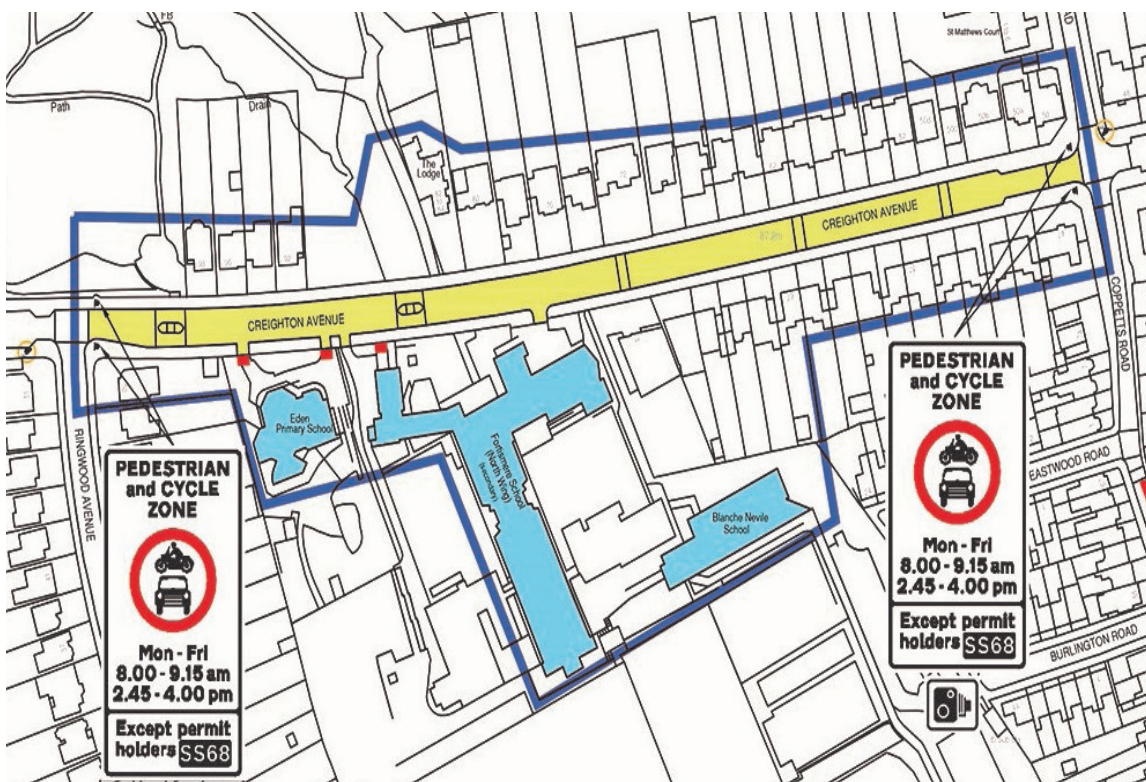


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Gridlock fears over plans to shut major route at peak times



No entry: The section of Creighton Avenue earmarked for peak-time closure between Ringwood Avenue and Coppetts Road, showing Eden Primary, Fortismere and Blanche Nevile schools in blue

By David Melsome

Road users have been alarmed by a proposal to close down a major route between East Finchley and Muswell Hill during school drop-off and pick-up times. They fear the plan to turn Creighton Avenue into a 'School Street' will cause rush hour gridlock.

Haringey Council says it wants to close part of Creighton Avenue to traffic from Monday to Friday in term time from 8am to 9.15am and from 2.45pm to 4pm.

The School Street zone will run from Ringwood Avenue, N2, to Coppetts Road, N10, outside the entrances to Eden Primary School and Fortismere secondary school, with the aim

of making it safer for students and parents, pedestrians and cyclists.

No motor vehicle, including motorcycles, will be allowed to enter during the restricted times unless they live or work in the zone. Anyone who enters without an exemption will be identified by camera and may be issued with a penalty charge.

Continue on page 3



Walk, don't fly: Hospice caretaker John Wallace took part in last year's Big Fun Walk dressed as Superman alongside friends and family.

Fun walk open to superheroes

Two new ideas are opening up the annual Big Fun Walk in support of the North London Hospice so that even more people can take part. This popular event on Sunday 18 May takes an eight-mile route from East Finchley through some of London's most beautiful parks to finish at Westminster.

For the first time this year, there will be a shorter five-mile route called the Little Fun Walk for those who want to join in but cannot manage the full distance. Additionally, the hospice is trialling a meeting spot where anyone walking on their own can gather if they would like to link up with others and possibly

make new friends as they walk.

This year the hospice is also inviting participants to recognise the caring work of their nursing team by dressing up as their favourite superhero and walking alongside neighbours, colleagues, family and even furry friends.

Accessible

North London Hospice Community and Events Manager Rachel Bloom said: "By joining us you will be making a huge difference to the hospice. Take photos, rediscover your love of London, and become a tourist for the day, all for a great cause. It's great fun for everyone and you'll be doing something heroic for the hospice." To find out more or to sign up, visit northlondonhospice.org

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

Thank you to The East Finchley Constitutional Club for providing us with a meeting place.

Copy deadlines - June: 16 May, July: 13 June, August: 11 July

BE PART OF IT Volunteers wanted

Compiled by Lynn Winton

Finchley Foodbank is supporting a growing number of people who rely on this outstanding organisation to manage through the week. Help clients with choosing their food, toiletries and baby goods, or come in when the Foodbank is preparing stocks on the days before opening. New recruits are urgently needed to carry out this valuable work. Email finchleyfoodbank@gmail.com to find out more.

The **North London Hospice** shop on East Finchley High Road is looking for more volunteers. Whether you want to get work experience, help temporarily whilst between jobs or are looking for a long-term role, please call into the shop and talk to the manager Anastasiya. Age is no barrier, ages 14-94 welcome. You will play a vital role in funding the hospice and enjoy the camaraderie of a very inclusive team.

Can you help keep the **Grange Big Local's** Warm Spaces initiative going as a coffee morning all the year round? It created a warm and welcoming get together within Tarling Road Community Centre now that it has a lovely kitchen. If you would like to help please get in touch with **Karen** on **07902 900639** or karen@grangebiglocal.org

Driving Aid to Ukraine is a non-profit organisation based in N2 and started by local resident Michael Byrne, delivering lorries of humanitarian aid across Europe to the Ukrainian conflict zones, via border transfer points. They require all kinds of volunteers: to help build a social media campaign, to raise funds and to apply for grants, as well as to organise collections of vital humanitarian and medical aid items. Find out more at Drivingaidtoukraine.org and get in touch with Michael on 07791 912389.

Could you spare an hour or so a week to chat to an older isolated person? **Age UK Barnet** is looking for befrienders to offer friendly chats, support and companionship. The charity also needs walking buddies to help older people to get out and about again after losing the confidence to leave their homes. Just a couple of hours a week of your time could make a big difference to an older person in East Finchley. Please contact Lisa on 020 8432 1422.

If you'd like your organisation to be included in this column please email news@the-archer.co.uk



Read all about it: Ute Ormerod has been delivering The Archer for decades. Photo Lauren Fleishman

Long-time volunteer looks back on decades of deliveries

By Ute Ormerod

I have lived in East Finchley for more than 50 years so I feel very much a part of the local community. My children went to Holy Trinity School and later to Christ's College. In the early years, my husband Anthony was one of the founding members of the East Finchley Neighbourhood Association, which started the festival in Cherry Tree Wood.

