



He's the tops! Asghar Shaikh can do dry....Photo by Diana Cormack

## Tops score

By Diana Cormack

**Over 40 years ago, one of the first dry cleaners in East Finchley opened its doors at 3 Fortis Green. It was one of four started in the mid-1960s by the then proprietor at Coral Travel Agents on the High Road.**

About 20 years later the business was put up for sale and an advert in a trade magazine caught the eye of 24-year-old Asghar Shaikh, of Forest Gate. He had been working in Kensington learning the trade for seven years and thought that this might be a good career move.

Obviously it was. For, having opened on 22 July 1985, Asghar is still there running Tops Dry Cleaners and he still travels to work from the East End to East Finchley.

Asghar told *THE ARCHER*, "I've been here half my life and I've never missed a day

in more than 20 years."

Amongst his loyal band of customers, many of whom have been with him all this time, there are some well known people including television stars Michelle Collins and Steve McFadden.

In appreciation of his customers and to celebrate over 20 years in business Asghar is making a one-off special reduction to readers of *THE ARCHER*. If you mention this article to him when you take your dry cleaning or repair work into Tops, you will get 20% off your bill.

## Calling all walkers

**There is still time to register to take part in this year's Big Fun Walk in aid of the North London Hospice.**

The annual event, organised by the hospice's North West Support Group, is in its 11<sup>th</sup> year and takes place on Sunday 19 March, starting as always from East Finchley tube station.

Walkers will follow a seven-and-a-half mile route through Cherry Tree Wood, Highgate Wood, Parliament Hill, Belsize Park, Primrose Hill, Regent's Park, Green Park and St James's Park, finishing at Storey's Gate, close to Westminster Abbey.

New walkers of all ages are welcome to join the ranks of fundraisers who complete the walk every year to enjoy the camaraderie and views along the way, as well as the fabulous refreshment stops at Belsize Park and Regent's Park.

Last year's 10th anniversary Big Fun Walk raised more than £130,000 for the work of the North London Hospice, a multi-

faith service for the boroughs of Barnet, Enfield and Haringey that makes no charge to patients or their families.

The hospice in Woodside Avenue, N12, will cost £4.8 million to run this year but only a quarter of that sum will come from the NHS. The rest has to be found from fund-raising and voluntary donations.

It continues to expand its services in the three boroughs and now manages a co-ordinated palliative care service with Macmillan nurses from a separate base in Enfield.

To register for the walk and to receive a sponsorship form, go to [www.bigfunwalk.co.uk](http://www.bigfunwalk.co.uk), telephone the Big Fun Walk line on 020 8202 5586 or write to Vivienne Bentley, 11 Westchester Drive, London NW4 1RD. Registration must be completed by 10 March.

## Walkers, did you know...?

*The first charity walk in this country took place on Boxing Day 1959. It was in aid of the World Refugee Fund. Twenty-one walkers each paid a shilling (5p) and raised £20 in sponsorship. The furthest distance walked was 50 miles.*

*The first person to walk on the moon was American astronaut Neil Armstrong. This was on 21 July 1969.*

*It has been estimated that it would take a year to walk round the equator (25,000 miles) if you went at a steady speed of 3 mph non-stop day and night.*

*Left-handed people are generally left-footed as well and they tend to put their left foot forward first when they walk.*

## The barriers are back!

**After a long month of disruption to traffic using the High Road in November and December, more road works came to town in January and February.**

A long stretch of the High Road was dug up by BT, another stretch by Transco and Barnet Council installed new pavements along the main stretch of shopfronts.

The new pavements have certainly enhanced the High Road but some traders questioned whether the upheaval could not have been better coordinated to minimise disruption to their businesses.

A spokesman for Barnet Council said this was not possible because some work was to pavements, the rest was to roads, and the work did not always affect the same stretches of the High Road.

The new pavements are part of a programme to replace surfaces with 'long-life' pavements in areas of high footfall, such as the High Road. The longer-lasting paving stones will need to be replaced less frequently.



Photo by Diana Cormack

## What's the word on the streets?

By John Lawrence

**We all use them and we all probably have an opinion. What do you think of the state of our streets in East Finchley?**

An organisation that campaigns for safer streets and to get more of us walking wants to know if we think our roads are safe, well-lit and generally easy to use.

Living Streets works on practical projects and lobbies local authorities to deal with specific issues such as litter, pavement maintenance and lighting.

### Street audit

Local representative Dominic Church, of Fortis Green, is considering organising a community street audit for East Finchley later in the spring.

He says: "Walking is a good way to get some light exercise, but Living Streets believe that the streetscape should be appealing and easily accessible for all, including those with impaired sight or mobility.

"A safe and inviting public realm supports the amenities and facilities that are so important for the local community. East Finchley has a lot to offer,

and improving the streetscape is the best way to make sure it stays that way.

"Priority is given to traffic planning and the desire to keep traffic moving, leading to a hostile and discouraging environment for everybody else. Pavements are often too narrow, uneven, dirty and badly lit. Pedestrian crossings are put in the wrong place and force us into small sheep pens to make way for passing traffic."

The result of poor street planning, according to Living Streets, is that as a nation we are walking less than ever before. Compared to 20 years ago we each make 100 fewer walking trips per year.

If you have something to say about East Finchley's streets or would like to take part in the street audit, you can contact Dominic on 020 8815 0082 or by email at [dchurch@cabe.org.uk](mailto:dchurch@cabe.org.uk)

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## Seen and heard

**In Leslie Road, the driver of a refuse collection vehicle was seen eating a Mars bar while seated in his cab. As his colleagues toiled to fill the back of the truck with the contents of wheelie bins, he finished his snack and promptly threw the wrapper out of the window onto the ground. So much for keeping our streets litter-free!**