Ivor Gaber

**A charity based in East Finchley that has been providing valuable services to local lone-parent families is closing. Barnet Lone Parents Centre, based at the Green Man Community Centre in Strawberry Vale, is shutting down with immediate effect after 17 years serving hard-pressed families.**

The Centre provided two main services, a toy library and a Money Advice Centre, which last year alone managed to claim back almost half a million pounds of benefits on behalf of Barnet's neediest families.

### Insufficient funds

Nina Gentry, who led the team at the Centre, said in a message to the community

on Facebook: "We have truly enjoyed being a part of your life for so many years and are proud of the work we have done for the community. We will miss you."

The charity has been forced to close because its main funders did not have sufficient funds to meet all the many worthwhile causes that they try to support. The Green Man Community Centre has said they will be working with the funders "to explore ways to reinstate some of the much-needed services that have been so valuable to the community".

### Best start in life

Speaking to The Archer, Green Man trustee Julia Hines said: "We wanted to give children the best start in life. We have always understood that to achieve that it is more than just supporting children, it is

about supporting their families, neighbours and communities.

"Finchley Toy Library, a stay-and-play space for children aged 0-4, with their parents or guardians, gave children a chance to experience toys, books, messy play, singing, a warm space in winter and a garden in summer. It gave their parents the chance to get support from each other and the dedicated, caring staff. Last year we proudly supported 94 families and 130 children."

East Finchley's Councillor Alison Moore said: "I was very sorry to hear of the untimely closure of the Barnet Lone Parent Centre, and the loss of the valuable services they provide. Nina Gentry, who with her team has been a key support to many families in our community over the years, will be much missed."

# Neighbours take action against dog fouling

By Mike Coles

**One of the most unpleasant anti-social behaviours in our streets and open spaces is dog fouling, caused by owners who don't clean up after their pets. It's a health hazard, particularly for toddlers and young children who don't recognise the danger.**

The problem became so acute in Lincoln Road, N2, recently that residents took the matter into their own hands by posting signs on every available tree and lamppost asking dog owners to be more thoughtful.

It seems each London borough has its own policy. Islington, for instance, takes it very seriously posting warning signs of heavy fines and a hotline to call to report irresponsible owners.



Get the message: One of the signs tied on trees in Lincoln Road by residents fed up with thoughtless dog owners

In Barnet there is no hotline but residents can report incidents by going to www.barnet.gov.uk and searching 'dog fouling'. This takes you to an online form where you

can include photographs. The council aims to respond within three days but gives priority to cleaning streets with the highest footfall.

# Energy livestream talk

Muswell Hill Sustainability Group is hosting a free livestream evening talk and Q&A with science and environment author Jean-Baptiste Fressoz. Livestreamed from Paris, the evening will offer the chance to question him about his thoughts on energy and the environment.

It takes place at Muswell Hill Methodist Church, Pages Lane, N10 1PP, on Tuesday 18 March. Doors open at 7.15pm and the event starts at 8.15pm, also online on YouTube. For tickets and further information, visit <https://wegottickets.com/event/650338/>.



Environment expert: Jean-Baptiste Fressoz



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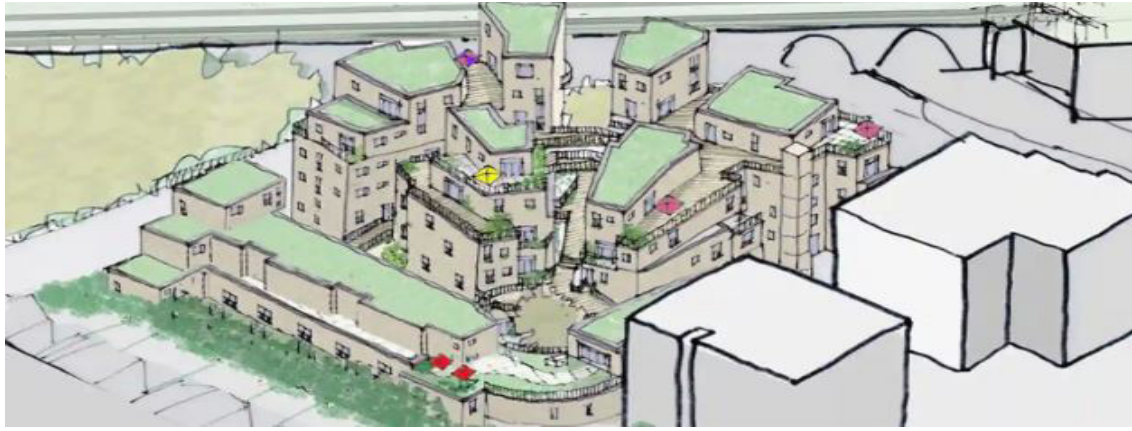
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Proposed roof plan with communal terraces

First look: Early drawings of the Cherry Tree Quarter development show buildings up to six storeys in height with balconies and walkways arranged in 12 blocks, marked in green on the aerial plan



Corner site: How the development would look with the railway bridge and station in the background

### Continuing from page 1

East Finchley Councillor Arjun Mittra said: "I am encouraging all residents to have their say on this application via the public consultation [see details below]. This is an extremely important site to get right, given its location. There is a real opportunity to make much needed improvements to the town centre including the entrance to Cherry Tree Wood."

