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Neighbours get together to form powerful voice

Community volunteers in one part of East Finchley have formed a new grassroots residents' association to give locals a collective voice that works with Barnet Council to solve problems, enhance quality of life for all, improve public spaces and champion the area's future.

The East End Village Residents Association (EEVRA) is starting with a few pilot streets west of the Northern line tracks between Church Lane, Hamilton Road and East End Road but has ambitions to represent a much wider area by the end of 2026.

Joint chairs Nikki Austin and James Masters said the aim of the association was to turn "chat into change" and neighbourliness into real opportunity.

"There's no shortage of brilliant clubs, projects and events in East Finchley, yet there hasn't been an active, formal residents' association for quite some time. EEVRA aims to fill a gap," they said. "What began as a few small WhatsApp groups during lockdown has grown into a strong neighbourhood network, keeping residents informed, connected, and ready to help each another."

They said the network proved its worth last year when plans were put forward by Places for Barnet, a partnership between Barnet Council and developers the Kuropatwa Group, to build private housing on a green space and car park in Manor Park Road, in the heart of the EEVRA area.

Nikki and James said: "The community responded. Questions were raised about how public land, used daily by locals, could be earmarked for development, particularly after planning inspectors had already judged the site's allocation 'not justified' and removed it from the Local Plan.

"A parallel challenge was supported at Park House on the High Road, the site of Monkey Puzzle Nursery. Out of this moment came a consensus: the

neighbourhood needed a formal body to coordinate, communicate and ensure its voice was heard. Creating something more formal felt like the natural next step." As we reported last month, Places for Barnet have put both the Manor Park Road and Park House developments on hold in response to the level of local feedback they received to their plans.

EEVRA's first project in 2026 is to form Friends of Manor Park, a community effort to care for the open space while the Council decides its future. A detailed 60-page proposal is already with councillors and officers, with a meeting due imminently.

The association is finalising its constitution, forming a committee, and preparing for an inaugural meeting this month,



Eye-catching: The EEVRA logo



The small park area in Manor Park Road that was earmarked for a housing development



Self-help: EEVRA neighbours form a tidy-up team to clear their local streets of rubbish

where residents will be invited to join, share ideas and vote in the committee. Residents can get in touch at: hello@eevra.org.uk

The group has taken its name from the East End Village area marked on historical maps from the 1800s after Finchley Common was divided into parcels including: East End, Hog Market (now Market Place) and Dirt House (now Cherry Tree Wood). The extension of the Northern line in 1939 separated East End from what most call the Old Village. Their mascot is Eevie the Elephant, inspired by the famous Lord George Sanger's circus, which wintered in the area at Park Farm. In its heyday in the late 1890s and early 1900s, giraffes, bears, big cats and elephants could be seen parading up East End Road.

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

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BE PART OF IT Volunteers wanted

Compiled by Lynn Winton

Age UK Barnet needs volunteers to help in its Tuesday or Thursday day clubs in East Finchley which are for people living with mild to moderate dementia. By chatting to people, helping with activities and serving lunch and refreshments, you will help to make the club a warm, welcoming and stimulating environment for members. To find out more please contact Lisa on lisa.robbs@ageukbarnet.org.uk or call 020 8432 1422.

Volunteer at the **North London Scouts group**, who are looking for adults to help their Beavers (age six to eight) and Cubs (age eight to ten) have fun, learn new skills, and go on adventures. From games and crafts to cooking, outdoor activities, and trips, no two weeks are the same! You don't need experience, just enthusiasm and a willingness to join in. Whether it's a weekly commitment, occasional help, or support behind the scenes, you'll make a real difference and be part of a friendly team. Interested? Email del@224northlondonscouts.org.uk

Finchley Foodbank is looking for a new kind of volunteer to help people with all things digital e.g. searching the internet, sending emails, booking appointments. You will signpost people to help with the cost of living, employment, housing etc. The team has resources for you to use and will be there to support you! You will need to be available for foodbank sessions on Tuesdays and/or Saturdays 11.30am-2pm twice a month. To find out more about becoming a digital champion volunteer email: finchleyfoodbank@gmail.com

The North London Hospice shop in the High Road, N2, would love to hear from people of all ages who are interested in helping out with sales and donations. They offer places for students 16 years old as well and can help you with work experience placements. Please drop into the shop and speak to the manager Anastasiya.

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

Friends of the Wood

The next Annual General Meeting of The Friends of Cherry Tree Wood will be held at 7.30pm on Thursday 15 January at Monkey Puzzle Day Nursery, High Road, N2, close

to the entrance to the park. Everyone is welcome to come along and hear what has been achieved by the charity over the past year and also the planned activities for the year ahead.

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Special school's £1million upgrade is a snip

Oak Lodge School in East Finchley celebrated a major milestone last month with its former headteacher Lynda

Walker officially cutting the ribbon to open new facilities after a £1million building upgrade project.

Photo by Mike Coles. Turn to page 4 for the full story and more pictures.

Trees for streets

Residents and businesses who would like to choose a spot for a new tree have until Monday 19 January to submit requests for winter planting.

More than 330 trees have already been installed in Barnet as part of the national not-for-profit sponsorship scheme Trees for Streets. Many applicants opt for gaps outside their

homes, while others select a local park.

Once a request is submitted, Barnet Council surveys the location to check for obstacles like cables or pipes. If everything is clear, the sponsorship goes ahead, and a contractor plants the tree. For more information, visit treesforstreets.org/Barnet

Coffee and chat

The Age UK Barnet team have extended an invitation to anyone over 55 to join them for a cuppa and a friendly chat at one of their free-to-attend coffee mornings. They are hosted at the Ann Owens Centre on Oak Lane, N2, from 10.30am to 12 noon on Saturday 31 January, Saturday 28 February and Saturday 28 March. For more details, call Tamara on 0208 1297619 or email: activities@ageukbarnet.org.uk

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Barnet

Land at Central Avenue (adjacent To Willow House), The Grange Estate, High Road, N2

Non-material amendment to planning permission 22/3539/FUL dated 12/07/2022 for 'Development of the site to provide eight affordable homes (Class C3) in a three-storey building, together with associated public realm, landscaping and playspace improvements, and car and cycle parking (Subject to Unilateral Undertaking, dated: 21/12/22)'. Amendments include the "after" condition survey of the agreed route to be utilised by all construction traffic. Ref. No: 25/5004/NMA

4 Trinity Avenue, N2

Part single, part two-storey rear extension with new patio area and associated alterations to the roof following demolition of the existing garage, shed and conservatory. New front entrance porch. Changes to fenestration. Ref. No: 25/4983/HSE

Outside 2 Challoner Close, N2

Installation of one 12m light wooden pole. Ref. No: 25/4936/LIC

Fairacres, 164 East End Road, N2

Submission of details of condition 5 (Demolition and Construction Management and Logistics Plan) pursuant to planning permission 24/1113/FUL dated 22/01/2025. Ref. No: 25/4917/CON

