



Garage Sale

By John Dearing

There used to be a fine selection of petrol stations in East Finchley, but one by one they have closed and become subject to the inevitable re-development. There are now arguably only two left (in the Great North Road and the High Road), plus one on Lyttleton Road on the border with Hampstead Garden Suburb.

The picture left shows, clockwise from top left, former garages in East Finchley: opposite the library, on the High Road between Hertford Road and Bedford Road, two in Fortis Green, and one on the Great North Road.

The Eruv - nearly there?

After a long and sometimes bitter battle the proposal to set up an eruv is about to be realised. The plans have been finalised, the contractors briefed and all that is left to do is to put up the poles marking the boundary.

The United Synagogue claims that it will benefit thousands of observant Jews who are currently not allowed to carry out numerous tasks including carrying keys and pushing prams or wheelchairs on the Sabbath if they are not within an eruv. However, some opponents fear that the eruv could be divisive and make the area a target for racist violence. Others have objected to the way that the poles and wires will form gateways into their neighbourhoods and some are puzzled as to why followers of a religion that imposes strict restrictions on its adherents should go to such lengths to find loopholes.

Fears for local harmony

A number of groups have been actively involved in objecting to the eruv. They include the Barnet Eruv Objectors Group, who state that they believe that people should try to live together and that the eruv will destroy local harmony. The Forum Against Intrusive Eruvs and the Eruv Boundary Opponents have also campaigned against the eruv. The United Synagogue

eruv committee claims that it will benefit 10,000 people who observe the Sabbath, pointing out that many major cities including Washington, Sydney and Venice have successful eruvs. The objectors claim that only 600 people actually observe the strict Sabbath restrictions and that the other eruvs do not use poles and wires to mark their boundaries.

Under the plans approved by Barnet Council in 1998 most of the 11 mile boundary will be marked by the M1, A1 and the Northern Line. The problem is that to maintain a continuous boundary so that the eruv can be considered a private domain under Jewish law, 84 poles, each 30 foot high and connected by 1,000 metres of fishing line will need to be erected.

The latest hurdle for the eruv concerns the colour of the poles. Although the United Synagogue has suggested painting them sage green, the objectors have discovered that the Council is putting this out to consultation and has taken this opportunity to raise further objections and try to delay the scheme.

The Future for Council Tenants?

By John Dearing

Barnet Council has launched a consultation with council tenants and leaseholders by distributing a leaflet entitled "The future for Barnet's homes".

The Government has set a target to bring all council homes up to a 'Decent Standard' (meaning modern kitchens, bathrooms, and heating systems) by 2010, but the Council does not have enough money to achieve this. There are 8000 homes not in Barnet's regeneration schemes including many in East Finchley, (but not its main estates such as Strawberry Vale or The Grange). The leaflet (also available on Barnet Council's web site) describes two possible options for these homes:

* Large Scale Voluntary Transfer where ownership of part or all of the home would be transferred to a housing association. Tenancies would change from being "secured" to "assured".

* Arms Length Management Organisations where ownership remains with the council, but management is vested in a board made up of council representatives, tenants, leaseholders and "independent people". This option would depend upon government approval and prior improvements to the council housing service.

In both of these options the

money necessary to carry out major improvements could be borrowed privately.

Borough-wide vote

Residents are asked to complete a questionnaire by September on these options. Advice is available from an Independent Tenants Advisor, Solon Community Network. At the same time, the Council has employed specialist consultants to consider the financial benefits of these, and possibly other options.

If this follows the pattern of similar initiatives by other London councils, there will eventually be a borough-wide residents' vote on those options deemed viable, results of which will be largely binding. It is not clear whether the status quo can or will be one of those options.

Who Needs Friends reunited?

Daphne Chamberlain

Websites for tracing long-lost friends are proving very popular. In fact, Friendsreunited is said to be one of the most frequently visited sites on the Internet, but I've just discovered that *THE ARCHER* draws a long bow too.

We all know how it is. Most of us wonder from time to time "whatever happened to so-and-so?" Sometimes, though, that old cliché is said with genuine regret.

I met my first real friend at the age of seven, but we drifted apart shortly after leaving school. She went to America - and for "is-it-really-so-many" years that was that. Then, a few weeks ago, I had a message from her. Was I really me? Yes, I was (excited disbelief all round) - but how had she tracked me down?

Web spinning

Elementary (though amazing) - she had seen my name on *THE ARCHER* website. (Just another spin-off from being on this paper's team.) As it happens, she is back in England now, which makes meeting more convenient, but that first contact could have been made from anywhere in the computerised world. At any given time there is a sporting chance that someone somewhere is reading our latest edition on screen.

Our website is <http://www.the-archer.co.uk>. Thanks, "Archie"!

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