### Monkey Puzzle

Paula Murphy, who runs the Monkey Puzzle nursery, told us her team would adapt if the development went ahead. She said: "Whilst we are saddened to potentially lose the nursery that we love and have poured our hearts into over the last 13 years, we do recognise the benefits that a new development would add to the area and the opportunities that an enhanced

learning environment would provide for the children.

"Our intention would be to relocate within the N2 area and remain a part of the East Finchley community, whilst continuing to deliver 'outstanding' childcare to our amazing families."

Who is behind the project?

The Cherry Tree Quarter project is being led by Places for Barnet, listed at the public meeting as a partnership between Barnet Council and development company London Placemaking.

The latter is presented as a multidisciplinary company that has been delivering homes for 20 years but does not have an online presence. Information available on Companies House lists it as being owned by brothers Oliver and Daniel Kuropatwa.

They also own the company behind the striking brick-built Edgewood Mews development on a narrow strip of land where the A1 Falloden Way meets the North Circular, designed by the award-winning architect Peter Barber.

Other companies involved in the project are planning consultants DP9, communications consultants Kanda, transport planning advisors Lime Transport, Point 2 Surveyors and KP Acoustics.

### Have your say

*No official plan or request for planning permission has been submitted yet for the Cherry Tree Quarter project. The website <https://cherrytree-quarter.co.uk/> contains all the information available at the public meeting as well as a 'Contact Us' button where you can leave feedback.*

## LETTERS SPECIAL

Readers who attended the Cherry Tree Quarter public meeting at the Old White Lion or read the project website details immediately contacted us with their reactions. Please email us at [news@the-archer.co.uk](mailto:news@the-archer.co.uk). Here we print some of the opinions we received.

### Give us a credible plan

Dear Editor,

I write in response to the consultation for the Cherry Tree Quarter development at the Old White Lion on 5 February. As we all know, it is not unheard of for developers to embroider the truth. However, in this case where the owner-developer is Barnet Council it is reprehensible given the proposal exhibited fell short of a credible development.

As there was no formal presentation given, the developer and architects in attendance could only shrug their shoulders or prevaricate to the following queries. These are issues that should have been considered and acknowledged before a development gets to this point.

Here are just some of the main points that need to be answered so that East Finchley can feel assured that the client, Barnet Council (and their partners) are operating within their own planning guidelines and not providing an unworkable development to the detriment of our community.

- The flyer and website have illustrations which are simply 'not to scale'. When asked if there were scaled drawings with dimensions, the answer was no.
- These illustrations do not show building heights nor proximity to neighbouring dwellings. For example, they have drawn six-storey buildings that appear one storey less than the actual four-storey development adjacent. How does that work?
- The London Plan and Barnets' own Planning Guidelines are given little regard - Sustainability & Carbon targets / Disability Discrimination Act provisions / No drop off zones and only four cars able to park on site / Plot densities and overlooking existing dwellings / Secure by Design.
- We are all entitled to our individual aesthetic preference, but the attendees at the consultation could not understand how this incredibly dense massing and its Mediterranean-style appearance be relevant or contextual to East Finchley. Barnets' architects described their proposal as 'playful'. Please let us have something 'meaningful' that is a contemporary interpretation and evolution to East Finchley's beautiful Victorian/Edwardian heritage.
- Perhaps most telling of this mercenary proposal, is the intention for 70 residential units and a children's nursery that will lose its outdoor play space. According to Barnet's own local plan a plot of this size should only yield circa 19 units!

We are a close-knit community and those who attended and who we have spoken to, all feel whilst we are not against a residential development with public services and a

public realm we can all share and be proud of, this proposal as it stands is cynical. It is too dense and too inward looking for housing and a gateway building. Please can we have a development with the integrity and diligence it deserves.

**James Elliott,**  
Baronsmere Road, N2

### Where will they park?

Dear Editor,

The proposed Cherry Tree Quarter scheme on the High Road opposite East Finchley tube poses a serious threat to parking availability in the surrounding streets. Only four parking spaces will be built. It is unfair on existing residents nearby to build 70 homes, without the guarantee that these flats will not be granted parking permits. The surrounding streets' limited parking is already full to capacity.

I was told that 24% of the homes would have three bedrooms, which will encourage families, and families are more likely to require cars. It may be that a 'new build' address will not be granted a parking permit, but in a few years' time, the address will no longer be 'new build', so the owners or any new buyers would be able to obtain parking permits then.

The scheme includes 130 secure cycle parking spaces. This will do little to encourage cycling to work. Someone with a job in the City would face a seven-mile bike ride each way, with the choice of the four steepest hills in north London on the way home.

**Name supplied,**  
Park Hall Road, N2

### Chance to improve

Dear Editor,

On 5 February, I attended the very crowded exhibition at the Old White Lion on the proposed Cherry Tree Quarter (CTQ) development. I thought to share just some of the views I managed to get/put across at this very busy meeting in the hope these help to develop ideas to be exploited to improve our area.

The CTQ proposal seems to be very laudable but for an unfeasibly large number of flats and bike parking spaces (130!). I think the idea was that the flats would command a high price in order to help fund affordable social accommodation elsewhere in the borough.

The high price would be based on access to good local travel hubs and future residents would not be seen as requiring access to local car parking spaces (would the council really be able to enforce this?).

There does seem to be the opportunity to rid our area of the local eyesore that is the unmade road, Brompton Grove. Also we could add to the argument for step-free access to our tube station. For example, Brompton Grove could be turned into a paved or Tarmac-ed, well-lit walkway with space for company-funded hire-bike parking.