52a Manor Park Road, N2

Roof extension involving rear dormer window. Ref. No: 25/4916/CON

45 Helen Close, N2

Single storey rear extension (retrospective application). Ref. No: 25/4804/RCU

1 - 6 Denison Close, N2

Installation of two new risers up the rear elevation of the property with horizontal runs to individual flats (retrospective application). Ref. No: 25/4805/RCU

1 Summerlee Gardens, N2

Single-storey side return extension. Roof extension involving hip to gable with rear dormer windows with three front-facing rooflights. Ref. No: 25/4756/192

Archer Academy, Eagans Close, N2

Submission of details of condition 4 (Noise from extraction and ventilation equipment), condition 7 (Noise impact) and condition 8 (Demol and Const Mgmt Pln) pursuant to planning permission 25/0320/FUL dated 27/11/2025 (amended description). Ref. No: 25/4763/CON

12 Hertford Road, N2

Single-storey side and rear extension with five roof lights following the demolition of existing storage area. Ref. No: 25/4696/FUL

24 Cherry Tree Road, N2

Roof extension involving hip to gable, rear dormer window, two front-facing roof lights, one skylight and new side gable window. Ref. No: 25/4677/192

228 Creighton Avenue, N2

Single-storey side and rear extension with one roof lantern following demolition of existing the existing garage. Reinstatement of railings to the existing terrace. Ref. No: 25/4658/HSE

Haringey

33 Beech Drive, N2

First-floor side extension, new and replacement windows, doors and roof glazing. Ref. No: IN/2025/2805

42 Springcroft Avenue, N2

Proposed double-storey rear extensions at ground and first-floor levels. Proposed loft conversion including the removal of chimney breast and associated alterations. Ref. No: IN/2025/2817

3 Fortis Green Avenue, N2

Fire reinstatement works to the top two floors of the property to an existing three-storey building (work commenced February 2025). Ref. No: RV/2025/2815



Call for homes to be people-friendly after leisure park scheme is rejected

By John Lawrence

An architect has called for “houses that people want to live in” after a mammoth scheme for 1,470 homes on the Great North Leisure Park was overwhelmingly rejected by Barnet Council for being overdevelopment out of character with the area and with no good transport links.

The planning committee voted last month by eight votes to zero, with one abstention, against the application by developer Regal for 20 buildings of up to 25 storeys on the site where the Vue Cinema, Hollywood Bowl and restaurants now stand. The existing Finchley Lido pool and gym would have been replaced with a new leisure centre complex nearby.

East Finchley-based architect Mary Hogben, who addressed the committee on behalf of The Finchley Society, said she was surprised that councillors made such a clear decision,

against the recommendation of their planning officers. “I think they did it because the plans did not fit the Government or the Mayor of London’s brief for putting the right buildings in the right place,” Mary told The Archer. “They saw nearly 1,500 homes being built at least a 20-minute walk from the nearest tube station and with just the 263 bus route passing by. “The development was committing people to live in flats close together with limited daylight, which is not good for them. We do need homes but they need to be well-thought through and



High rise: A developer's image of how the Great North Leisure Park would have been transformed

homes that people actually want to live in with the associated amenities that all communities need.”

At the time of going to press, the Great North Leisure Centre was still listed as an active project on Regal’s website. Steve Harrington, planning director for Arada, which now owns Regal, said last year: “Currently, the area is dominated by cars, so it feels unwelcoming and inaccessible to pedestrians. Our proposals will create a new neighbourhood, delivering new homes,

a new leisure centre and new public spaces, truly putting this corner of Finchley on the map.” The company may decide to refer their original plans directly to the Mayor of London who has the power to make a final decision. Barnet Council has indicated that it would be willing to consider “scaled back” plans for the site.

Meanwhile, Arada were already given permission last June to redevelop Lodge Lane Car Park in North Finchley into 98 apartments and amenities, including a cinema and a bowling alley.



Always in their hearts: Michelle Collins, second left, with fellow guests at the Light Up a Life ceremony.
Photo North London Hospice

Memories of loved ones and their end-of-life care

EastEnders actress Michelle Collins welcomed more than 500 people to North London Hospice for their annual evening ceremony of remembrance, Light Up a Life. Taking place at the end of every November, it is a chance for people to come together in memory of someone they have loved.

Dedications are written and a short service of reflection is held with music and readings. A one-minute silence is observed as everyone holds their candle and the hospice’s giant tree comes to life with hundreds of lights, each one dedicated to someone special.

Michelle said: “It was an honour to host Light Up A Life as an ambassador for the hospice this year. It is a deeply moving and special event that was as personal and meaningful to me as for the huge crowd who all came out to show their support. “We were all there for one another and for everyone at

the hospice who gave such tender care to our loved ones. Seeing the dedicated lights shining in memory is a beautiful way for both our love and hospice care to live on.”

Guest speakers were Bal Sandhu, who bravely recalled her young son Jake’s experience of the hospice, and Carmel Cully, who spoke movingly about the care of her brother Pat and his complex special needs.

Faith leaders Dilwar Hussain and Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg and the hospice’s Spiritual Care Coordinator, Rev Simon Rowbury, gave words of solace,

and music was provided by the London Youth Concert Band and the Covenant City Church Choir.

Almost £30,000 has been raised by the Light Up a Life appeal and event to help deliver support to patients needing end-of-life care.

Hospice chief executive Declan Carroll said: “Our care is free of charge, but it does not come for free. It now costs over £16.3 million a year to run the hospice. Most of our funding comes from donations, this is something that we never take for granted.”

Looking for volunteers?

Are you looking for volunteers to help in your community group or organisation? Our Be Part of It column is published on page 2 every month and gets results. Submissions are free and are included subject to available space. Please submit your listing up to a maximum of 80 words to news@the-archer.co.uk, marking your email ‘Be Part of It’.

Did you know?

The Archer is printed each month on paper made from 100% recycled fibre, mostly retrieved from old newspapers collected by local authorities around the country. It is made here in the UK in King’s Lynn in Norfolk, some 50km from our printers Sharman and Co in Peterborough.



Local News is our Aim

The Archer

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

Can our area cope with 1,470 new homes?

By Ruth Anders

Front page: How The Archer reported the plans in November 2024



Rabbi retires after 38 years of leadership

By Geoffrey Davies

The lighting of the first candle to mark the Jewish festival of Hanukkah in mid-December also marked the end of nearly four decades of leadership at the New North London Synagogue (NNLS) in East End Road, N3.

The event was the last official duty of Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg, who has retired after leading the community since 1987. Planned to be no more than 350 members when founded in 1974, it now numbers more than 3,700 members, a third of whom are under 21.

His retirement was first announced a year ago. "I had always intended to retire at this time when I still had strength," says Rabbi Wittenberg. "I've seen too many rabbis leave it too late." It is a sign of his current strength that he will be running locally using a tracking app on the day of the London Marathon.

