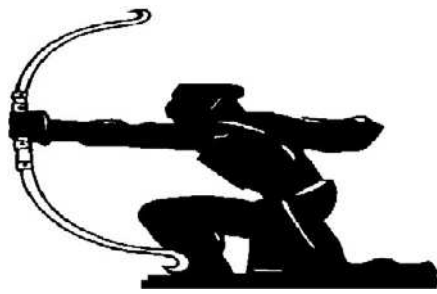


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Million pound gift for 'forgotten' community

By Daphne Chamberlain

The Grange Estate and a wide swathe of roads around it have been given £1 million from the Big Lottery Fund's Big Local programme to be spent on projects suggested and agreed by local residents.

The area was identified as a "forgotten" pocket of London, previously overlooked for funding and investment, and facing difficult issues. Nine locations in London, and a total of 50 across England, received the same funding.

East Finchley's chosen area is titled The Grange, but is in fact all the roads in the pocket bordered by the North Circular, the High Road, Church Lane and East End Road. This is a large part of the Community Safety Action Zone, set up by Barnet in 2004.

Big Local Trust, who run the programme. This rep will introduce himself to the community, probably in March, and will encourage residents to consider their options. During this 'warming-up' period, each area can draw on up to an extra £20,000 to get things going.

Big Local has been running since 2010, and says it can be useful for people to visit other areas to see what they are doing. There are now 150 communities across the country, including 26 in London, who are working to improve their lives with the help

of Big Local Trust.

To see the map of the funding area, go to www.local-trust.org.uk/?project=grange-estate. The site also gives the name of the Local Trust rep as Paul Bragman.



Residents decide

This category of funding differs significantly from the usual pattern of specific bidding. Big Local is proactive from the beginning, identifying neglected areas with the help of local authorities and organisations. Recipients have up to 10 years to spend the money, and they decide within the community how it should be spent.

Alison Rowe, London regional head for Big Local, told *THE ARCHER*: "This is all about helping people to develop confidence and to see what they really need. It can be challenging, because people have different issues, and may need support to come to a democratic consensus. It's exciting!"

The selected areas have the help of a representative from



Stallholder Monica Russel knitted her way through the day and had a line-up of tea cosies for sale.

Photo by John Lawrence.

All wrapped up

Congratulations to all the organisers and volunteers who made East Finchley's first Christmas festival such a success. See our report and photos on pages 6-7.

Home planning consultation

Barnet Council has launched a consultation to gather people's views on two planning documents which will help guide the future design of homes in the borough. The consultation will run until 17 January.

The first document provides direction on the design aspects of future developments and deals with modifications such as extensions and conversions to existing homes, and also provides detailed and locally relevant guidance on issues such as local character, car parking and density in relation to new-build developments. The second document addresses

the more technical design and construction aspects of development, such as how energy efficient they should be and how much indoor and outdoor space, such as gardens and balconies, should be provided for residential development.

Both draft documents can be viewed online by visiting <http://engage.barnet.gov.uk>. Alternatively, printed copies are available at the planning reception area of Barnet House, 1255 High Road, Whetstone, or at libraries across the borough.



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THE ARCHER team wishes to thank all the generous people who give up their spare time, in all weather, to deliver the paper for us.

If you have a story for us, please contact us at the above address.

Comments to THE ARCHER may be published unless clearly marked 'Not for publication' within the text.

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Battle for a library

By Daphne Chamberlain

The year 2012 was one to remember for supporters of Friern Barnet Library. They kept its profile high and a service alive after Barnet closed it last April. National television, radio, newspapers, celebrities and the leader of the Green Party visited the 'people's library' on the green outside the deserted building. The council rejected petitions to re-open, in spite of abandoning plans for a proposed replacement library in the artsdepot.

Then, in September, the building was indeed re-opened, but by friendly squatters. The new residents joined forces with library campaigners to run a public library service with thousands of donated books and audio-visual stock, and several extension activities. Barnet failed to evict them immediately, and council officials began negotiations (later broken off) to open a community library in Friary Park.

Eviction hearing

Then, campaigners succeeded in having the 1934 building added to Barnet's list of places of historical or architectural interest. However, a Barnet spokesperson said that this decision had no impact on the council's decision to sell it off. In fact, marketing was due to begin at the time of a full eviction hearing, scheduled for December. Barnet say they don't want to lose a financial

asset. The campaigners and squatters say they are running a service which should be provided by the council, in a building which is in better condition than when they took it over.

A full eviction hearing was scheduled at Barnet County Court between 17 and 21 December as this edition of THE ARCHER went to press.

All that glitters is not gold

By Janet Maitland
Barnet Boroughwatch is warning people not to fall for a street scam involving a gold ring. A local resident was outside his house saying goodbye to a friend when a man stopped and picked up a gold wedding ring from the pavement and looked at him.

The resident called to his friend to ask if the ring was hers. When she said it wasn't, he told the man who had found it that he would keep it in case it had been dropped by a neighbour. The man asked for some money for it and said something about having a baby at home. He refused and the man left.

The resident didn't realise it was a scam until he asked the builder working on his house if it belonged to him. The builder said the same thing had happened to him twice and that on the first occasion he'd given the man £5 for the ring, which wasn't gold. When they compared descriptions it sounded like the same man who is described as tall, thin, dark skinned, shabbily dressed and not able to speak English very well.