**Mike Hoare,**  
Address supplied

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# Patients decry run-down face of surgery building

By Anna Hindmarsh  
A patient at East Finchley Medical Practice wrote to *The Archer* recently to voice his concerns over the outside appearance of the surgery, calling it a “poor advertisement for East Finchley and for the NHS”.

The GP practice is a long-established part of healthcare provision in East Finchley. However, its frontage on Baronsmere Road is notorious locally for its rotting woodwork, peeling paint and broken windows. It has been in a worsening condition for some years with no signs of any repairs

being made.

Our reader, who asked to remain anonymous, made clear that they are “very happy with the care provided” but “very unhappy with the increasingly run-down appearance of the practice’s premises.”

“I find it hard to believe that such a big practice - I understand it has 7,500 registered patients - cannot afford to hire a decorator,” he said.

Katherine Herzmark, the practice manager, indicated that there may soon be improvements. She told us: “The partners of the practice are in discussion with the landlords

of the building regarding refurbishments.”

### Funding run down

We asked other patients and local residents what they thought of the surgery’s exterior. One said: “It doesn’t look great, but maybe that just shows how much GP funding has been run down. It’s still an excellent medical practice.”

Another said: “I haven’t noticed it as being particularly bad and I definitely wouldn’t want funds diverted from care to the cosmetics of the exterior. If we need to fundraise, this could perhaps be done at the East Finchley Festival which I’m sure lots of patients attend.”

In July 2024, *The Guardian* reported that hundreds of GP practices have been forced to close due to financial constraints. Many faced tightened NHS budgets at a time when they were also dealing with the impact and after-effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.



Needs attention: Peeling paint and a broken window mark the external appearance of the East Finchley Medical Practice. Photo Mike Coles

# A little extra help with daily living



Real life: A staff member and a resident at Nightingale Hammerson film one of the advice videos

By Lynn Winton  
A residential care home on The Bishops Avenue has launched a free set of resources to help all older adults and their families and carers cope with daily life.

Named Reach, the aim of the community engagement team at Nightingale Hammerson is to support people to “live better for longer” at home for as long as possible and to also assist those caring for them.

All the information is research-backed, drawing on expertise from physiotherapists, occupational therapists, dieticians and psychologists working at the care home.

As well as being available to give talks to groups both in person and online, the team is building a library of short two to five-minute practical advice videos available online which

illustrate different issues. Titles include ‘Finding Funding’, ‘Getting in and out of cars’, ‘How to Look after Hearing Aids’ and many more, including how to best engage with people with dementia.

### Body of research

Heading the initiative is director and clinical nurse specialist Nuno Santos Lopes who says: “Working here at Nightingale Hammerson gives us a huge body of research to help people who want to remain in their own home. Residents and staff enjoy being the ‘actors’, demonstrating how best to carry out daily activities.

“Despite being a Jewish organisation and charity there is not a Jewish way of getting in and out of bed. We just want to offer our resources out to people.”

Reach can be contacted to come and give talks and demonstrations to local groups.

Further afield, they have already arranged online seminars in Uganda, Australia, China and the Middle East. Find out more at [www.nightingalehammerson.org/reach/](http://www.nightingalehammerson.org/reach/)

# A chance to reflect

As part of the nationwide Covid-19 Day of Reflection, the Grange Big Local team is holding an event on Thursday 13 March from 9.30am to 12pm at Holy Trinity Church, Church Lane, N2. Go along to remember those who have lost their lives since the pandemic began and to honour the tireless work of health workers and acts of kindness shown during the outbreak.

# Monumental Bach mass



On song: The North London Chorus

Following a sell-out performance of sacred music in November, local choir North London Chorus will be performing JS Bach’s monumental Mass in B minor on Saturday 29 March at St James Church in Muswell Hill.

It’s thought that the mass, completed in 1749, was not actually performed in Bach’s lifetime, and it’s been described

as a compendium of earlier masses, cantatas and original movements.

The 24 players of the Meridian Sinfonia accompanying the choir will be playing period instruments including the oboe d’amore, transverse flute, natural horn and violin.

For tickets go to [northlondonchorus.org/tickets](http://northlondonchorus.org/tickets) or buy unreserved tickets at St James Church bookshop.

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Overall ‘GOOD’ rating from the latest Care Quality Commission (CQC) report. Care Quality Commission is the independent regulator of health and social care in England. You may view the full report at [www.cqc.org.uk](http://www.cqc.org.uk)



## Smartphone ban in schools – and what it means for students



Uninterrupted: Students at Archer Academy are among many from other local schools, like Fortismere, who have had a smartphone ban for years. Photo Adam Lawrence

**Barnet Council is to be the first in the country to ban smartphones from all its 126 schools. From September, all primary school pupils will be prevented from bringing the devices into classrooms, with the rule being phased in for secondary schools. Here, Ruth A, a Year 10 student at Archer Academy in East Finchley, tells us the effects of her school's smartphone ban, which has already been in place for ten years.**

Parents, politicians and education experts have been arguing for smartphones to be banned in UK schools by law due to their negative effects on young people. However, here at the Archer Academy, we have had a complete ban in place for almost a decade.

Since 2015, mobile phones with cameras and access to the internet have been banned at our school. The only devices allowed to be brought in are 'brick phones' with no camera or internet access, and these must be switched off and kept in our lockers throughout the day. There are firm sanctions in place if a student breaches the school's mobile phone policy.