So when *The Archer* first appeared in 1993, I was very pleased to read what was happening in our area and eventually I rang up to volunteer distributing the paper. I am not sure how long ago this was, but I have enjoyed dropping the paper through the letter boxes in all sorts of weather.

At times, it is a bit frustrating to get the rather flimsy paper through the sharp bristles in the modern letterboxes ... but on the whole they flop through quite well!

I am however surprised that I see so few people, regardless of

delivering in the morning, lunchtime or evening. But I think people in London are busy bees, either in town or working on computers at home.

So I hope there will be many more volunteers carrying on the good work. Also, it could be nice to meet some of the other helpers and hear their experiences. *The Archer is always pleased to hear from volunteers who can spare 30-45 minutes once a month to deliver our newspaper. We currently have a vacancy for our Tarling Road / Brownsell Road round.*

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Barnet

148-152 High Road, N2

Installation of one electrical vehicle charging point unit with double-sided LCD screen, feeder pillar and associated electrical connection works

118A High Road, N2

Mansard roof extension with front, side and rear dormer windows to create one self-contained flat. Associated cycle and refuse/refuse storage

Flat 2, Elmhurst Court, Elmhurst Avenue, N2

Roof extension involving rear dormer window

81 Summerlee Avenue, N2

Installation of external thermal insulation

31 Baronsmere Road, N2

Single-storey rear infill extension. Changes to fenestration

11 - 59 High Road, N2

Non-material amendment to planning permission 24/1519/FUL dated 07/08/2024 for 'Alterations to internal courtyard including single-storey extension to north entrance,

creation of a new south entrance, new retaining wall and handrail with new seating area. Amendment include reduction of the width of the north and south entrance doors, to suit the maximum size of the internal glazed pocket screens that protects people from the sliding door mechanism.'

Ground Floor Flat, 63 Bedford Road, N2

Single-storey side extension with five roof lights. Conversion of two self-contained flats into single dwelling house

79 Summerlee Avenue, N2

Single-storey rear extension

143 Abbots Gardens, N2

Two-storey side extension including demolition and rebuild of the existing garage and one rooflight. First-floor rear extension. Changes to fenestration

Footpath and Underpass between 24/26 Manor Park Road And 44/46 Trinity Road, N2

Submission of details of conditions 3 (Materials) pursuant to planning permission 24/2406/FUL dated 09/10/24

5-14 Juliana Close, N2

Replacement of the existing windows and doors to match existing

47 and 48 Juliana Close, N2

Replacement of the existing windows and doors to match existing

45 Durham Road, N2

Roof extension involving rear dormer window and two front-facing roof lights. Conversion of flat roof space to terrace area with glass balustrade

14 Market Place, N2

Single-storey rear extension with one roof light. Installation of an air source heat pump

9-16 Chapel Court, N2

Addition of a new external electrical intake cupboard to the south side elevation wall

Haringey

4 Twyford Avenue, N2

Replace the roof, fit new roof tiles. Paint the window frames

8 Western Road, N2

Two-storey rear extension and removal of chimney breasts in the kitchen and dining room

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Traffic calming and 20mph in county roads

By Ruth Anders

Eighty per cent of people who responded to a consultation on traffic calming measures in the county roads in East Finchley have supported the introduction of a 20mph speed limit.



Slow down: A 20mph limit may be introduced

In January, we reported on the inconsistent speed restrictions on the High Road and county roads, namely Durham, Lincoln, Leicester, Huntingdon, Bedford and Hertford. The 20mph limit on the main thoroughfare rises to 30mph for vehicles turning into these narrower residential roads.

Barnet Council subsequently sent out a consultation to 1,078 homes and businesses to outline the options for traffic calming on the county roads. They received 132 responses, a return rate of 12.2%.

The options included a new 20mph limit in the county roads, speed bumps to reduce vehicle speed, and double yellow lines to replace single yellow lines at junctions.

In a letter to residents

summarising the responses and outlining recommendations, Barnet Council reported that 80.3% supported the 20mph limit, 45.5% supported the speed bumps (with 42.2% objecting) and 42.4% supported double yellow lines to prohibit waiting and parking at junctions.

No one-way

After considering the responses, the Council said it had concluded that a one-way traffic system in the county roads would not be helpful.

The issue of 'cut-through traffic' should be addressed, it said, apparently recognising the concern of many residents that the county roads are used as rat runs between Fortis Green and the High Road.

Tactile facilities, including textured surfaces and dropped kerbs for those with sight impairment and mobility challenges, will be included in recommendations.

And if speed bumps are introduced they are expected to be 'sinusoidal humps', which have a shallower initial rise and are therefore more cycle-friendly.

Barnet Council said detailed designs of proposed improvements and changes in the county roads would follow.

Your letters, page 11

Continued from page 1

Haringey Council, which operates similar schemes elsewhere in the borough, said the restrictions will improve air quality, reduce road danger and congestion and encourage active travel. It could be introduced at the same time as another School Street outside Our Lady of Muswell Primary School in nearby Pages Lane, N10.

But the reaction from many road users has been one of horror. "Terrible, terrible idea," said one. "This is going to cause gridlock," said another. "Why would you move traffic from a main road onto side streets?" asked one resident.

There are serious concerns that peak period traffic trying to get between East Finchley and Muswell Hill will all be forced onto Fortis Green and Twyford Avenue and that more drivers will try to cut a corner through Durham, Lincoln, Leicester, Huntingdon, Bedford

and Hertford Roads, which are already used as rat runs to and from the High Road (see 'Traffic calming and 20mph in county roads' on page 3).

No right turn

The additional concern is that there is no right-turn from Fortis Green to turn north up the High Road in East Finchley, again forcing traffic to use the county roads or to take a circuitous route up East End Road.

East Finchley's Councillor Arjun Mittra has written to colleagues at Haringey asking for an urgent meeting to discuss the proposal.

Haringey Council has run a public consultation on the School Street proposal and expects to make a decision this month or in June. If the scheme is given the go-ahead, it would be implemented in November.

Good idea or bad idea? Let us know what you think about the School Street proposal by emailing news@the-archer.co.uk.



Kitchen champ: School chef Amber Francis is congratulated by host Andi Oliver and runners-up Jean Delpont and Sally Abe as she is named winner of BBC TV's Great British Menu

Amber's menu wins the taste trophy in TV final

Amber Francis, head chef at Christ's College Finchley in N2, won the prestigious Great British Menu 2025 title on TV in a series that reached its final stages last month.

As we reported last month,

Amber was winning her way through the heats and her final menu impressed the judging panel Tom Kerridge, Ed Gamble and Lorna McNee so much that they handed her the trophy. The school said it was bursting with pride at her success.

Since then, Amber has been in high demand. She appeared on the BBC show *Saturday Kitchen*, where she shared her experiences and showcased her culinary skills, and also featured in *The Times* newspaper, advocating for healthy school food.

Station bookcase is coming back

By John Lawrence

The popular book exchange will be returning to the foyer of East Finchley tube station... but in a new metal format with lockable doors.

We reported last month that the previous wooden bookcase was removed in March after London Fire Brigade issued advice to Transport for London about the fire risk associated with book exchanges at tube stations across the network.