Born in Glasgow in 1957 of German-immigrant parents, Rabbi Wittenberg was educated at University College School in

Hampstead and read English at Cambridge University before his religious studies.

While he regards retirement as "unknown territory", he is planning a book on listening and spending more time on his concern for the environment through EcoJudaism, a charity leading community response to the crises in climate and nature. He points out how climate change is a major factor in the movement of refugees.

As well as housing refugees himself, the synagogue has been involved in supporting refugees and contributing locally through FEAST With Us, cooking meals for a homeless shelter in East Finchley, and Homeless Action Barnet.

While retiring from NNLS, Rabbi Wittenberg will continue in his role as the Senior Rabbi of the Masorti Movement, which sits between the United Synagogue, represented by the Chief Rabbi, and the Reform Movement. Masorti Judaism originated after a split within the United Synagogue over the origins of the Torah (law).



Final duties: Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg at the Hanukkah candle-lighting ceremony. Photo Adrian Pope

From The Archer archives...

By Jane Marsh

**10 years ago:
January 2016**

We reported on the success of the fourth East Finchley Christmas Festival in the High Road. Despite inclement weather, everyone pulled together to keep the event going. Many local traders ran stalls outside their shops and many other attractions braved the strong winds. There was also singing, music, a baking competition and dog show. Sadly, despite its popularity, this event no longer takes place.

**15 years ago:
January 2011**

Our local stationer UOE, now also our Post Office, won the 2010 BOSS Industry Award for Retail Excellence. It was deemed to be the best stationery shop in the UK by judges, and manager Elliot Jacobs was delighted with such recognition when he collected the award during a ceremony at the Royal Lancaster Hotel.

**25 years ago:
January 2001**

We published a report from the Friends of Cherry Tree Wood highlighting the state of the Wood in 2000. It showed that flooding on the main open space was not a new phenomenon: "The park dried out last summer and the ducks left their muddy patch on the Quaggy, the old name for the football ground, where once there were watercress beds."

Tell us the news

Have you got a news story or an interesting photo for us? Our readers are our eyes and ears, and we are always pleased to hear what is going on in East Finchley. Tips, ideas and stories, large or small, are very welcome. Please email news@the-archer.co.uk or leave a message on our free phone line 0800 612 0748. Thank you

Car boot sale

The Muswell Hill Indoor Car Boot Sale will be held this month from 10am to 1pm on Saturday 31 January 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 with refreshments available. Also open between 10am and 1pm is the Basement Bookshop below the hall. More information from 020 7263 7638.

Special school opens £1million redesign project

Oak Lodge School in East Finchley celebrated a major milestone last month with the official opening of its newly refurbished Walker Building following a £1million project funded by Barnet Council.

The building was named in honour of Lynda Walker, the school's previous headteacher and current CEO, whose leadership steered Oak Lodge School through three consecutive outstanding Ofsted inspections.

Current headteacher Charlotte Charlesworth said the refurbishment demonstrated a



Class facilities: One of the new rooms in the refurbished Oak Lodge School building. Photo Mike Coles



Lynda Walker speaks at the opening ceremony. Photo Mike Coles

shared commitment to providing the highest quality educational environment for students with highly complex needs.

The Walker Building now features two specialist classrooms, a dedicated swing room, and a calming sensory integration space, specifically designed to support students with complex needs. The building also includes upgraded art and music rooms benefiting the entire school community.

In a remarkable feat of project management, the entire refurbishment was completed in just six weeks over the summer holidays, ensuring students returned to enhanced learning spaces without disruption. The

project was led by Alison Dawes and Miladin Stevanovic from the local authority, working in close partnership with Kim Miller, the school's Director of SEND and Inclusion. The building work was completed by Gary Cheek and the team at GRC Maintenance.

Oak Lodge School's leadership team expressed profound gratitude for the local authority's investment. Charlotte Charlesworth said: "The official opening ceremony welcomed members of the local community to celebrate this exciting new chapter in the school's ongoing mission to provide outstanding education for all its students."

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Citizens Advice warns of service closures due to funding shortfall

By David Melsome

Citizens Advice Barnet has warned that if it does not receive adequate funding over the next few months, vital advice services for residents in the borough will have to close or be drastically cut.

Funding shortfalls for the charity will affect immigration, employment and welfare benefits casework, all of which serve as a lifeline for many residents in the borough.

Daniel Bamford, CEO of Citizens Advice Barnet, said: "This is a very difficult time for the advice sector as traditional funders face dwindling endowments, competing pressures and more demands. We are also seeing an ever-growing need for our advice but with ever more limited means to solve people's problems.

"In that context we will need to close some projects where replacement funding has not been found despite our best efforts. We have made dozens of applications to replace lost funding but success, in the challenging environment I have described, remains difficult."

Citizens Advice Barnet effectively operates as the law centre in Barnet following the closure of Barnet Law Service in 2014. After its closure, the charity took on some of its staff and functions. This includes free end-to-end casework on welfare benefits, immigration at the highest level: Immigration

Advice Authority (IAA) level 3, and employment rights.

There is no other free provision in the borough for such complex, in-depth casework. The charity has been fully funding employment casework and part-funding immigration casework from its own reserves since funding came to an end last summer, but it cannot continue doing so beyond March 2026.

This means that Citizens Advice Barnet's employment litigation project, which enables workers to uphold their employment rights in cases such as unfair dismissal and discrimination, will close on 1 April. Immigration casework will be reduced from 31 March. Funding for welfare benefits casework also ends this month.

Daniel Bamford added: "There is still very high demand for these services despite the cuts that we are being forced to make and we expect that demand to continue to rise in 2026."

He appealed for anyone who can help fund any of these vital services to contact Citizens Advice Barnet at fundraising@barnetcab.org.uk.



In harmony: Music makers at the Dovetail DaCapo concert. Photo Finn Paul Photography

Music making for asylum seekers and refugees

By Gail Norcliffe

East Finchley residents Helen Halpern and Sarah Manson have been instrumental in driving forward an exciting new project to provide free access to music making for asylum seekers and refugees.

Dovetail DaCapo brings together two charities: the Dovetail Orchestra in Bristol for refugees and asylum seekers, and the DaCapo Music Foundation, a music school based at the Wren Academy in North Finchley.

As a teacher of English to refugees and asylum seekers, Helen was aware that weekends can be a particularly difficult time for them. Dovetail DaCapo's founding principle was a means to improve participants' mental health by alleviating isolation, boredom and social exclusion.

