



Children enjoying the new Avenue House playground. Photo by Daphne Chamberlain

Ahead of the game

By Daphne Chamberlain

The new play area in Avenue House grounds "sets the standard for parks all over the borough", said Barnet's Deputy Mayor at its official opening. He was speaking to celebrities, carers and children, all celebrating the first playground in Barnet to be designed for disabled children as well as those with no disabilities.

The all-over safety ground surface (also the first in the borough) is soft and spongy, and the equipment is in bright primary colours, with rounded edges. Swings can be adjusted to get children in easily, and the short slide is wide enough for child and carer to whiz down together.

Other pieces of equipment are also built to allow adults to share the ride, if necessary.

Some pieces incorporate manual games, and some encourage children to develop upper body strength by hanging from handholds. Children can climb to the top of the slide

by using decorated hand and footholds, and then climbing through a larger hole. This was designed particularly for partially sighted children.

"Not all disabled children have mobility problems, and we have tried to cater for everyone," said Janett Durrant, Avenue House Estate Manager. Described as "a human dynamo" in the opening ceremony, Janett herself praised the efforts of her staff.

Guests at the opening included Felicity Edmunds, great-granddaughter-in-law of "Inky" Stephens, who once lived in Avenue House, MP Rudi Vis, Council Leader Victor Lyons and several councillors, as well as representatives of the various charities which have contributed towards the cost of this play area.

With their generous contributions and money raised from public subscription, the project is just a few thousand short of covering its cost of £89,000. This attractive and worthwhile playground has certainly set standards, but I heard more than one person at its opening wondering how easy it would be for other parks to follow its lead.

Record move

By Garth Morton

Alan's Records of East Finchley High Road is set to transfer to new premises just a few yards away. Martin Henham is retiring after 31 years of running his antique shop and Alan's Records will soon be moving in. There is, however, one rather unique aspect of this antique business which will remain – the key cutting service.

The unusual combination of antiques and key cutting came about when Mr Henham tried to buy the shop from its original owner in 1973. Bob Thomas wanted to sell his business as a going concern and did not want it to be turned into an antique shop. After 10 weeks of Mr Henham trying unsuccessfully to acquire the shop, Mr. Thomas relented on condition that Martin kept up the tradition of cutting keys in addition to his new antique business.

To Martin's surprise, on the day he opened his antiques business, one of his first customers was Bob Thomas. Over the next six months Bob appeared

every day, not to buy anything but because he had decided to train Martin in the skill of key cutting. At times it was as if nothing had changed, as Bob would introduce Martin to customers as "the imminent new owner" rather than the actual owner he now was.

Bob and Martin must have got on well however, because, on the strength of a handshake with Bob, Martin still cuts keys at the back of the shop and will still continue to do so after Alan's Records moves in.

Find your market

By Daphne Chamberlain

Last month Nikki Joule wrote about the success of a new farmers' market at Alexandra Palace. When other markets in London are closing, why is this one seemingly catching people's attention?

It is run by Chris Elder, whose company – City and Country Farmers' Markets – started up four years ago and has sites at Dulwich, Brockley, Lee Green and Hammersmith. He told *THE ARCHER* that he doesn't want farmers' markets to die out in a few years "because of lack of inspiration".

This is why he offers organic Free Trade tea and coffee at some sites, low-key music, traditional dancing, and occasional cookery demonstrations, and guest "healing tents".

As Nikki said, the choice of site is important, and perhaps the fact that Ally Pally has parking spaces for 840 also draws the customers. Chris says that there are regularly 32-38 stalls, from as far north as Norfolk and as far south as Sussex.

The Ally Pally market started in April, and has yet to get full planning permission. Also, 'main events' at the Palace prevent the markets

being held every week. This is why he recommends checking before going along. Call 020 8291 1124 or 07780520610.

This month's dates are fixed already – Sunday 5, 12 and 19 September (10am-3pm), when apples and beer will be the main focus.

But don't forget that London Farmers' Markets – the company which started the whole thing off – still has 16 markets running. Some (like the Whetstone site) have closed, but the first one, in Islington, is still apparently flourishing. This is now held in Essex Road, opposite Islington Green, on Sundays from 10am to 2pm.

If you want to browse further, look up Farmers' Markets online. I shall be making a few comparisons myself, and it would be interesting to hear your opinions. Meanwhile, don't let's desert our excellent local shops.

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