The protests that followed were swift and loud. Finchley and Golders Green MP Sarah Sackman and London Mayor Sir Sadiq Khan both called for the decision to be reversed.

Paul Baxter, Transport for London's customer service manager for the High Barnet area, said a trial of the new metal bookcases had been successful and one would be purchased by TfL for installation at East Finchley. It will have doors that can be locked at night.

No firm timeline has been given for the installation but Mr Baxter has said he expects it to be weeks rather than months.

Lynn Winton, who first installed the book exchange eight years ago, said: "I'm very relieved to be told there will be a metal bookcase coming in place of the lovely old one, even though it's rather ugly, but I'll only be truly content when I see it for myself, installed in the station."



To be continued: The former wooden bookcase will be replaced by a metal version



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Frontage: How the proposed Cherry Tree Quarter development will look from street level outside the tube station. Image Places for Barnet

Lack of answers leaves neighbours unimpressed

By Lynn Winton

Places for Barnet unveiled new drawings and plans for their proposed Cherry Tree Quarter housing development opposite the Tube station (*The Archer*, March 2025) at an evening meeting for neighbouring residents from Ingram and Baronsmere Roads on Wednesday 9 April.

Most of the pressing questions addressed to Places for Barnet are still “up in the air” according to the ten attendees they stipulated could attend in person. The remaining neighbours had the opportunity to listen online.

Nursery can stay

One notable key point,

confirmed to *The Archer* by Monkey Puzzle nursery owner Paula Murphy, is that her long-established children’s daycare unit will no longer have to be temporarily re-sited. The building schedule can allow them full access to their current Park House home and garden playground until their new premises in the new development are ready.

In addition, Monkey Puzzle has been given a revised site with outdoor space at the back of the proposed new complex. Only when it’s ready will their current building be knocked down.

No clear answers

A host of other points raised about the prospect of 75 new

homes on a site originally set out in Barnet planning documents as suitable for 19 residences concerned all the neighbours, who said that they were not clearly addressed.

Architect and *The Archer* team member Nadia Savvopoulou, who lives on one of the affected streets, attended the meeting. “I think it’s important to take away the fact that the design team did not have any answers about the quality of living and basic emergency provisions for this development,” she said. “They don’t seem to know the size of the units yet, they don’t know the dimensions of the three public corridors and whether they will provide adequate privacy levels to residents of this complex.

“Up to this meeting it seemed that access to this complex was going to be free to the public but under pressure they admitted this might end up being a gated development and they did not answer questions about disruption to the main entrance in Cherry Tree Wood.”

The Archer has contacted Places for Barnet to request an interview about the residents’ concerns and questions.

‘Monster’ building will crowd us out

By Lynn Winton

Since we reported last month on the housing development proposal for Manor Park Road, N2, which is Places for Barnet’s second private sector project in East Finchley with Cherry Tree Quarter opposite the tube station, there has been a strong reaction from residents living in the surrounding streets.

The density of the new homes in Manor Park Road is the main issue, with a mix of ten flats and maisonettes being shoehorned into a space for less than three of the traditional footprint size for a house in those roads.

Response

Susannah Hall is the spokesperson for the newly formed resident’s group, which comprises people from Manor Park, Hamilton and Brackenbury Roads. “It’s a monster of a building for that space” she said, “and with losing the parking lot that is there now and adding ten more homes we estimate at least 20 more cars trying to park on nearby roads.

“We have worked hard to produce a 24-page document which we have sent to Places for Barnet, with a request for a meeting. Their response was to refuse to meet, and said they had answered all our questions”.

The group has also requested under the Freedom of Information Act to see all correspondence between the developers and Barnet Council.

Meeting u-turn

At the time of going to press, Places for Barnet did a U-turn and agreed to a meeting with the residents. A key revelation was made by director Oliver Kuropatwa who stated that all three of the Places for Barnet private developments must go ahead and it would be “all three or none”. The other two are Cherry Tree Quarter opposite East Finchley Station and another in Mill Hill. He insisted that the plans are “exemplary”. There is a further resident’s meeting planned before the plans will be submitted for Barnet Council’s approval.



Pocket park: The green space in Manor Park Road that will be replaced by housing

Susannah Hall added: “Whilst so far we cannot find one household in favour of this development, we want to hear from anyone at all with a view. Everybody must have a fair say.”

You can contact the Manor Park Road resident’s group to request a copy of their document or send any other message by emailing mpreastfinchley@gmail.com

From The Archer archives ...

By Jane Marsh

**10 years ago:
May 2015**

East Finchley was highlighted as having one of the top ten healthiest high streets in London. The mix of shops and businesses in the High Road earned it eighth place in the rankings drawn up by the Royal Society of Public Health. Muswell Hill, Temple Fortune and Whetstone also made the top ten.

**15 years ago:
May 2010**

In a long letter to *The Archer*, Finchley and Golders Green MP, Rudi Vis, explained his reasons for standing down at the forthcoming general election. He revealed that he had recently been diagnosed with incurable cancer, then praised the local Labour Party for its support and assistance during his time as an MP. Sadly, Rudi died peacefully at the end of May 2010.

**25 years ago:
April 2002**

The High Road welcomed the arrival of general household store Amy’s at number 79, the location now occupied by Caffè Nero. The shop soon became popular with local residents and Amy’s told *The Archer* that some of their neighbouring businesses had increased their footfall following their opening. Amy’s later moved to its current location a few doors down at 69 High Road.

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Foul-smelling sewage lake blights homes

By Margaret Crockett

Residents of St Pancras Court in the High Road, N2, have been suffering from sewage leaking from the drains since early December. The worst effect is a stinking, expanding puddle in the communal garden to the rear of the block where children usually play.



No go zone: A child's ball floats in the liquid sewage overflowing onto the lawn outside St Pancras Court

The situation has been repeatedly reported to the housing co-operative's manager Camden Council yet at the time of writing the cause of the problem remains unclear, as do any plans to remedy matters.

"The foul odour and unhygienic conditions are affecting the well-being of those living in the area," said resident Agnieszka Gasiewska. "Residents deserve to live in a safe and healthy environment, and continued inaction is unacceptable."

Neighbour Anna Lowenstein lamented a lack of communication from Camden: "All they needed to do was put a notice through the door". It was only by raising a complaint that she was able to obtain any information about the block management's actions to identify the cause of the leak and rectify it.

Catalogue of causes

A five-page letter, dated 24 March, from a caseworker in the council's Property Management Department reveals the issue was first brought to their attention in early December. It catalogues eight reports of blocked drains overflowing with sewage over four months.

Different contractors during 12 site visits variously plunged, jetted, manually pumped, cleaned, disinfected, examined, reported and recommended action. They attributed the cause to "wet wipes and possible tree roots", "faulty pump room equipment causing fuses in the main isolator to blow" and "a severe break 30cm downstream from the manhole, as well as a large tree root at 17 metres".

The letter suggests Camden

thinks the main cause is the malfunctioning pump chamber and blocked drainage system. However, deployment of the necessary tanker, pump engineer and confined space equipment has still not been scheduled despite their acknowledgement that the situation is urgent.

Regarding the tree root, the boundary line of the property is at 12 metres and therefore Thames Water's responsibility to fix. Camden Council "has made enquiries on how to address this matter".

Residents are concerned that when the warmer weather comes flies will breed and cause an additional health hazard. Meanwhile, where children used to play two once-bright balls lie stranded in the noxious puddle.