Alongside fellow committee members, Jane Cutler and Michelle Groves, Helen and Sarah worked with others to initiate and implement the project. Funding has come from a range of sources, including Barnet Council, some small trusts and the National Lottery. Local councillor Anne Clarke and MP Sarah Sackman have also been very supportive. Saturday afternoons at Dovetail DaCapo are spent making music with a range of instruments from around the world. Everyone is welcome, whether or not they have prior musical knowledge or are skilled musicians. DaCapo music teachers Will Dollard, Alice Purton, Sally Russell and Liz Menezes are

crucial in guiding the music, helped by the partnership with Bristol's Dovetail Orchestra and its organisers. Free refreshments are offered at the end of sessions, shared food helping to cultivate the sense of belonging. Forty two people of numerous nationalities have attended to date and 19 are now regular participants. Feedback is encouraging: "I and my friends enjoyed the groups. Thank you for your love towards us always."

The project's 12-week pilot stage ended on 5 December, culminating in a well-attended concert at the Wren Academy, celebrating the musical diversity of participants.

Concert highlights included the 'dovetailing' of an Iranian folk song with a South African lullaby, and a similar blending of Liberian folk and Kenyan pop songs. A former music teacher from Iran played solo pieces on a tar and setar, a stringed instrument used in traditional Persian music. "Ya Yammah", a song from Iraq, was also a solo performance, and audience members movingly joined in with the chorus.

Given the pilot stage's success, Dovetail DaCapo will be continuing in January, with all involved contributing to building a valuable musical community.

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- Call **101** for non-emergencies, if your property has been stolen or damaged, you wish to report drug dealing or a minor traffic accident, and for general police enquiries
- Report crime to your local Safer Neighbourhood Team by email: eastfinchley.snt@met.police.uk, gardensuburb.snt@met.police.uk or fortisgreen.snt@met.police.uk

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French clubs for adults in Muswell Hill

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Smartphones, your children and you



Nova Eden would like to see smartphones and social media phased out for children. Photo Lauren Baskent

“Children with problematic smartphone usage are twice as likely to experience anxiety.”

Q. Many parents are aware of the dangers of these highly addictive devices, yet they still struggle to reduce their children’s screen time or remove smartphones altogether. What advice can you offer to parents who want to make a change but are worried about conflict, resistance or feeling too late to intervene?

A. I have had pushback from my own children. I always try to be very honest when I am working with other families. Now that we are better informed, we have to have the confidence to know that just because everyone else has something doesn’t mean it is the best thing for our child. We have to speak openly with our children, we have to have difficult conversations and we have to know within ourselves that one day our children will thank us for having firmer boundaries with them. If you give children the opportunity to choose whether they want a screen or do something else, of course they want to be on a screen. Once we take that away, or reduce the amount of time, they will find other things to do with their time.

Eco warriors start early

Green-minded pupils at Holy Trinity Primary School in Eagans Close, N2, have raised money for the Just One Tree charity for the third year in a row. Every pound raised funds the planting of a tree somewhere in the world.

The school’s Eco Warriors group are also making a difference closer to home, with the five fruit trees planted in the school grounds last year still standing strong.

They are planning a Climate for Justice art project and an Electricity Tree project to save energy.



Holy Trinity pupils during their special Tree Day

The Archer on the move

TheArcher’s website is now easier to use on your mobile phone. Our online pages have been redesigned to make it quicker to find important information like contact details and deadlines, and simpler to read

our latest edition or search and browse past editions of the newspaper in our archive stretching back to 1993.

So now you really can take The Archer with you wherever you go. Bookmark our website at www.the-archer.co.uk

Nova Eden is a children’s mental health expert and the founder of One Collective Power, an organisation dedicated to raising awareness about the addictive nature of modern technology. She spearheaded Barnet’s drive to be the first borough in the UK to go smartphone-free in their schools. She talks to Lauren Baskent about how families can create healthier digital habits.

Q: Was there a moment that convinced you children need protection from smartphones?

A: As a parent trying to navigate parenting in the digital age with my own children, it really made me aware of how difficult it is. We now have research to show the damage that is being done to young children. I kept having the same conversation with all my friends about how difficult it was navigating screen time, smartphones and social media. I realised all parents were struggling with the same issues.

Q. What research do you feel most strongly supports your position?

A. The NHS data statistic I often quote is that outdoor childhood accidents have reduced by 73% in the past decade and self-harm incidents in young children have increased by 97%. Children are no longer pursuing the healthy activities that they need for brain development. They are not outside as much as they used to be. They are not socialising face to face the way they used to. Instead, they are spending hours and hours alone with their devices. Children with problematic smartphone usage are twice as likely to experience anxiety and three times as likely to experience depression compared to most children without problematic smartphone use.

Q. What misconceptions do you think people have about the smartphone-free movement?

A. People sometimes feel like it’s too late. We can still work and grow as parents every day and we can implement boundaries. There are ways to have healthier digital habits.

Q. How do you respond to parents who say their child needs a phone for safety?

A. I would say that a brick phone is much safer than a smartphone. First of all, they don’t have the danger of the internet in a child’s pocket. A child is a target if they are carrying around a very expensive device. Giving a child access to the internet means that the whole world can access your child. A brick phone allows calls and messages in case of an emergency.

Q. Where do you want to see this movement in five to ten years?

A. I would like to see real legislation implemented by the Government. It should be a tobacco-style regulatory framework, where we start phasing out smartphones and social media for children. There should be a minimum age with clear health warnings and laws against addictive design.



Headteacher wins gold for innovation

By Anna Hindmarsh

Archer Academy headteacher Lucy Harrison has received the Pearson Headteacher of the Year Gold Award in recognition of her innovative leadership at the East Finchley secondary school and her dedication to the community.

Referred to as the ‘Oscars’ of teaching, the Pearson awards recognise teachers who have a passion for supporting their student and staff communities.

At the Archer Academy, Ms Harrison has pioneered several transformative decisions. She said it is “very special” to be credited for decisions such as the smartphone ban and restructuring the school day to optimise productivity.

Ten years ago, Ms Harrison introduced a policy to ban smartphones on campus. At a time when social media and WhatsApp were relatively new, the move sparked debate.

Ms Harrison said: “It’s been fascinating how much focus there has been on the smartphone ban... I think that

winning the award has further spotlighted the importance of young people not having smartphones in school.” The decision was a response to emerging problems, such as filming in class and sharing photos taken in school online. She noticed that “[having phones] was really distracting from school and from the friendships that the young people had with each other.”

Now, Archer students are in a “protected bubble”, said Ms Harrison, “we don’t realise what challenges [having a smartphone] can cause for young people in school, other than my experience of talking to other headteachers, where they say at lunchtime nobody speaks to anybody, because they’re all

on their phones.”

Having been at the school since before its opening in 2013, Ms Harrison was initially drawn to its values and wanted to contribute to the community where she lived.

The rewards of being part of a new school’s journey have kept her at the Archer Academy ever since. She said: “I don’t think there are many points in your career as a teacher that you get the chance to join something from the beginning, and that was exciting. I will always see it as my greatest privilege.”

