



Lynne Coleman and Richard King with the cup. Photo by Toni Morgan

Allotments are not surplus

By Daphne Chamberlain

THE ARCHER has discovered that in 1998, when Barnet Council was considering the future of the Martin schools, one proposal was to relocate at least some of the adjoining allotments.

Council papers reveal that Stanley Road playing field and the then under-used Vale Farm Allotments were considered as relocation sites. This would have freed a large expanse of land for building.

When told of this, Richard King, chair of the East Finchley Allotments Association, said: "We have always been aware that this is a valuable site. All our plots are taken, however, and we have a healthy waiting list. Our lease comes up for renewal this April."

Each lease runs for six years, so it will be due for renewal again in 2012, which is when the

Martin schools may be rebuilt. Under the current proposal the combined school would be rebuilt on its existing site.

Meanwhile, Richard King and his fellow plot-holders are celebrating winning the trophy for the best allotment site in Barnet for the third time in recent years.

Season's greetings to prolific criminals

Barnet police sent Christmas cards to about 30 of Barnet's most prolific criminals wishing them a happy Christmas and warning them to stay out of trouble.

The cards carried wording inside that included the phrases: "If you continue with your criminal activity, you will ruin the festive season for many people, yourself included, because my officers will be paying you special attention. The outcome of this could be that you spend Christmas and beyond in prison." Each card was signed by Chief Superintendent Mark Ricketts, the Borough Commander.

Similar cards were sent out in other London boroughs and in other parts of the country.

Chief Superintendent Mark Ricketts said: "Like many other Christmas traditions, every year we notice a crime increase, committed by those too idle to fund their festivities legitimately. I have made it absolutely clear to those offenders who we are focusing on that if they don't want to miss the third repeat of the 'Only Fools and Horses' Christmas Special and to enjoy Christmas with their families they should stay away from crime."

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Learning to take pride in Barnet

By Peter Pickering

I attended the meeting of the Barnet Civic Network in November as a representative of the Finchley Society, and have been invited to tell readers of THE ARCHER something about it.

The Civic Network has been up and running for two years. It is designed to engage organisations representing the full range of communities in Barnet in thinking through ideas for the future of the borough, and to have an input into the implementation of Barnet's Community Plan.

It meets two or three times a year with senior council officers and elected council members present, and the meetings attract an impressively large number of diverse organisations. I am not certain, however, that the ideal way has been found for engaging them constructively. The theme of the November meeting was 'Civic Pride', but the plenary session was only loosely related to that theme. It included an account of the preparation of the Community

Strategy 2006-2016 and a lively presentation of its work, with a video, by the young people (almost entirely female) of the Barnet Youth Forum. Civic Pride was discussed in groups. We were asked to list the things we were most and least proud of in Barnet. Some of the points made in my group I found surprising, but it is good for elderly members of amenity societies to realise that not everyone thinks the same way.

Although Civic Pride is undoubtedly a good thing, and more of it would improve the quality of our lives, I find it much easier to be proud of London and of Finchley than of Barnet. That is not a criticism of the council, but a reflection of the fact that despite the 40 years since the reorganisation of London government the Borough of Barnet feels an artificial political entity, while London and Finchley seem somehow real.

The future of Park House decided at last?

East Finchley looks set to become the new permanent home for the Hampstead Garden Suburb Adult Education Institute. Barnet has reportedly accepted the Institute's offer to buy the Park House site freehold, as the previous preferred bidder, Sherm Properties, has dropped out. The current lease on Park House, opposite the tube station, is being extended while negotiations over the sale continue.

Principal Fay Naylor told *THE ARCHER* there are no plans at present to build on the Park House site. Building of the new Institute arts centre on the Neurological Hospital site is going ahead and four floors of McDonald's headquarters will be rented on a 15-year lease from January 2006.

Should the Institute buy Park House, one of the most hotly disputed episodes in the recent history of East Finchley will come to an end. Residents were deeply divided over proposals to build a superstore with parking on that site, including adjoining land up to Baronsmere Road, backed by

the threat of a Compulsory Purchase order. Local protests led to a hastily withdrawn Cabinet paper and the surprise Grade 2 listing of the library. Indeed, plans to include a new library in the building and to demolish the old one were of huge significance in the local consultation process which followed. With the majority voting against the plans, the prospect of a superstore receded.

In 2004 Park House was put up for sale. A year later, the endgame appears in sight, although questions remain about increasing traffic and appropriate parking controls.

Park House parking problems

By Diana Cormack

Local residents' objections have overturned a planning application for Park House, 16 High Road, by Hampstead Garden Suburb Institute. The Institute wanted a permanent change of use to an educational facility and an extension of present opening hours, including all day on Saturdays.

At the end of November a meeting of Barnet's Planning and Environment Committee was told by Jan Hogan, of Ingram Road, and Ken Cordeiro, of Baronsmere Road, about the severe parking problems caused by the current Controlled Parking Zone, imposed without consultation when the Institute opened at Park House in August 2004.

It was suggested that these problems would certainly escalate, for not only Park House had to be taken into consideration, but also the Institute's imminent occupation of part of McDonald's headquarters and of their new building on the neurological hospital site.

The committee decided unanimously that, since the Institute's purchase of Park House is not yet certain to go through, the change of use should last

for only twelve months. The current Monday to Friday opening hours should remain, with Saturday hours limited to 1pm. This could be extended to 9pm on four Saturdays a year to allow for special occasions such as Open Days.

The committee also asked for a review of the current CPZ, which should give more consideration to the impact on residents.

Ken Cordeiro told *THE ARCHER*: "On the whole, East Finchley residents seem to welcome the Institute, but its November newsletter encouraging students to park in residential roads where there is already an acute demand for parking space is not clever PR for a new neighbour on the block. The Institute needs to show sensitivity and balance their needs with those of residents and local traders if they don't wish to create any resentment."

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