This means that phone usage isn't a distraction during lessons. At lunchtimes we are free to talk and play games instead of scrolling, catching up on social media, and responding to notifications. This allows us to build closer friendships and feel more comfortable in the school setting.

Additionally, as Archer Academy is well-known for its phone-free rule, students are safer from muggings and

phone stealing when out and about, and the local police are very supportive of our school's smartphone ban.

Our school's mobile phone policy is increasingly relevant due to current debates around the contentious issue of smartphone bans in schools. Earlier this year, the government released guidance encouraging schools to stop the use of phones.

More recently, the Labour MP Josh MacAlister, a former teacher, proposed turning this guidance into law in a 'Safer Phones bill', making it a legal requirement for all schools to be mobile-free zones.

As someone who attends a smartphone-free school, I believe it is very beneficial to students' wellbeing, learning and behaviour.

## Into the woods for a date with nature



Into the woods: Volunteers get to grips with nature in Coppetts Wood

**By Jake Eiseman-Renyard I have been volunteering on Sunday mornings in Coppetts Wood Nature Reserve, by the North Circular and Colney Hatch Lane, since 2018. Work varies tremendously, from litter-picking and clearing invasive plants to uncovering paths, planting wildflowers and trees, putting up bird boxes and digging ponds. Like farming, what we do can depend a lot on the time of year.**

Led by experts, the work can be a physical challenge but I find it great fun and extremely rewarding to make a difference to the woodland. It attracts people from all walks of life and I have learnt a great deal about nature and the history of the area from volunteering. The nature reserve itself is very varied, with wooded areas, open meadows, marshy areas and ponds.

If you're interested, you can email Coppetts Wood Conservationists at: [coppettswood-conservationists@gmail.com](mailto:coppettswood-conservationists@gmail.com) or visit their website at: [www.coppettswood.wordpress.com/volunteer](http://www.coppettswood.wordpress.com/volunteer)

**Puppet parakeets**

Like East Finchley, Coppetts Wood has an annual festival. This year's festival is on Sunday 11 May and includes good food, a beer tent, great music, games and children's activity stalls. Since 2021, I have been running the popular family show 'Puppets Wood', which I also need volunteers for.

This year, its theme is the parakeets that have become so numerous in recent years. You don't need to be experienced in puppetry, as long as you're willing to learn and are able to commit to rehearsals (likely to be Saturday afternoons). Please contact me on [jakeeisemanrenyard@gmail.com](mailto:jakeeisemanrenyard@gmail.com)

## Summer festival seeks your help to make the day a success

**The East Finchley Festival is looking for volunteers as planning continues for the 2025 event.**

The hugely-popular community festival will take place in Cherry Tree Wood on Sunday 22 June.

Volunteering roles include assistant stage managers, children's activity coordinator and parade coordinator, along with a number of smaller roles on the day of the festival itself, such as selling raffle tickets and stewarding.

The festival will again showcase some of the best local music and arts talent across two stages. There will also be arts and crafts and storytelling for younger visitors, while sports teams and clubs will provide

taster sessions for all.

Appeal to businesses

Organisers are appealing to local businesses to help with sponsorship as the event, which is free to attend, is funded entirely by donations from local organisations.

Festival sponsorship manager Catherine Stewart said: "The festival is a major day in the East Finchley calendar and we couldn't do it without support from the community and our local businesses.

"We are hugely grateful to the local businesses who have sponsored and continue to help fund the festival so we can put on the best event possible for East Finchley

"The festival has always been free to attend and we're proud to keep it that way. We'd

love to hear from any business or organisation who would be interested in helping to support us."

Along with entertainment and activities, there will be a wide range of food and drink available, while 80 local artists, crafters, makers and community groups will showcase their works.

For more information about volunteering or sponsorship, visit [www.eastfinchleyfestival.org](http://www.eastfinchleyfestival.org).

### Did you spot the differences?

*Did you spot all the differences in the two puzzle pictures we published in last month's edition. Here they all are in case you missed any.*



Spot them all: The 20 differences in our festival puzzle photo are marked with white circles





# RICKY SAVAGE... THE VOICE OF IRRESPONSIBILITY

## Heavy and not cool

In the warped and twisted world of rock'n'roll some bands are cool, some bands achieve coolness and some just ain't ever going to get coolness thrust upon them.

From the 1960s until the music press died in the early noughties, coolness was dictated by the likes of Melody Maker, New Musical Express and Sounds and written by self-opinionated hacks who thought they knew it all. Maybe that's why one of the greatest bands to come out of Britain has never been 'cool'. Or was that just because they came from Birmingham?

Black Sabbath were never going to be trendy. They were four long-haired blokes from Brum and when Tony Iommi, Geezer Butler, Ozzy Osborne and Bill Ward got together in 1968 they had a problem. It wasn't the music, which was hard, loud and exciting; it was that they did not look or sound cool. Unlike Led Zeppelin they didn't steal from the blues, write trite ditties about stairways, have a pretty boy singer or have a guitarist who'd once been on Crackerjack. What they had was a hard driving sound. Some of it by accident as much as design.