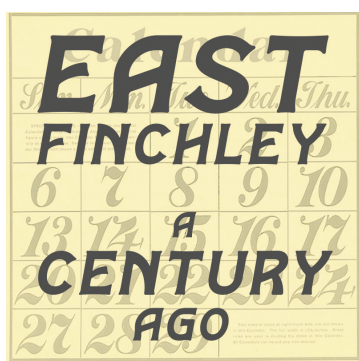
Her leadership philosophy revolves around a belief in “joy” and now, with this prestigious award, Ms Harrison hopes to continue to innovate in the education sector.



Award winner: Archer Academy headteacher Lucy Harrison

Highway piracy and passenger perils in early days for buses

By Frank Edwards



This is some of the news from East Finchley, 100 years ago, as revealed in newspaper archives.

It’s all buses this month. In the 1920s, rapidly expanding bus services were gradually displacing older tram networks. The General Omnibus Company (GOC) provided most of the timetabled services in London. However, other operators, often with just a few vehicles, also jostled for fares. These companies were sometimes unscrupulous in pursuit of business, often clashing with each other and the GOC. The press dubbed them pirates.

Hold on tight

Travelling on a pirate bus in East Finchley 100 years ago was risky. One bus, motoring at top speed, burst into flames in the High Road. “Fiery tongues caused by ignited petrol enveloped the engine and licked around the bonnet,” reported a lyrical Finchley Press. The driver turned off the petrol (good idea), halted the bus and extinguished the fire.

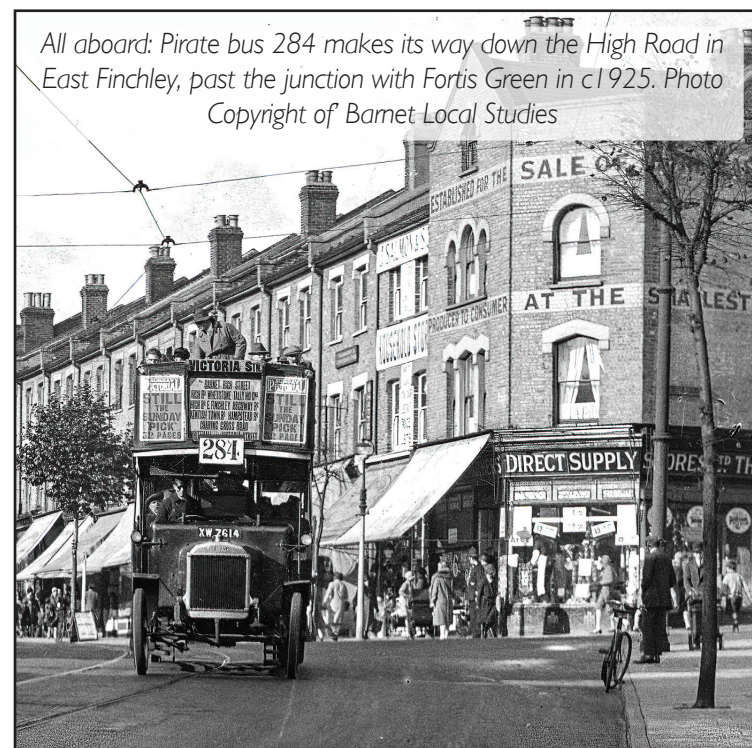
A second, gathering speed downhill from Church Lane towards Islington and St Pancras Cemetery, lost its steering. Fortunately, the brakes still worked and the driver brought it to a standstill before any collision occurred.

Other pirate buses in East Finchley were not so lucky. One struck a dairy van. The van’s horse bolted, leaving a 100-yard milky trail. A second ran into a GOC bus, ripping off its side. A third, admittedly in foggy and icy weather, skidded a full circle and hit a lorry. As the shaken passengers drew breath, a GOC bus ploughed into the pirate from behind and a second lorry, advancing from the opposite direction, did a bit more damage at the front.

Typical really, you wait ages for a bus story, then several come along at once. And, given the risk of fire, collision and rivalrous drivers that they reveal, you might think that residents, 100 years ago, were wary of bus travel. But a correspondent to the Finchley Press, picking up on complaints that a bus failed to stop in East Finchley during a snowstorm, rose to its defence.

Bus travel is much better than tram travel, they claimed. It’s more reliable and passengers alight at the kerb rather than in the middle of the road. Let us all patronise buses, the correspondent concluded, and be thankful they are here.

Perhaps try to remember that when next waiting for a 263.



All aboard: Pirate bus 284 makes its way down the High Road in East Finchley, past the junction with Fortis Green in c1925. Photo Copyright of Barnet Local Studies

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Simple tributes to lives cut short

By Sebastian Hall

The issue of how to commemorate the victims of the Holocaust has long been central to European nations' attempts to come to terms with that terrible inheritance. The prominent Holocaust memorials of Berlin, Vienna, and many others, force passers-by to gaze upon symbolic reminders of the murder of millions of Jews.



Embedded: Hermine's Stolperstein in the pavement

The Stolperstein, by contrast, is a far less conspicuous but no less profound attempt to address this. Small golden squares on the pavements of Europe's great cities bear the names of those Jewish residents who

were deported from those streets and killed. The simplicity of the squares reflects the ordinary lives of integrated European Jews before the Shoah. It was such a life that

Make friends with a literary classic

Ulysses by James Joyce has the reputation of being one of the most challenging novels ever written... but here in East Finchley there is an expert reading group on hand to help.

Local resident Russell Raphael created North London Ulysses in 2019, since when he has been publicly reading and explaining the novel in pubs around East Finchley and guiding eager readers through its pages.

Russell says he loves reading it out loud and to an audience. He enjoys the noise it makes, the accents, the commotion, the shock at its naughty bits, the hilarity of its funny bits and the pin-dropping silence at its tender parts.



Reading circle: Russell Raphael

It takes around 40 weekly readings to finish and then he starts again with another group of eager listeners who invariably add a new twist to his own understanding. Russell calls it a vibrant symbiotic dynamic with no prior knowledge required.

The next full reading will start on 19 January at 8pm in The Clissold Arms, 105 Fortis Green, N2. It will then be each Monday evening through the year, finishing in late November 2026. The readings are complimented by weekly videos offering a taste of the reading and full explanatory analysis, so those who can't make the pub can enjoy the experience remotely.

The pub readings are free, but it is of course polite to support the venue. There is a modest charge for the analytical videos. Russell is the author of two Ulysses-related books. An Understanding of Ulysses and The Fine Trousers of Almidano Artifoni. If interested in joining the next reading, email russell@northlondonulysses.org.



Tribute to a life: Sebastian Hall's family gather in Vienna in memory of his great-great-great grandmother Hermine Goldstein

brought nearly 50 members of my family to Vienna late last year to commemorate our ancestor, my great-great-great grandmother Hermine Goldstein.

Having fled Vienna for Yugoslavia, Hermine was deported by Nazi collaborationists in July 1942 and murdered in a concentration camp in Croatia. Two of her five children spent time in concentration camps, with one being killed in Auschwitz and the other, my ancestor, surviving Bergen Belsen.