Gentle slope: Members of the East Finchley Running Community make their way up the High Road on one of their weekly outings

A year under their belts

By Luke Brazier
East Finchley Running Community began in April 2024 as an idea. And the growth we have seen in just a year is absolutely outstanding. Today we have more than 130 registered members, have completed more than 52 weekly runs and collec-

tively covered thousands of kilometres around the Finchley, Highgate and Muswell Hill areas... and made friends for life.

As founder I am so proud of what this community has become and it is so touching to see just how much good it has brought to our community. We continue to run every week and host our own long run events

and social events on weekends. With summer coming back we hope our numbers grow even more.

We meet every Monday at East Finchley Station, setting off at 7pm. We are open to all abilities and welcome seasoned and beginner runners alike. Join us for another amazing year. Find us on Instagram @efrun-community

An evening of classical gems from Haydn and Stravinsky

Finchley Symphony Orchestra's next concert on Saturday 17 May will be an evening of classical and neo-classical gems from the 18th and 20th centuries.

Prokofiev wrote the *Overture on Hebrew Themes* in New York after fleeing Russia. Stravinsky's inspiration for the ballet *Pulcinella* was a collection of 18th century which he adapted to a more modern

style. Finally the *No 99 in E Flat* from Haydn's 12 'London' displays his characteristic cheerfulness and wit.

The concert takes place at Trinity Church, Nether Street, N12, on Saturday 17 May starting at 7.30pm. Tickets are priced £18, £15 for those under 26 and over 60, and £2 for those under 18 with a saving of £1 per ticket by booking online at www.finchleysymphony.org

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No timeline for work to start on former Esso garage site



Untouched: The former Esso filling station site on the corner of the High Road and Church Lane still awaits development six years after planning permission was granted. Photo Mike Coles

By Matteo Lanzini

About six years have passed since Barnet Council granted planning permission for the development of a new housing block on the former Esso petrol station site at the junction between the High Road and Church Lane, N2. Yet there are still no signs of building works commencing any time soon.

Despite its prominent location, the desolate plot of land has been fenced off and left untouched for some time, with weeds growing wild and an advertising board for the new development falling apart.

The only visible change since *The Archer* last reported on the site in July 2024 has been the fixing of private security yellow notices to the perimeter fence, advising that the site is protected by SQR Security. One of its personnel has been spotted inspecting the site recently, seemingly due to reports of intruders at night.

Project on hold

It is unclear what enforcement powers Barnet Council has at his disposal to ensure the housing plans are implemented. They were only approved after an extended planning application process, which involved an appeal to the Secretary of State and the submission of revisions which substantially increased the number of residential units.

The Archer however understands that the planning and building control department inquired recently with the site owners, Leopold Properties Limited, who reiterated that the project is on hold due to

“adverse market conditions”, without providing a new timeline.

Additionally, in relation to reports of the current untidy state of the site, the latest council inspection has deemed it not in breach of current planning regulations to justify any follow-up action and has put the case on file.

So for local residents and the hundreds of parents and children who daily attend Martin Primary School just opposite the site, the uncertainty around what will happen behind those metal fences remains. *The Archer* will continue to monitor the situation.

Tell us the news

Have you got a news story or an interesting photo for us? Tell us what is going on in East Finchley by emailing news@the-archer.co.uk or leave a message on our free phone line 0800 612 0748. Thank you.



Stand sentinel: Volunteers plant the silver birch in honour of their friend Wayne Armsby, with his wife Elsie second from the right. Photo John Lawrence

Wayne's tree will welcome everyone

By John Lawrence

Volunteers at Long Lane Pasture have planted a tree in memory of their long-time friend and pasture stalwart Wayne Armsby, who died in 2024. The striking silver birch stands near the entrance to the nature reserve, welcoming visitors as they come through the gates.

Wayne was instrumental in saving the rough pasture from development more than 25 years ago and went on to become the group's treasurer as well as working on the land to transform it into the beautiful wildlife haven that it is today.

His friends and fellow volunteers gathered on Saturday 12 April to place the tall sapling in the ground with forget-me-nots

around its base. Pasture volunteer Donald Lyven paid tribute saying: “Wayne was a man who believed in planting trees and he planted many here.”

Wayne's wife Elsie Price-Armsby said: “When we knew he was dying, Wayne chose a silver birch. It was one of his favourite trees, a very resilient ancient native species. I'm glad we've got such a lovely spot for it to welcome people into the pasture.”

Long Lane Pasture is now open every day from 9am to 7pm or dusk. Volunteers meet every Saturday from 10am to noon to keep the site looking good. They thanked readers of *The Archer* and everyone who contributed to a recent fundraising drive, helping them to buy essential new gardening equipment and secure units to store it on site.

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Up close and personal: Zoe's photograph of Queen Elizabeth II alongside Samantha and David Cameron and their baby daughter in Downing Street



Seaside special: Zoë's portrait 'Gracie in Frinton' won The British Journal of Photography's Portrait of Britain award.

By Amie Douglas

Zoë Norfolk is a freelance photographer based in Muswell Hill, specialising in portrait photography to capture genuine moments with visual storytelling. From an early age, Zoë knew photography was her calling. "I got my first camera when I was 10," she recalls. "It was a Box Brownie, and I was captivated by the 'instant-ness' of it all."

This ability to pause on a fleeting moment and contemplate it for a long time set Zoë on her career path to becoming an award-winning photographer, which has included her popular series of beautiful Muswell Hill views.

Downing Street

Following a photography degree at Staffordshire University, Zoë managed Linda McCartney's photographic

archive for the first ten years of her professional life, before shifting her focus to freelancing with magazines and at 10 Downing Street for 18 years.

Zoë's portfolio has garnered numerous highlights throughout her career, including the prestigious silver award from the Association of Photographers in 2023 for her project 'Every Year I Take a Photo'. In 2024, Zoë's portrait 'Gracie in

Frinton' won *The British Journal of Photography's* Portrait of Britain award.

Pandemic life

Reflecting on her achievements, Zoë adds: "Photography has really been validation for who I am" and I sense her validation is a gift she shares, allowing her subjects to be seen and tell their story. Her project 'You Must Stay Home' is a brilliant example of her more intimate work. The project documented more than 80 households in North London during lockdown,

capturing all those isolating indoors from single parents to individuals with disabilities.

Behind the scenes

Zoë's work has captured some unforgettable moments. One that stands out is when she took a spontaneous photograph during Queen Elizabeth II's visit to Downing Street. "It was after Prince Philip's 90th birthday lunch. David Cameron's baby daughter Florence was brought in to meet them and she reached out for the Queen's brooch and she's

looking slightly alarmed," Zoë laughs. "It was so behind the scenes and unposed, and I just knew it was a special moment."

Get involved

Readers have a chance to get involved in one of Zoë's latest projects. Muswell Hill is no stranger to charm and character, and the project seeks to cover those who have become a part of the community, anyone from local characters, community pillars to those with unique stories. You can contact Zoë via email at zoe@zoe-norfolk.com.



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You never know what you'll find

When staff from the McDonald's headquarters next to East Finchley tube station volunteered to pick litter from the flower beds outside Budgens and Amy's in the High Road they found an interesting array of items, including a discarded shovel, a china bowl, a Guinness glass and thousands of cigarette butts.