### Riff-laden rock

At 17, guitarist Tony Iommi lost the tips of two of his fingers on his right hand and, as a left-handed player, had to rethink how he played. He made plastic tips for the fingers, used lighter strings and down-tuned his guitar so that he could keep playing comfortably. Bass player Butler changed his tuning to match and, with drummer, Bill Ward, powering behind and Ozzy belting the songs that Iommi and Butler wrote they created riff-laden rock. And, when their first album was released in February 1970 heavy metal was born.

Did the music press like it? No, it wasn't cool, but it wasn't made for them, it was made for the fans and they bought in truckloads. The follow-up, Paranoid, topped the charts and the title track even got them on Top of The Pops.

### Drink, drugs and madness

For the next seven years until a combination of drink, drugs and madness led to Ozzy leaving, they were the hardest, loudest and probably the most exciting band out there. There were chart LPs, sell-out tours and Sabbath were the best metal band anywhere.

From then on things fluctuated until by the mid-1980s only Iommi was left and the band folded. There have been various reunions and reformation but the last LP was in 2013 and the last gigs in 2017. But on 7 July, in Birmingham, there is one last chance to see the original line-up do what they do best. Remember, that even if you can't get tickets and there isn't a fan zone, without Sabbath there would have been no Guns'n'Roses, no Metallica and no heavy metal. Not bad for four blokes from Birmingham.

## Scouts seek new helpers

The 10th Finchley (Scottish) Scout Group, based at Gordon Hall, West Finchley, provides Scouting for young people aged six to 14 years and is looking for volunteers to help support its leaders. You don't need to have been a Scout before and training is provided, most of which can be done online. Meetings take place on Tuesday and Thursday

evenings. For more information, contact Scout leader Chris Reay on [chrisreay@email.com](mailto:chrisreay@email.com)

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## Our buy now, discard later culture



Make it better: Director Nic Stacy, right, with his interviewee Kyle Wiens, CEO of iFixit, a firm that provides repair advice for consumer goods

By Maxine Klein

**When we buy ourselves a new T-shirt, phone or pair of boots do we consider what happens to stuff when we no longer need it? Nic Stacy asked himself the question after seeing the way the annual Black Friday sales phenomenon encouraged people to go out shopping whether they needed new things or not.**

## Hearing loss hub ambition



Lip-reading tutor: Jennie Parke Matheson

By David Melsome

**A lip-reading tutor has set up a new business in Muswell Hill with the aim of creating a 'hearing loss hub' for the area. Jennie Parke Matheson decided to set up her course after noticing there was a lack of support for people living in London.**

Her face-to-face classes under the name Read My Lips are running from this month on Tuesday afternoons at the refurbished United Reform Church on the corner of Queens Avenue and Tetherdown, N10. She may also offer weekly classes via Zoom if there is sufficient interest.

Jennie says: "I started in the autumn following my graduation as a lip-reading tutor at City Lit. I'd taken classes there in both lip-reading and BSL (British Sign Language). It became abundantly clear to me during my time there that there is not nearly enough support or provision for people living in London with hearing loss."

Jennie also hopes to offer one-to-one sessions for those who prefer to work individually rather than in a group. For more information, visit [www.facebook.com/LearningtoLipRead](http://www.facebook.com/LearningtoLipRead)

As an award-winning documentary maker he decided to make a documentary on the topic and created for Netflix the very disturbing expose on the creation of waste titled Buy Now. It is a powerful analysis on the way in which we are manipulated to consume and the consequences of doing so.

Nic went to Fortismere School where his drama teacher Jacqui Hyffe recognised his talent and encouraged him to do a degree in drama. Having qualified at Bristol University he joined the BBC. He started

as a runner and subsequently became a producer and director specialising in innovative science and history documentaries.

### Deluge of shoes

In Buy Now, he uses the imagery of advertising to illustrate the volume of waste that we create. The 25 million shoes that are manufactured every hour are represented as a deluge of shoes pouring from the sky into the streets. There are also shots of Paris looking as if it were buried in discarded rubbish. It visibly questions where these items end up when they are no longer fashionable.

And where does the waste go? We are shown disturbing images of landfills and beaches covered in discarded electric items and old clothes, which do not disintegrate. A shot of a fish that had swallowed a large piece of plastic was particularly disturbing.

Apart from the items we deliberately throw away he revealed how manufacturers build in obsolescence to our gadgets so that they run out of batteries that can't be replaced, or they are designed so that they cannot be repaired.

All consumers should see this documentary and I guarantee that after seeing it you will think twice before buy anything that has to be ultimately thrown away.

## Review: Handful of Nothing



World turned upside down: Tilly Lee-Kronick during a performance of her one-woman show

By Jessica Holt

**This one-woman show, written and devised by local resident Tilly Lee-Kronick, explores the complex issues surrounding eating disorders. Tilly uses her singing, dance and circus skills to create a piece of drama that is informative but not triggering.**

Tilly was drawn to physical theatre when she went on a school visit to see the Cornish theatre group Kneehigh performing their devised play The Wild Bride. After her A-levels, Tilly attended a circus school in Bristol called Circomedia, which developed her circus

skills and gave her the physical strength required to perform some of the aerial choreography seen in her show.

Above all Tilly wants to tell a story, the essence of drama. And she tells this story in such an inventive way. It is full of imagery, beautiful movement sequences and a sensitive musical score that plays alongside this story of recovery.

The door frame which features throughout the show is reminiscent of trapeze, but it is used in a unique way. There is also puppetry, and the way Tilly uses balloons is quite unique. She hopes her 50-minute show will be a success and she intends to perform it on tour in the future.