While the Stolperstein conveys a simple devastation – that of a normal life destroyed, anonymously among the millions – it is worth taking heed of a certain ambivalence in our own experience in this commemoration: the extraordinary showing of our family;

the celebratory dinner the night before; the music composed for the occasion; the photos of a cheerful, sprawling family.

A weekend based on commemorating death was also one of celebrating the life of a fundamentally European woman: born in Slovakia, grew up and married in Serbia, raised a family in Bulgaria, retired in Vienna. In the elegant Viennese

apartment metres above street level in which she once lived I had a palpable sense of a woman who lived as well as one who tragically died.

If the Holocaust remains incomprehensible in its destructiveness, the Stolperstein now stands on Böcklinstrasse in Vienna's second district as a tangible, permanent tribute to the life that was Hermine's.



Ancestors: Sebastian Hall

Much-loved youth leader: June James, 1936–2025

June James, a lifetime resident of East Finchley, died peacefully aged 89 on 30 October 2025. Spending her whole life in the same house in Leicester Road, June was a familiar figure to many in N2.

Throughout her life she was a leading light in the Methodist Church on the High Road, teaching in the Junior Church and leading the Girl Guides and the Boys' Brigade.

Through her youth work, she came into contact with a large number of young people, many of whom remained in touch with her. Some may remember her at the head of the Boys' Brigade Band marching down the High Road. June was a great supporter of many local groups, including

the Finchley Society and the National Trust, and could always be seen on the Methodist Church's stand at the East Finchley Festival.

A huge Arsenal fan, she was proud of telling everybody that she had attended or watched every match since she was a teenager.

There will be a Service of Thanksgiving for her life on Friday 16 January 2026 at 2pm at East Finchley Methodist Church, 197 High Road, N2 8AJ. All are welcome.



Leading light: June James

Parking rules are 'isolating' for residents of care home

By Lynn Winton

Hammerson House, the residential care home on The Bishops Avenue, N2, is appealing to Barnet Council to reverse or modify its new all-day parking restrictions, which they say have caused misery for family members, visitors and volunteers and increased isolation for its residents.



Double yellows: Parking on The Bishops Avenue close to Hammerson House is now severely restricted. Photo Mike Coles

The road outside the home used to be open parking all day but since the autumn there has been a yellow line forbidding parking from 8am to 6.30pm Monday to Friday and 8am to 1pm on Saturday. The home has some on-site parking but not sufficient for all visitors.

One family member told us: "We can't park when we go to visit our ageing, dying mum. It's terrible enough, but the new parking ban makes visiting so much harder than it should be."

A staff member explained: "Volunteers and relatives are struggling to park anywhere near Hammerson House. Many of our visitors are older themselves. This is causing distress for residents and practical problems for staff and emergency access."

The 116-bed care home is urging the council to reconsider its approach and implement a more balanced solution, such as limited-time parking, resident permits, or partial-day restrictions, that ensures safety without cutting off vital access for care home residents and their families.

Chief Executive Jenny Pattinson said: "Our residents' well-being depends on connection with their families, volunteers, and the local community. These restrictions have unintentionally isolated some of the most vulnerable people in our society. We are appealing to the council and local MP to work with us urgently to find a compassionate, practical solution."

MP Sarah Sackman is supporting their appeal and told TheArcher: "I have been speaking with Transport for London about local public transport provision and looking into concerns around parking availability with Barnet Council. We should make caring for the elderly as smooth as possible."

As we went to press, Barnet Council acknowledged there may now be "different parking pressures in the area" and confirmed that they would be reviewing the parking arrangements and putting forward new proposals for residents and business owners to comment on.



Hold fire: Emily Cathrine Haldane, right, and fellow cast member on stage during their tour

Director takes interactive theatre to the classroom

Primary school pupils across Barnet were invited to step directly into a story, shaping its twists, discoveries and big decisions, through an interactive theatre production called *Lose the Path, Find Your Way*.

The show, created and performed by Cracking Slate, toured classrooms across the borough in October as part of a wider national tour that also visited Southwark, Hampshire, Lincoln and Luton.

East Finchley resident Emily Cathrine Haldane, a community arts facilitator, directed the production and toured in it as a performer. For this project, she collaborated with a creative team of more than ten artists, including a puppetry designer, composer, movement director, creative producer and stage manager.

Designed for ages eight to 11, *Lose the Path, Find Your Way* blended physical theatre, puppetry, cinematic music and improvised storytelling. At key moments in the performance, children in the audience collectively voted on what the characters should do next, influencing relationships, consequences and outcomes. No two performances were ever the same.

Across its tour, the piece reached 974 young people. In one school, a student reflected: "It's hard to make choices, but after watching the show I can see how important it is to trust your gut." For Emily, this is the purpose of the work: creating space where children's voices genuinely matter. "Young people already hold insight, creativity and empathy. When we invite them to shape the story, they reveal it," she said. More information, images and a short trailer can be found at: <https://crackingslate.com>

RICKY SAVAGE... THE VOICE OF IRRESPONSIBILITY

Generation Games

How long's a generation? In the weird world of rock and roll it's about seven years. You know, just long enough to get through your teens and be headbutted by adult reality. And that's why rock'n'roll is always rebooting itself.

Let's start with Elvis and 1956. All sneer, snarl and gyrating hips, a piece of pure white trash sounding black and upsetting Middle America. OK, so they shoved him in the army and turned him into a cabaret act, but the job was done.

Next stop 1963 and the return of the guitar bands as four lads from Liverpool ripped up the rule book. They had style and cool Britannia ran riot across the mid-sixties. And yes, by about 1969 they were splitting up and it was time for something new.

This time it wasn't just music it was a lifestyle and that meant posing. The first half of the 1970s was the most pretentious time ever. The sound got louder, the solos got longer and people were so hung up on being cool that they became boring. Rock band Yes, the high priests of pomposity, produced a double album of four songs based on some eastern poem that was designed for stoned hippies to get stoned to.

Pink Floyd were no better, but more successful and even the hardest rock bands lost the plot. Led Zeppelin went flabby as time went on. Less Rock'n'Roll and more Stairlifts to Heaven, complete with 20-minute guitar solos and the inevitable half-hour drum solo. Bored? Yes, I was, I needed the weird and not Bohemian Rhapsody.

I wasn't the only one, because 1976 was time for a change. In New York, the Ramones and Blondie were getting down and trashy and over here Dr Feelgood were doing the same. All it needed was something to really annoy the parents and the hippies and thank heaven it arrived.

The Sex Pistols weren't a great band, but they were a great idea. They said 'sod off' and played loud and nasty. The Damned appeared at the same time and The Clash weren't far behind. Within a year hair was shorter, flares were banned and speed had taken over from dope and acid. The Pistols had even sworn on prime time TV and if you were 16 music was exciting again. Generation games? You bet, living fast and heading for burn out like everyone before them, but that's teenage rock'n'roll dreams for you.