The litter pick was part of an initiative for McDonald's staff to take part in community activities, including graffiti cleaning and bulb planting, set up following an initial meeting six months ago between East Finchley Town Team, local councillor Arjun Mittra and Aaron Davis, business manager of McDonald's staff restaurant.

The fast food chain is a major Barnet employer, and the Town Team says it is looking



Pick of the bunch: The McDonald's litter pickers fill bags with items found in the High Road flower beds

forward to working with the company on other activities throughout the year, hopefully

in Cherry Tree Wood as well as along the High Road.



Happy memories of half a century in N2

By Gail Norcliffe

A resident of Church Lane, N2, since 1967, Margaret Russell has a wealth of fascinating memories and insights into how life has changed in East Finchley. Affordable housing, good transport links, and a relatively quiet area with plenty of green open spaces first drew Margaret and her late husband, Chas, to the area.

Chas was a police officer in central London and relied on the tube for his commute, although Margaret remembers there being far fewer trains. Chas needed daytime quiet when on nights, so Margaret depended on local parks for outings with their three small children.

Idyllic summer days were spent at the old Finchley Lido on the other side of the North Circular, picnicking under trees on the grass surrounds, walking there via the Tarling Road path, picking raspberries at the allotments en route. As a wonderful local facility, Margaret regrets that more was not done to prevent the Lido's closure in 1993.

Cherry Tree Wood was also a firm family favourite. It was known then as Dirt House Wood, reflecting its history of being fertilised by the soil and horse manure from London streets and brought to the Dirt House, now the Old White Lion pub.

Daily shopping

No supermarkets were on the High Road in the 1960s, but an abundance of smaller shops flourished and Margaret shopped on a daily basis. Mr and Mrs Davies's store on the Manor Park Road corner of Church Lane, stocked a wide range of produce, much of it

being sold on a per weight basis and all purchases individually wrapped in paper cones. Definitely no plastic!

Church Lane also featured two butchers, Mr Dodds's fish shop and a bakery at the end of Long Lane, the fresh bread smells bringing in custom from the neighbourhood.

As the children grew, Margaret worked locally, initially for Kleenaroll, a paper company on Church Lane, and then for 20 years as a secretary at Martin School, seeing a whole generation of children through their primary school journey.

Better or worse?

Many of the changes over 58 years living in N2 are welcome to Margaret. The High Road has seen significant improvements, including the cheeriness of the cafés with outside tables and chairs.

The community seems to have grown stronger, people are very willing to engage with each other and Margaret finds the support system in Church Lane second to none. Margaret feels East Finchley has become a much more integrated society in the last half century and welcoming to all, which is of real benefit to everyone who makes this area their home.



Margaret Russell with her photo album



With husband Chas moving into their house in Church Lane in the 1960s



Their children's favourite playground in Cherry Tree Wood



Finchley Lido was the setting for idyllic summer days

Gardeners get busy on new ground



Hard workers: Some of the volunteer gardeners who have helped to transform the planted areas in Church Lane

Having secured funding from the Barnet Area Committee to improve the brick planter areas on Church Lane by Long Lane and the Walks, N2, (The Archer, December 2024) residents have been busy clearing, tidying planting and creating new community gardens.

Council contractors undertook some repair work to the planters followed by a group of about 20 locals aged nine to 88 collectively spending over 1,250 hours clearing, weeding,

planting and watering.

A variety of plants which are bee and butterfly friendly have been selected to provide year-round interest, and a selection of herbs has been planted by The

Walks. The Finchley Pollinator Project will be providing pollinating plants and wildflower seeds in June, and a local resident is cultivating sunflowers which will be planted soon.

The sunny weather last month saw many people use the new benches but the dry spell meant the plants needed more watering. The florists at Jennie Mann in Church Lane have been helping by using water from their flower displays on the new plants.

The youngest volunteer is nine-year-old Alma, who has been helping with her father Matteo. She said: "I enjoy helping as I can contribute to the local community and make it a cleaner and greener environment for everyone."

The last bed to be tackled is where the hedge used to be by The Walks, and that is next on the list. If you would like to find out more or get involved, email churchlanegardens@gmail.com.

Songs and chocolate on the day peace returned

Here an East Finchley resident, soon to be 100, who wishes to remain anonymous, looks back 80 years to remember the sights, sounds... and smells... of VE Day on 8 May 1945.

Eighty years ago it was a warm humid day. I was a student with a group of friends youth hostelling in Yorkshire. We were in York planning to walk the walls and visit the cathedral.

As the news filtered through, we joined crowds gathering in a central open space. There was an overpowering smell of chocolate, which puzzled us until a local said Terry's and Rowntree's factories were on each side.

By late morning a makeshift platform had appeared and an announcement was made. Hostilities had ceased; Hitler was dead. Cheers, jubilation then singing *We're Going to Hang Out Our Washing on the Siegfried Line* over and over and, strangely, *It's a Long Way to Tipperary*, which I remember most vividly.

After a while catering vans turned up: fish and chips, pork and stuffing buns, sausage rolls and, for us, pint glasses of Bulmer's cider. All the while

everyone hardly believing the war in Europe was over and our lads would come home.

As evening drew in, the crowd thinned, then someone struck up *Auld Lang Syne* then *God Save the King*. People dispersed and we went back to the hostel. Male and female dormitories, with a warden in charge, never the twain would meet. Excellent value at one and sixpence a night.

The next morning we explored York. Shops hung out bunting and Union Jacks. The pervading feeling seemed to be relief and weariness as we all prepared to resume peace after more than five years of war. All these years later, my abiding memory is the smell of chocolate and the songs we roared together.



A town square for the future

By Peter Hale

The London Festival of Architecture and Barnet Climate Action takes place during the month of June. The East Finchley Town Team are organising 'Round the Square', an event on Saturday 7 June on the pavement in the High Road, N2, between Budgens and Caffé Nero.



Meeting place: Fixation Academy students entertain the crowd at last year's Festival of Architecture event on the future 'Town Square' in the High Road.

We are continuing to promote the ideas to reconfigure the wide pavement space there, which is awkwardly divided by the large planting beds, so that in future we can free up space as a meeting place and to hold events.

So, please join us on Saturday 7 June from 2pm until 5pm and you can expect activities from local charity Art Against Knives who are working to prevent youth violence through creativity. Between 2pm and 4pm, join the Finchley Pollinator Project planting workshops designed to introduce pots of pollinator-friendly, nectar-rich herbs and flowers into your garden, thus supporting local biodiversity.

At 2pm Fixation Academy

of Performing Arts will be presenting an excerpt from musical theatre by young people.

East Finchley Town Team members will also be on hand to explain the proposals for "town square" improvements to this area of the High Road. Find out more at www.london-festivalofarchitecture.org

Town square update

At present holding the event in this location is awkward but continues to demonstrate the reason for our improvement proposals. The Town Team now has information about all the utilities in the area which will dictate to some extent where trees and other features can be located, and they anticipate submitting a revised scheme for planning.

Walk the history of the High Road

Town centres emerge and evolve. The High Road in East Finchley is no exception and it has grown over centuries to become the beating heart of the local community.

A 90-minute walk led by Roger Chapman next month will pick up past echoes of what was here before the buildings we know today. It will explore the evolution of the High Road to the present day and pose questions about where it may be going in the future. Fascinating documents from Old Bailey trials and newspaper reports will tease out past voices and events along this historic route, which was first used as far back as the year 1300.