## Review: An Interrogation



Question time: Rosie Sheehy interviews the suspect played by Jamie Ballard in a tense police drama

*Hampstead Theatre, Swiss Cottage*

By Jessica Holt

**This is Jamie Armitage's first play as author and director and debuted to great acclaim in Edinburgh. For Hampstead Theatre, he expanded it to 70 minutes to explore moments that the Edinburgh audiences wanted developed in more depth.**

The police force is a huge and controversial topic to write about but by setting the play in an interrogation room with a young female officer and male suspect many ideas about our police are exposed in a subtle way.

Ruth, played by Rosie Sheehy, is persuaded to question the sus-

pect alone by her male superior officer, played by Colm Gormley. The crime is the kidnapping and murder of a young woman and the kidnapping and possible murder of a second victim. She questions him without a lawyer, raising the issue of why she is in with this suspect alone and what was her superior officer's motive.

There are many questions raised throughout the tense and economical dialogue. Our current climate regarding police practices is a real focus of the play. The suspect is held on very little evidence, so is it right to employ a young female officer to push him to confess to a misogynistic crime? What is the relationship between the pair?

All the characters are developed in depth, which is clever in such

a short play but, without giving anything away, I was left wishing the male suspect had been given a different motive to that which is ultimately revealed. The whole piece is performed in the interrogation room and the audience is made to feel inside it as well. We are allowed some respite when the video of the interview is projected onto the back wall. Here there is a chance, however brief, to consider at close range the guilt and innocence of the characters. The intensity of the play is immense, and the questions and the manner of the questioning is a revelation at times. Let's hope the playwright, who has so far mainly directed plays, continues to write, as this is hugely engrossing.

## Review: Learning



Marriage on the rocks: Gemma Franco and Nick Delvalle play a couple trying to rescue their relationship

*Upstairs at The Gatehouse, Highgate*

By Jessica Holt

**Originally conceived as a series of monologues, Learning has now become a short, hard-hitting play about a marriage where the husband and wife are drifting apart. As Jonathan, played by Nick Delvalle, moves further towards Jewish orthodoxy, his wife Debs, played by Gemma Franco, moves further away.**

The play begins with piano playing and a harmonious couple in tune with each other, recounting their upbringings and sharing their culture with the audience. As their marriage deteriorates, they resort to separate counselling sessions, but this device is not as successful

as when they debate with each other.

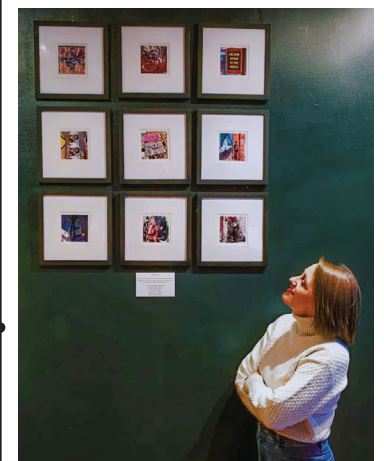
The glimpse of physical theatre lightens the mood and suggests the couple were once very happy and the play could benefit greatly from more music and movement.

Some universal themes were raised, one of which is the limitations religion places on women, whether it be the Catholic Church, Islam or Judaism. Another theme is individual freedom within a relationship and how it can be achieved. This could be further developed as a longer play. As it stands, an interval was not necessary; in fact it lost some dramatic tension as a result.

The stage is bare apart from the piano and a couple of stools that are expertly used by the actors to move around the acting area, creating the home and the con-

sulting room. Gemma Franco provides the play with a haunting original musical score. The purple light on the piano creates a quiet, comforting place. The play begins and ends with the image of Debs playing it and hints at a reunion of some kind.

## Ugly but beautiful



City scenes: Part of the display of works by Blank Canvas

London's streets tell a thousand stories but not everybody stops to notice them. Local photographer Blank Canvas, real name Natalie Blanks, does just that. Her latest exhibition, Ugly Beauty, captures the overlooked features of the city's streets and graffiti-covered alleyways, reflecting the unexpected artistry others might dismiss as signs of decay.

Her work is taking centre stage in an exhibition at the Old Marine Arts Group, a tattoo studio in Colney Hatch Lane, Muswell Hill, that looks more like an art gallery. It runs until the end of April.

When she's not out and about capturing the raw unpolished details of London's streets, the former Fortismere School student works at the Muswell Hill Club gym in Fortis Green. Find out more on Instagram @blankcanvasnb

## What's on at the Phoenix in March



By Rob Kenny, executive director

**March opens with Pamela Anderson's highly-rated comeback film The Last Showgirl, billed as a poignant film of resilience, rhinestones and feathers set in a changing Las Vegas.**

Then Bong Joon-ho makes his return to cinema after 2019's multi-award winning Parasite with an English language offering starring Robert Pattinson. Mickey 17 is a science fiction comedy about clone workers struggling to survive against the oppressive rules of a future human colony.

Actress Sadie Frost directs Twiggy, a film on the life and career of the British model and cultural icon, with appearances by Dustin Hoffman, Joanna

Lumley and Paul McCartney. We celebrate International Women's Day with a special screening of this warmly received documentary.

Also in March, we remember the recently-departed director David Lynch with a retrospective of his best films. The season starts on 1 March with The Elephant Man, followed on later dates by Blue Velvet, Wild at Heart and Mulholland Drive. Finally at the end of the month, the new NTLIVE offering is Dr Strangelove. The creative team behind this hilarious take on Stanley Kubrick's masterpiece include Armando Iannucci, Olivier-award winner Sean Foley and Steve Coogan.