Review: Pippin

Upstairs at the Gatehouse, Highgate Village

By Jessica Holt

This hugely entertaining production of a 1972 Tony Award-winning show has a cast of talented singers, acrobats and musicians who work beautifully as an ensemble with superb support from all the design elements, especially lighting and costume.

As with many musicals, the plot plays a subservient role – and in this case, there is a rather ludicrous plotline involving the young prince Pippin, played by Lewis Edgar, being the rebellious son of Charlemagne who eventually kills his father and takes on his role as king.

This thankfully doesn't overshadow the sharp script and some truly magical moments. One such is in the first half when Pippin's grandmother, played by Clare Brice, delights the audience with the song No Time at All, a humorous solo giving Pippin advice concerning his quest to find some meaning in his life.

Musicals are at their best when the song reflects perfectly the action on stage. Emily Friberg's beautiful singing as The Leading Player links the many scenarios together and she plays a stereotypical temptress luring Pippin away from what makes life meaningful, leading him to greater disappointments.

The choreography by Amanda Noar, also the director, is outstanding, and it was delightful to see the tributes made to classic musicals such



In search of meaning: The cast of Pippin at Upstairs at the Gatehouse

as Cabaret and Chicago, both in the dance and the music that accompanied it.

Broadway legend Bob Fosse directed and choreographed the original New York production then called Pippin Pippin. He was also responsible for moving the musical's structure away from melodrama to the idea of a troupe of players personifying devilish and angelic attributes to challenge and confuse Pippin.

The first half is too long and the Charlemagne element, in my view, needs adapting to a different father-and-son scenario. But this is a brilliant cast, faultlessly directed, with a brilliant design team whose talent is evident throughout the show. It all adds up to a great night out.

Pippin runs at Upstairs at the Gatehouse, Highgate Village, until Sunday 11 January.

Shadowlands was my father's favourite film

By Ruth Anders

Renowned actor and director Richard Attenborough made the film Shadowlands, about the relationship between the writer C S Lewis and his American wife Joy Davidman, in 1993. Starring Anthony Hopkins and Debra Winger, it moved many of the audience to tears when the Phoenix Cinema showed it at the end of November.

However, we were all very quickly cheered by the late director's son, the distinguished theatre director Michael Attenborough CBE, who was interviewed by Phoenix Cinema Trust board member Ed Sayers. Michael was an interviewer's dream, darting off unprompted on a raft of stories about the film, its genius casting, its music by composer George Fenton and the way his father directed it.

Michael told us: "Shadowlands was my dad's favourite film, even more so than Gandhi, and it was very unlike most of those he directed. Ben Kingsley told me that dad's greatest quality as an 'actors' director' was the faith and trust he placed in his actors. Tony Hopkins made five films with dad and always felt hugely supported by him." We heard about the sensitive filming of the final scene in which Lewis and Joy's orphaned son weep together in the attic, and how, knowing he couldn't ask the actors to repeat it, Michael's father used three



Close bond: Michael with his late father Richard Attenborough



Michael Attenborough, left, at the Phoenix with interview Ed Sayers. Photo Mike Coles

cameras to cover it all. Richard Attenborough was disappointed that Hopkins failed to be awarded an Oscar for Shadowlands, having to wait until The Remains of the Day a little later to do so.

Michael also stressed the importance of seeing movies on the big screen. "It's a totally different experience," he said, adding: "Imaginative marketing is important, but there's nothing like word of mouth to encourage people to go to the cinema."

Let's hope this word of mouth can bring more north Londoners to the Phoenix, especially younger audience members. The cinema's unique independence allows it to plan its own programming, interviews and events. As a non-profit charity, the Phoenix needs your support, so do keep buying tickets, teas and memberships! For full programme information, visit www.phoenixcinema.co.uk

What's on at the Phoenix in January

By Zalan Pall, general manager

Awards galore! The strongest line-up we had in years, acclaimed films, classics, live theatre, opera and plus many more await you at the Phoenix Cinema in January.

In Marty Supreme, from Friday 2 January, Timothée Chalamet is a young man with a dream no one respects, who goes to hell and back in pursuit of greatness.

Deftly exploring the uneasy tension between artistic expression and personal connection, Sentimental Value, also from Friday 2 January, is a bracingly mature work from writer-director Joachim Trier that's marvellously acted across the board.

Breaking hearts and mending them in one fell swoop, Hamnet, from Friday 9 January, speculates on the inspiration behind Shakespeare's masterpiece with palpable emotional force thanks to Jessie Buckley and Paul Mescal's astonishing performances.

H is for Hawk, from Friday 23 January, follows Helen (Claire Foy), who, after the sudden death of her father (Brendan Gleeson), loses herself in the memories of their time birding and exploring the natural world together and turns to the ancient art of falconry, training a wild goshawk named Mabel to navigate her profound loss. Seamlessly recreating the newwave classics Breathless, one of cinema's most



groundbreaking productions, comedy drama Nouvelle Vague, from Friday 30 January, doesn't reinvent the medium the way its subjects did, but it pays tribute to their accomplishment with infectious admiration.

For lovers of the screen arts, we will have Met Opera's I Puritani on Saturday 10 January, RBO's La Traviata on Wednesday 14 January, and NT Live's The Fifth Step on Monday 19 January and Hamlet on Thursday 22 January.

We also carry on showing classic films this month with Woody Allen's Manhattan on Sunday 18 January, A Streetcar Named Desire on Sunday 25 January and the aforementioned Breathless on Sunday 1 February. For details on times and to book, go to www.phoenixcinema.co.uk or call in at our box office.



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Letters



Clutter? Signs in Edmunds Walk. Photos Malcolm Goldstein



Signs clutter

Dear Editor

Please look carefully at these two photos. After several days of work and disturbance these signs indicating speed limits for traffic in Deansway and Edmunds Walk, N2, suddenly appeared.

Note that for Edmunds Walk, a cul-de-sac ending in a footpath to East Finchley station, the speed limit is higher than that for Deansway and indeed other local roads. Aside from being absurd and nonsensical the signs are a needless addition to street clutter.

Perhaps a more useful sign could have been to inform pedestrians not to walk in the middle of Edmunds Walk instead of on the pavement both for their own safety and for that of motorists. May we know who authorised the erection of these signs which many of us in Edmunds Walk believe should be removed completely?

**Malcolm Goldstein,
Edmunds Walk, N2**

Joyful noise

Dear Editor

Having been brought up in a traditional Jewish household, carols were not part of my culture. As they were 'forbidden fruit', they were all the more appealing.

I love carols and all the corny Christmas songs, and so when I got a message on our street WhatsApp in December that Martin School was holding a carol concert outside Budgens, I headed up there to listen to and join in all the Christmas favourites.