Walk and talk: Roger Chapman

The first retail buildings appeared in the late Victorian and Edwardian period and Roger's guided walk will explain how and why the centre came to develop in this location. Moving nearer to the present he will bring together lived experience voices from traders to shoppers to children through the work of the East Finchley Town Team.

The walk will start at East Finchley Underground station at 11am on Saturday 7 June. The event can be booked at www.eventbrite.co.uk from Thursday 8 May.



Spruce up: James Masters, right, along with project designer Phyllida Mills and her son Thomas do some work in the Trinity Road underpass ahead of its full makeover. Photo Mike Coles

Guided walk through ten years of change

By Lynn Winton

Mark your diaries for Sunday 8 June, when Grange Big Local chair James Masters is taking part in the prestigious London Festival of Architecture. Along with volunteers, he will be leading a farewell walk for this groundbreaking East Finchley initiative, which is now coming to the close of its resident-led, lottery-funded ten-year plan.

"We will be focusing on celebrating the hard work of our fantastic residents," said James, "and whether you join the guided walk or follow our trail map independently, you will find out how volunteers made these transformative projects happen."

The free 2km walk will visit the Green Arrows Garden at Archer Academy, a tranquil and inclusive space that supports the wellbeing of students and the parent volunteers who created it.

Also on the route will be Market Place Playground, a formerly derelict, grey space that has been reimagined as an inclusive green park, with a vibrant community of supporters and users.

Paths and gardens

Other stops include the Manor Park Road Underpass, currently being refurbished, Oak Lane Open Space, the pergola outside Vale Farm allotments and the Community Quilt at Tarling Road Community Centre, ending at Barnwood, where free refreshments will be served.

Additionally, the route can be enjoyed by everyone, even from your armchair. An online trail map is accompanied by a film, made by local company Film Yard Ltd, where you can learn more about each project.

James has a final message of gratitude: "I am immensely proud of this community, that called for changes, imagined what could be better and different, and then worked together

to make it happen. GBL may have been the catalyst for all this work, but it is local people who deserve all the credit, so thank you everyone."

The guided walk will start at

11am on Sunday 8 June outside the Archer Academy Garden Space in Eagan's Close, N2. More details and the downloadable map and film can be found at grangebiglocal.org.

RICKY SAVAGE... THE VOICE OF IRRESPONSIBILITY

What is history?

Anyone who says that history repeats itself, the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce, is wrong. It's not history that repeats itself, it's historians. And, anyway, what is history? The obvious answer is whatever historians say it is. The reality is weirder.

To become history it has to have happened long enough ago for most of the people who were here to have died so that they can't argue about it. It helps to have been turned into the kind of book that gets reviewed in *The Times*. Better still if it has been the subject of a 26-part TV series. All of which is why we will celebrate the 80th anniversary of VE Day.

The 8 May 1945 is a hell of a long time ago. To have eaten jam sandwiches at some street party you need to be well over 80, to remember life 'before the war' you'll be pushing 90 and if you served in the thing you'll be close on 100. So it has to be history. And now we can remember it.

All too raw

We never used to. Unlike the Great War which has been memorialised every year since it ended in 1918, this second global conflict was all too raw, too much of a reminder of the horrors. And it hung like a wraith over Europe for decades as those who were there reminded those too young what they fought for. And it was not for teenagers and rock'n'roll

If you grew up in the 60s or 70s 'the war' was everywhere in books, films and on TV. It took until 1968 and *Dad's Army* for anyone to make jokes about it. And there was always someone to tell you 'what it was really like' and that they didn't fight in the war for us to listen to rock'n'roll or grow our hair and not conform. But they did; they fought in the war so we didn't have to join the Hitler Youth and so they could listen to jazz, because Hitler hated jazz.

Now we can remember

Never before or since has Europe been caught up in such a horror as what took place between 1939 and 1945. It took decades for those who were there to get over it. Many never did. Growing up in north London it didn't take much to make me realise what could have happened to many of my friends. But then my politics would probably have got me shot anyway. The thing is, to prevent history repeating itself as tragedy, you must never forget the past. So on 8 May, don't just celebrate, remember.





Glorious greenery: Patsy Bailey and John Rance's garden in Muswell Hill will be open for charity again this month

Open garden season is ready for visitors

By Lynn Winton

Keen gardeners Patsy Bailey and John Rance are once again inviting you into their beautiful Muswell Hill home as part of the National Garden Scheme, to spend an afternoon with at least 16 varieties of homemade cake, a saxophone quartet, an opportunity to stock up on gorgeous plants and a chance to see not one but two lovely gardens. All to raise funds for the caring charities, such as Macmillan Nurses.

"Yes, this year you can visit two gardens for the price of one!" explained Patsy. "I have joined forces with my new neighbour Lucinda Oppenheimer who wanted to take part too."

Patsy and John have invited visitors into their garden for more than ten years. Last year they had 200 visitors and raised an incredible £5,000. As well as potting up plants for the plant sale, Patsy is busy knitting baby clothes and artist daughter

Imogen is making greetings cards.

The two gardens at 17 and 28 Princes Avenue, N10 3LS, will be open on Sunday 18 May from 12pm to 6pm. Combined entry is £6, children free.

Pottery and cakes

Earlier in the month on Sunday 4 May, another Muswell Hill garden at 5 St Regis Close, Alexandra Park Road, N10, will be open from 2pm to 6.30pm.

Lovingly tended by Susan Bennett and Earl Hyde, visi-

tors will also be able to see their open pottery studio, buy plants and sample home made cakes and teas. Admission is £5, children free and cash preferred. Dogs are welcome on leads. And in East Finchley, Joan Arnold and Tom Heinersdorff's garden at 7 Deansway, N2, will be open on Sunday 11 May from 12.30pm to 5.30pm. Admission is £5, children free.

Find out more about all open gardens at ngs.org.uk

Activities for everyone at the Green Man Centre

By Diana Cormack

Have you heard of Capoeira or Krav Magna? Neither had I until I was looking at the timetable of weekly activities at the Green Man Community Centre in Strawberry Vale, N2. Both could be classed as self-defence, the former being a fast-moving Afro-Brazilian martial art and the latter a form of self-defence developed for the Israeli military. Evening classes in both are available. Possibly almost as active are the table tennis sessions

for the over 50s with daytime sessions twice a week. On a slower scale are the Monday morning yoga sessions and evening community Bingo.

There is also provision for children, with a book club for the home-schooled and Hope youth clubs for the younger and older age groups. On three days a week, Warm Welcomes with free beverages and biscuits are provided. Saturday afternoons offer a Debt Clinic and meetings on the Windrush Project. More groups are coming

soon and there is a large meeting room with an office available for sole-use long-term booking. For the full timetable and more information about the centre, visit <https://greenmancentre.org> The local team who run the community centre have many future events planned, some in partnership with estate managers Peabody and with church group Hope North London, starting with VE Day celebrations on Monday 5 May. Strawberry Vale residents are invited to the AGM on Wednesday 28 May from 6.30-7.30pm.

A new way for children to get close to nature



Story space: The first Children's Nature Circle in Cherry Tree Wood was a big hit with parents and their little ones

By Diana Cormack

The first event in a newly created children's nature circle took place in Cherry Tree Wood beside the playground, where the Friends of Cherry Tree Wood have created an area for natural play, with logs and stumps to balance and sit on.