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## Letters

### Don't scrap the lane

Dear Editor,

Traffic heading north on the High Road backs up when the queue to turn right into Fortis Green blocks all northbound traffic (Letters, The Archer, January 2025). This happens when there is continuous southbound traffic so nothing can turn into Fortis Green until the lights change.

Then only two or three cars will make it through the light, or if a bus or lorry is waiting that might be the sole vehicle.

A simple solution would be to keep the northbound lights green longer than the southbound at busy times. That way there's no need to scrap anything.

J Royall,  
Ingram Road, N2  
(Car and bike user)

### There are wheelie too many

Dear Editor,

Many large wheelie bins are

stored every day on the pavement of the East Finchley High Road. Some are very close to a junction or a pedestrian crossing, which can affect visibility.

Over 35 wheelie bins were recorded on 25 January on the stretch from the Tube station to Bedford Road alone. I am concerned these obstructions could have a detrimental effect on everybody's safety.

Gardener Finch,  
Durham Road, N2

Send your letters to:  
[news@the-archer.co.uk](mailto:news@the-archer.co.uk)

Letters without verifiable contact addresses will not be printed. Contact details can be withheld on request at publication. We reserve the right to abridge letters for reasons of space.

## All-day tournament at indoor bowls club



Come and learn: The all-day bowling fundraiser takes place at Glebelands Bowling Club

By Lynn Winton  
**Serial fundraiser Howard Skolnick, who has already raised thousands of pounds for Prostate Cancer UK, has come up with a new initiative and he hopes readers of The Archer will get on board.**

"Last year, I organised an all-day series of Walking Football matches with my club and other local teams and we raised over £8,000 as well as having a brilliant day," explained Howard. "So I started to think about different types of sports clubs who could copy the format and I had a very positive response from Glebelands, the indoor bowls club in Finchley."

On Saturday 22 March the club in Summers Lane, N12, is

hosting an all-day tournament and with the aim of raising at least £10,000 this time for Prostate Cancer UK and Target Ovarian Cancer.

There are spaces for 480 players and everyone is welcome to have a go, even if you've never played before. In fact, Howard advises it would be an ideal opportunity for a complete beginner. An hour's play is free, but he hopes that all those taking part will enter into the spirit of the event and make a donation.

If you would like to register for your place or find out more about indoor bowling at Glebelands, contact Rhys Lewis by emailing [glebelandsibc@gmail.com](mailto:glebelandsibc@gmail.com) or calling him on 020 8446 2090.

## James McCormack: A passion for snooker... and a love of singing

**Popular Park Road resident James McCormack, who died in December aged 93, lived in East Finchley for 27 years, for much of that time with his beloved wife and teenage sweetheart Maura.**

Born in 1931 in Boyle, Co. Roscommon, Ireland, James had an idyllic country childhood. It was here that his love of sport, particularly football and snooker, was nurtured. When a gift of football boots arrived from America, young James refused to ever take them off.

The passion proved lifelong and he was still enjoying kickabouts with local children during lockdown, socially distanced of course.

In the early 1950s, James moved to London with his family and was soon joined by Maura. The couple threw themselves into the social whirl of the London Irish community. James's singing was the highlight of these gatherings; Danny Boy and Sweetest Little Fellow were favourites. Daughter Helen said: "He put his heart and soul into every song he sang."

### Two stripes

London life was interrupted by National Service and James spent two years in Hong Kong. Despite a rocky start (he was unsure of correct saluting protocol, resulting in time in solitary), James went on to earn



Much-loved neighbour: James McCormack

two stripes in two years and was proud of his time in the Army.

Returning to the UK, James had stints at Foyle's bookshop and antique specialists Spinks before settling into a 25-year career at Barclays Bank.

Loyal, outgoing and caring, James was a 'people person'. "Such a kind man," recalled one neighbour. A regular at the East Finchley Constitutional Club, he was still beating everyone at snooker there into his 90s.

Maura's loss in 2020 was devastating but the support of his large family, many friends and his own zest for life sustained him. Whether heading down the High Road first thing for the racing papers or off to church or the theatre with a group of friends, he was gregarious and immaculately turned out to the end. He leaves his brother Joe, sister Sarah and children Helen and James.

## Get knitted at new crafting group



Where there's a wool: Members of the Knitting and Crochet Club have been busy

By Julia Lawrence  
**Knitting and crocheting are a proven aid to stress and anxiety and are no longer considered just a pastime for grandmas, with young people like Olympic diver Tom Daley taking them up enthusiastically.**

Keen knitter Daphne Berkovi has started a crafting group, through the Knitting & Crochet Guild, where beginners and highly skilled enthusiasts meet every week to swap tips,

and pass two hours in a mutually supportive and friendly company.

The North London branch meets every Wednesday at the Costa Coffee in Temple Fortune from 10am to noon and Daphne is keen to spread the word on this lovely hobby.

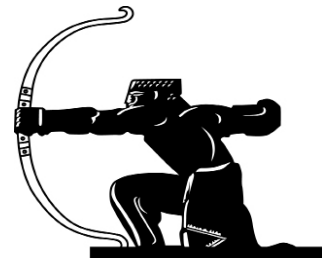
"I was taught to knit as a little girl and later taught myself to crochet. It really helped me when my husband Jack died four years ago," she said. "I was his carer for 11 years, and he used to love watching me

crochet, and I found it very relaxing.