I was delighted to see a group of enthusiastic children with their song sheets backed

up by their teachers, all facing a group of proud, beaming parents with various siblings wandering around. It was a joyous occasion.

The children sang a range of carols and Christmas songs with great enthusiasm. In between songs, a bucket was passed round to collect money for the Finchley Foodbank. More than £100 was collected for this good cause. As the song goes: "It's the most wonderful time of the year."

**Maxine Klein,
Address Supplied**



Joyful: Carols in the High Road. Photo Maxine Klein

**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.

Parking headache

Dear Editor

For Barnet residents needing to apply for or renew parking permits, be warned that this has been outsourced to a company called MiPermit. This is not an easy way to get your permit, as they make it almost impossible, and of course it has to be done online.

My computer skills are reasonable, my son's are better, but even with years of experience it took four attempts before the permit was granted, and after I had received the permit and receipt, I received another email today saying I needed to renew it. Neighbours have found similar problems.

The third application was rejected as the driving licence on the system was a previous one: why was this not spotted on the first two applications? I phoned their office at one stage and said I could not scan documents. The lady said she could not either, but all the applicants are expected to.

Believe it or not, MiPermit took payments for every attempt I made to apply. I found that there were four payments taken from my credit card instead of just the one for the successful application. My neighbour also had to retrieve multiple payments, which took some time.

Barnet Council should be aware of the inconvenience of the system, and residents should know that they might have to allow weeks of fruitless and frustrating time when they need their permits.

**Valerie Jablon,
Address Supplied**

Wheelchair access

Dear Editor

When will businesses start caring about patrons who use wheelchairs? It's a sad state of affairs when most cafés, pharmacies, dry cleaners and all charity shops in East Finchley are inaccessible to wheelchair users.

I would love to shop locally on the High Road but I cannot. I have spoken to many members of staff about decluttering their aisles. Lots of goodies, but I often avoid stores because they are far too narrow.

People complain about the big corporate companies taking over the High Road, but sadly, those are the only shops that have wheelchair access!

**Mischa Laurén
Address Supplied**

Ask Joy: Mum and Dad put me under pressure

Here at The Archer, we have introduced an advice column to give help and support. Joy is a trained counsellor and an East Finchley resident, and she can help you tackle issues that matter now.



It's always good to talk, so don't hesitate to reach out.

Email Joy at askjoyatthearcher@gmail.com.

Dear Joy,

I've recently started in Year 12. I used to enjoy school, but my parents are constantly putting pressure on me to do well. I got As and A*s in my GCSEs and thought that they'd stop pushing so hard, but it's actually made things worse.

They chose my A level subjects and I agreed because I was tired of arguing about everything. Now I'm thinking about where to go to uni and they're pushing again.

I'm under pressure at school and at home. It's just too much. I want to do what I want to do, but I can't talk to my parents without getting into a row. How can I get them to see that it's just so unfair that it's my life, but I don't get to choose? XY

Dear XY,

Starting in Year 12 is stressful. There are lots of change and you're making the leap from GCSEs to A Levels too, so adding parental pressure into the mix isn't helpful. I can understand that they want you to do well – most parents do – but it does feel unfair for them to make decisions about your future without considering what you want. You said that you allowed your parents to choose your A Levels to keep the peace, but you're older now and if you are going to go to university, it feels important that you choose a subject you're passionate about. If you want your parents to take you seriously, a well-thought-out plan is essential. Do your research thoroughly and be prepared to answer their questions.

Explain what you want to do and why, as well as which unis you're interested in.

Having this conversation at the right time is also important.

Let them know that you'd like to have a chat about your future and fix a time that works for everyone. It may take more than one conversation to get your parents onside, so be prepared to keep talking. By showing them that you're serious about next steps, they will hopefully reflect on what you've said and get behind your decision.

Helpful resources:

<https://kidshealth.org/> - this is a great website for advice about lots of things. In the search bar, type the words Talking to Your Parents or Other Adults.

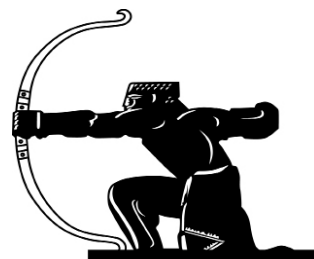


Classy bridge

Dear Editor

I think the scheme used on the Photoshopped image in the paper (The Archer, December 2026) looks appropriate and very classy. If you do manage to get a meeting with Transport for London you may wish to ask them when we might expect some refurbishment of the station; there are some pretty dilapidated areas.

**Ian Elliott,
Address Supplied**



Dynamic debate with former don of Downing Street

Former Downing Street communications director and now The Rest is Politics podcaster Alastair Campbell ran a thought-provoking session on global challenges with students in years 9-11 at Archer Academy in East Finchley last term.

Speaking to a full hall, he urged students to think independently, engage with the issues that matter to them, and build confidence in debating and public speaking. His message was that strong, informed opinions are essential for the next generation of leaders.

During the visit, students took part in a dynamic debate on international policy, discussing topics such

as proposed restrictions on young people's social media use and the recent decision to lower the UK voting age to 16.

The school said their contributions were thoughtful, articulate, and demonstrated a deep interest in political engagement. The event concluded with an energetic Q&A session, where students questioned Mr Campbell on a wide range of topics.



Chief communicator: Alastair Campbell captures a selfie with students at Archer Academy. Photo Archer Academy

Beauty emerges from beneath

By Diana Cormack

In the autumn a beautiful fungus, pictured next to a 50p coin, appeared on a tree stump in Cherry Tree Wood, situated close to the former site of the pavilion which was demolished several years ago.



Striking: Chicken in the Wood



Shapely: Honey fungus

Naturalist Linda Dolata told us that this brightly coloured fungus is a species that is present throughout the year as a network of microscopic hyphae, tiny 'threads' which grow throughout the stump forming a mycelium.

The growing tips of the hyphae secrete digestive enzymes onto the substrate and then absorb the digested soluble products. But the yellow mass that we see is the fruiting body of the fungus and is there to produce and release spores. This one is likely to be Chicken of the Woods. When a tree is dead, a whole range of fungi go to work, digesting specific structures (sugars, cellulose, lignin) and thus decaying the wood. These days, it is well known that the soil in an ancient woodland is full of mycorrhizal fungi, many of which are essential for the healthy germination and growth of the trees therein.

Reader Mary Poulter sent us a photo of another beautiful example from Cherry Tree Wood, identified as a honey fungus (*Armillaria mellea*). Now we are in winter many of these fruiting bodies will have faded away but remember the organism is always just below the surface getting ready to show itself again.

Tell us the news

Have you got a news story or an interesting photo for us? Our readers are our eyes and ears, and we are always pleased to hear what is going on in East Finchley. Tips, ideas and stories, large or small, are very welcome. Please email news@the-archer.co.uk or leave a message on our free phone line 0800 612 0748. Thank you

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