This was the Sunday morning setting on 23 March for a storytelling session for under-eights where they could learn about five birds of the Wood with pictures, songs and stories. Led by Kate Brown, the youngsters learned about the parakeet, magpie, crow, blackbird and nuthatch, even hearing their songs on cue!

Pitched at just the right level and length for the children, it was thoroughly enjoyed by them and the accompanying adults. Keep your eyes open for details of future presentations. The Friends are keen that children and parents feel free to

make use of the space whenever they wish to.

On Saturday 3 May from 11am to 1pm there is a Bioblitz in the park which people of all ages can take part in. Bioblitzes are surveys of a specific area to identify and record as many species of plants, animals, fungi and other wildlife as possible. From wildflowers to mammals, moths and mushrooms, all wildlife counts.

A briefing will be given to parents and children at 11am in the nature circle and then the idea is to go out and seek. Not hide and seek, more like seek and find!

Forgotten composer

A new East Finchley-based arts group is staging a concert dedicated to the music of Louise Farrenc, an overlooked French composer and virtuoso pianist who died in 1875. Her works include three symphonies and numerous chamber pieces and piano compositions.

The concert takes place at Pond Square Chapel, Highgate Village, on Saturday 31 May at 7pm and features the Marcel Chamber Ensemble, with Sarabande Foundation artist Darcey Fleming, pianist Andrew Campling, soprano Elinor Chapman and readers. Tickets are priced £20 and proceeds will go to the homeless charity Refuge.

Tekla Arts is a collective

comprising professional artists, musicians, actors and teachers, and is the fruit of a collaboration between co-directors Theia Charles and Caroline Soresby on arts projects going back years, including *The Tempest* for Phoenix Theatre in Camden.



Concert artist: Tekla Darcey



Letters

Dangerous rat runs

Dear Editor,

Barnet Council has said its feasibility study into traffic calming measures in the county roads in East Finchley concluded that they were subject to "significant cut through traffic" and were over-used by non-residential traffic.

In parallel, Haringey Council recently announced a school roads plan which will close Creighton Avenue in peak times. As a result, all traffic heading west or east will have to use Fortis Green Road.

Where westwards it cannot currently turn right onto the High Road, the result of the two boroughs' plans for increased road safety is thus that all Fortis Green and Creighton Avenue traffic will go through the very narrow county roads.

Significantly Barnet's recognition that the county roads are currently over-used didn't even consider the likely incoming increase. Its response ignored suggestions to close the rat run and instead to put in place speed bumps. Same dangerous rat run with increasing traffic.

Barnet is proposing works on the Fortis Green and High Road junction. At that time the road markings should be modified to allow right turns and save lives. Simply staging the lights so there is no oncoming traffic would allow better right-turn traffic flow without any road works.

Worried county road resident,
Name and address supplied.

Right turn is right move

Dear Editor,

I live on Durham Road, and wish to comment on the outcome of the East Finchley Statutory Consultation proposals.

Along with others, I feel very strongly that the one issue that was not consulted on, and is the cause of the rat run, the speeding and the parking issues on Durham Road, is the lack of a right turn from Fortis Green onto the High Road.

If this one issue was addressed, there would be no need for speed humps of whatever sort in the county roads, nor double yellow lines.

The High Road intersection with Fortis Green/East End Road is extremely dangerous for pedestrians, with cars taking no notice of red lights and speeding across the junction.

In order to improve safety for pedestrians at that crossing, and to stop the county roads including Durham being used as rat runs, the Council should consider installing a right hand filter at the High Road for traffic wanting to travel north, together with a timed, counting-down crossing such as the one at the junction of Fortis Green, Tetherdown, Fortis Green Road and Queens Avenue, so that all can cross safely and cars can turn right.

Deborah Granville
Durham Road, N2

Send your letters to:

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.

Blinded by the light

Dear Editor,

Domestic security lights are becoming something of an issue in the county roads. Several neighbours have complained of their back gardens and bedrooms being lit by a motion-activated beam with the strength of a searchlight waking not only the birds in the middle of the night but them too.

While I understand homeowners' concerns about possible intrusions, is it necessary to have lights with such intensity? And could they not be angled down rather than straight across at the opposite house?

I live in the county roads and am often woken by a beam that penetrates two layers of thick curtain, and both my neighbours have strong lights that are activated at random times. While these two are not of the searchlight variety, surely security lights should provide only the minimum level of illumination necessary to light householders' own properties?

Every security lighting website I investigated advises fitting a hood or shield to control and limit the light to the area to be lit. One said: "Whilst you may be happy with a light that illuminates half the street your neighbours may not."

Additionally, it has been proved without doubt that domestic lights affect the natural world detrimentally. So perhaps we can revisit our approach to movement activated lighting and be a bit more considerate to our neighbours and to the birds!

Name and address supplied

On the borderline

Dear Editor,

Following your article about a driver being wrongly given a penalty notice for turning right at the East End Road junction with the High Road, on two occasions we have had Barnet Council issue us with penalty charge notices for parking outside our own house. We live in Southern Road and our house is the border house between N2 and N10. Our car is parked right outside and it has a valid parking permit.

Who wants to live to 100?



Human behaviour: Professor Catherine Loveday gives a talk at the Age UK Barnet centre in Oak Lane, N2

By Amaya Shankardass

In 1986, the rock band Queen released a song, asking us "Who Wants to Live Forever?" Well, while we let technology handle society's search for ever longer lives, perhaps it is more prudent to ask ourselves "Who wants to live to 100, and how do you want to spend those years?"

That is a question that the charity Age UK deals with every day. It says its mission is to "change how we age" by helping over-55s embrace and enrich the years that lie ahead of them.

Their Barnet branch, based in Oak Lane, East Finchley, offers an impressive range of activities including community talks, exercise classes, social walks, art and cooking classes, a lunch club, and IT classes.

In the mind

A regular speaker is Professor Catherine Loveday, a leading neuropsychologist from the University of Westminster, regular on BBC Radio 4's *All in the Mind*, and former trustee of the charity. Her talks have explored the importance of sleep, improving your everyday memory, curating life stories, and unlocking the power of music.

"By uncovering the mysteries of the brain, Professor

Loveday gives us the tools to live better, healthier lives as we age," says Age UK Barnet CEO Helen Newman. "She supports our commitment to lifelong learning, mental wellbeing, and staying socially engaged, all key ingredients for a fulfilling later life."

Better with age

Life doesn't have to slow down when you get older. Research has demonstrated that certain skills improve with age, including vocabulary, problem-solving, and conflict resolution (if you're looking for a win on family game night, crosswords may be the way to go...).

The next free talk is a Q&A with Dr Andrea Oskis on "*The connection between food, memory and relationships*" on Wednesday 4 June 2025 from 6.45pm to 8pm. To register, contact Teresa Gallagher at teresa.gallagher@ageukbarnet.org.uk or call 07502 989403.

Additionally, the Age

UK website provides crucial information and advice, from handyperson contacts to benefit payments, which simplify stressful tasks. For further information and services about Age UK, head to www.ageukbarnet.org.uk or call 020 8203 5040.