"I started this group three months ago, and at the beginning about seven ladies, of various ages joined us. Yes, we are all women at the moment but everyone is welcome. The staff at Costa are wonderful, and make us very welcome."

### Find out more

For more information, go to the guild website: [kcguild.org.uk](http://kcguild.org.uk) or email Daphne at: [daphnesbland@gmail.com](mailto:daphnesbland@gmail.com)



## Perfect partners Olivia and Thomas spread a smile

By Lynn Winton

Early one morning, I encountered this twosome on the platform at East Finchley station. Their message, hers on a T-shirt and his on a matching bandana, declared 'Spread a Smile - Entertainment in Hospitals'.

I soon learned that this was Olivia Leich and her Labradoodle Thomas, who work for this eponymous charity that provides entertainment in hospitals all over Greater London.

That morning they were on their way to the children's unit at University College Hospital (UCH), one of 12 hospitals on their rota, where they would meet their team of musicians, magicians and other entertainers to bring joy, laughter and comfort to mainly long-stay patients.

### Therapy dog

"In 2017 I had recently retired from my work as a theatre nurse and was looking for a non-clinical role," explained Olivia. "I learned about the charity Spread a Smile through friends who already knew about its work."

"Thomas had exactly the right temperament to undertake the vigorous training to



Double act: Olivia Leich and her Labradoodle Thomas help to bring some moments of joy to patients spending time in hospitals

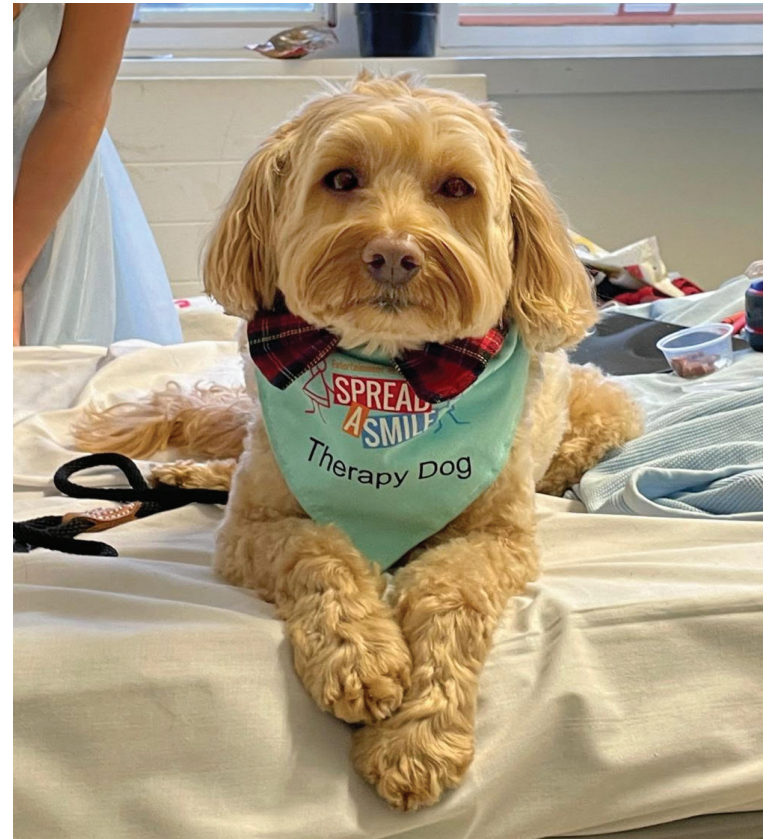
become a therapy dog. He passed with flying colours, so now we travel by train together all over London, sometimes as far as King's College in Denmark Hill.

"We work with the other entertainers, for instance Thomas has learnt to be a magician's assistant, knowing how

to pick the right card for a card trick. He can also use his paws to ring a bell on command, so he accompanies the singer. But sometimes he is just required to sit quietly on the bed, children find this a huge comfort."

### Young patients

Spread a Smile is a relatively



new charity, started in 2013 by two friends from Highgate who witnessed the boredom and loneliness of long-term young patients at Great Ormond Street Hospital.

Today, Spread a Smile works with 27 NHS partner hospitals and three hospices,

providing joyful visits, activities, events and treat drops. In addition, with the launch of Smile TV and Smile Spaces in March 2020, the charity also offers digital entertainment for thousands of hospitalised children day and night. Find out more at [spreadasmile.org](http://spreadasmile.org)



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## Moving drama to tell story of couple's adoption battle

Two theatre producers based in East Finchley are staging their latest production at the Upstairs at the Gatehouse theatre in Highgate until Sunday 16 March.

Hat Townley and Stephen Graham are presenting Too Many Books, a debut play by award-winning journalist Judi Bevan based on the experience she and her husband went through in their struggle to have a family in the 1990s.

After many trials and tribulations, they adopted a baby girl from China. The play takes its title from the comment made about the couple by the UK adoption authorities who turned them down.

The production is directed by Christopher Hunter, a long-time resident of East Finchley, and the strong cast includes local actor Lucy Pickles, a former Fortismere School student. Book tickets at: [www.upstairsatthegatehouse.com](http://www.upstairsatthegatehouse.com)



In the cast: Lucy Pickles

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