Lasting bonds amongst darkness and chaos



Safe sanctuary: East Finchley residents Michael Byrne, Stanislava Klymova and her host Maxine Klein, Aliona Donetska and her host Sarah Stafford, and Councillor Arjun Mittra at the House of Commons reception hosted by Sarah Sackman MP

By Lynn Winton

East Finchley residents were well represented at a special evening in the Jubilee Room at the House of Commons. Finchley and Golders Green MP Sarah Sackman invited local organisation Driving Aid to Ukraine to partner the event and together they welcomed a packed room of the Ukrainians who had found a haven in Barnet, along with community groups, host families and aid volunteers.

Sarah said: "I'm proud that in 2023 Barnet became a borough of sanctuary, hosting over 1,000 Ukrainian refugees, and we pooled together to help them build new lives, even as war rages. I am so proud to be your MP. Slava Ukraini!"

Guest speaker Michael Byrne, of Driving Aid to Ukraine, gave an update on how many vital tons of humanitarian aid he's getting into Ukraine. Many of the new Ukrainian residents were emotional after the warm and supportive speeches and were overwhelmed to be invited to Westminster.

Sarah reflected after the event: "It was an evening of music, dancing, and laughter, where young Ukrainian residents could form lasting bonds. Amidst the dark and chaotic geopolitical landscape, it was heart-warming to see people coming together in a show of strength and hope."

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On two wheels from Arctic to Med



Ready to ride: Nick Woodward is planning a long-distance journey by bike through Europe's varied terrain and, right, the route he will take from the Arctic to the Mediterranean

In his early 20s, **Nick Woodward** attempted to cycle from Norway to Spain with a friend but they had only reached Hamburg in Germany when a crash forced them to give up. Now 58, Nick feels he has unfinished business and is determined to complete the 6,500km route from the Arctic to the Mediterranean. Here he explains his motivation for taking on the challenge now.

Over the years in East Finchley, a group of us have gone on multi-day cycling trips. It started with London to Paris

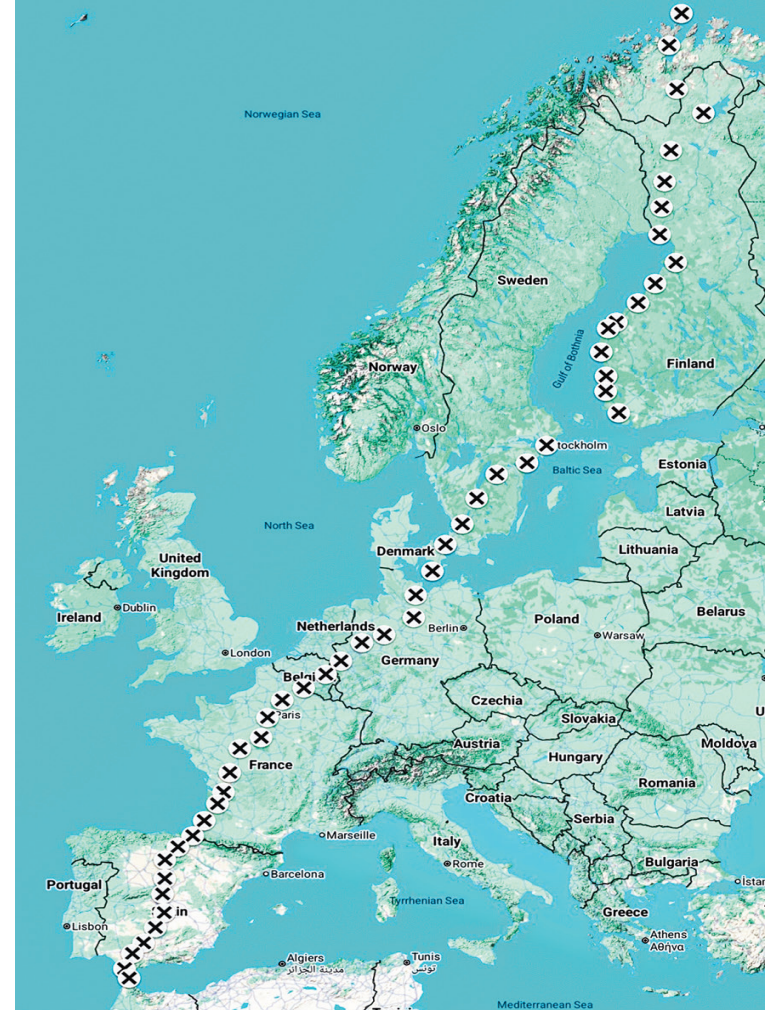
in 2012, then we cycled the Canal du Midi in France and the route of Hadrian's Wall. I always tried to tempt friends with a trip from the Arctic to the Med, but no-one would take the bait.

At last, my friend Pete said he would join me for the Scandinavian leg, so a 40-year dream became a detailed route on a map. Also, the reality of life at 58 means if I'm not able to do it soon, the likelihood of me being in good enough shape to complete it in future years is getting slim.

What is the route?

To get the bikes to the top of Norway, we are flying to Tromsø, then taking an overnight ferry to a small town called Honningsvåg, from where we will cycle the final 40km to the top of Europe and the trip can begin.

From 22 June we will head down some eastern Norwegian fjords, then cross the Arctic Plateau into Finland. Over eight days, we will camp and head towards the Baltic Sea. We will only pass a handful of towns and shops, with most of the cycling



being on remote rough gravel roads. For the first week, the sun won't set at all.

I will then head south to Denmark, onward through western Germany, then the outskirts of Paris and on to Bordeaux. The final two weeks will take me around the western edge of the Pyrenees through Madrid and on down to Tarifa, the southernmost point in Europe overlooking Africa.

The total trip will be about 6,500km, with around 36,000m of cycling ascent. On average, I will cycle for about a week, then have a rest day, so I am hoping to finish around 24 August, after about 53 days cycling.

Pros and cons

I'm most looking forward to seeing the midnight sun, spending time in the wildest parts of Europe and looking across the sea from Spain to Africa knowing I have made it from

the Arctic Ocean to the Med under my own steam.

The vast empty distances in Finland are a bit of a concern food-wise. Wild river water will be fine to drink, but we are likely to have to carry a few days' worth of food, and wherever we see a shop, eat as much as we can to keep our bodies stocked up on energy.

Fundraising push

I will be using the trip to raise money for the Wheelchair Football Association, where I have been helping out for eight years. It is their 20th year, and to protect the sport into the future, they have launched a benevolent fund. The sport caters for some of the most physically challenged individuals and allows them to play a competitive team sport and find camaraderie and freedom in ways that are near impossible in other aspects of their lives. Find out more at thewfa.org.uk and please help my fundraising by donating using the QR code here. Thank you.



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A magical musical menagerie of creatures

Finchley Chamber Choir is performing a concert of music with an animal theme this month. You can expect the widest variety of styles and moods, from the tranquil beauty of John Tavener's *The Lamb* and Eric Whitacre's *Seal Lullaby*, to the humour of Frederick Bridge's

The Goslings and Philip Colls' *Animal Songs*.

The concert takes place on Saturday 10 May at Trinity Church, Nether Street, North Finchley, N12, at 7.30pm. Tickets priced £18, £15 concessions, £2 under 18s are available from www.fcchoir.co.uk

Food waste

Barnet Council is to reintroduce food waste collections to all households across the borough by the end of March 2026. The service is already being offered to schools and businesses. Households will be provided with appropriate containers ahead of the service roll-out next year and more details will follow nearer the time.



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