Planning Applications

Barnet Council

58 Abbots Gardens, N2
Single-storey rear extension including alterations to rear patio. Alterations to front entrance door and porch.

Southern House, 1A Bedford Road, N2

Conversion of upper floors from D1 (non residential) to a self-contained flat.

24 Cromwell Close, N2

Alterations to front access, including new ramp with railings between footway and front door.

Christ's College Finchley, East End Road, N2

Demolition of disused animal house, and proposals for new two-storey Sixth Form block. Single-storey dining hall extension and works to internal servery area, and works to facade and internal layout of reception area, providing a new entrance area. Additional hard play to tennis courts.

6 Hertford Road, N2

Conversion of garage into habitable space, including replacement of garage door with window to match existing. Ground floor extension to side and front extension, including glass canopy. Alterations to fenestration.

21 Trinity Road, N2

Single-storey rear extension.

Haringey Council

56 Creighton Avenue, N10
Certificate of lawfulness for refurbishment of loft, including new hip to gable, side extension to rear dormer and rear roof lights. Erection of single-storey ground floor rear extension.

8 Fordington Road, N6

Non-material amendment following a grant of planning permission for addition of one timber window into side elevation of new single-storey porch extension.

8 Shakespeare Gardens, N2

Partial demolition of conservatory and flat roof rear extensions, construction of new single-storey rear extension, relocation of front velux window, enlargement of roof dormer and associated internal alterations.

1 Southern Road, N2

Demolition of dwelling, and erection of two three-storey plus basement dwellings, with associated parking and landscaping.

2 Woodside Cottages, Fortis Green, N2

Replacement of single-glazed timber framed windows and rear door with double-glazed timber framed windows and rear door.

3 Woodside Cottages, Fortis Green, N2

Erection of two rear extensions at first-floor level.

Drop-in centre for young people

A new service aimed at helping young people leaving care lead more independent lives has been launched in Barnet. The service, for young people aged 18 and over leaving Barnet Council's care, includes a new drop-in centre giving them the opportunity to meet up with their social workers on a regular basis.

Boosting skills

The centre, based at Woodhouse Road, North Finchley, will also provide workshops

aimed at boosting the young people's life skills including cookery and money budgeting classes.

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Barnet Law Service under pressure

By Cathy Young

"The sort of problems which our clients brought us, mainly concerning welfare benefits, debt and housing, will not go away just because we have closed down," says David Miller, secretary of the East Finchley Advice Service (EFAS), which was forced to close following the withdrawal of funding by Barnet Council.

Ironically, it was a report commissioned by Barnet Council in 1999 that highlighted the need in the borough for specialist legal advice for local people without the means to pay for it. Barnet Law Service (BLS) was a direct result of this report.

Staffed with solicitors, a barrister and experienced caseworkers, it initially took referrals from any local advice agency, including EFAS, national charities, MPs or social workers. However, welfare benefits casework is now accessible only by referral from the Barnet Citizen's Advice Bureau.

Legal aid cuts

BLS currently has funding for some employment and immigration law cases but after April 2013, it will no longer be able to take on any new legally aided cases as most employment law and immigration law will be moved "out of scope" of legal aid under the terms of the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act.

Marilyn Sparrow, executive director of BLS is very concerned. "The closure of EFAS meant another gap in the provision of advice in the borough. Meanwhile the demand

grows due to problems such as debt or homelessness increasing with the recession and with major changes to welfare benefits on the horizon. Also, the provision of advice will reduce much further once the cuts to legal aid kick in from next April."

Support for a vital service

The two organisations had worked closely together and so the trustees of EFAS thought it was appropriate to donate their remaining funds, £3,000, to BLS.

"We worked with BLS for a long time and referred many cases to them; all of the cases were handled in a highly professional and caring manner," explained David Miller.

When asked about the future, Marilyn Sparrow felt it was a gloomy picture but remained determined to provide help to the local community.

"We are very successful in what we do, with over 90% of the cases we take on successful at court or tribunal. We want to be able to continue this help so I would be very grateful if anyone can help us access grants and charitable donations."

Contact marilyn@barnet-law.org.uk if you can offer help in obtaining funding.



Cherry Tree Road residents clean up

By Jacky Wood

Cherry Tree Road, N2 is squeaky clean after a leaf and litter blitz by residents who signed up to Barnet's 'Adopt-a-Street' project. A band of volunteers aged from three to 73 braved the cold to wield an impressive array of tools, all donated by the council (who promise that the 'regular' cleaning service will still continue). Favourite with the kids was the litter-picker-upper, which can deliver quite a nip to an unwary backside. But a bin of winter grit was the most welcome item, and if adjacent streets sign up to the project we might just get our cars out this winter.

Is it safe to clear pavements yourself?

By Daphne Chamberlain

Some people are still hesitant about clearing snow and ice from the pavements outside their homes. The fear persists that they could be sued if someone had an accident there. The January 2011 newsletter of the Muswell Hill and Fortis Green Association carried this advice from its 'legal eagle' Peter Thompson.

"Most of the law regarding liability for personal injuries requires proof of fault and, most usually, negligence. There is nothing wrong with clearing snow off a footpath: it is a decent, neighbourly thing to do. A pedestrian who slipped on the cleared footway would not normally have a case.

"But there might be liability if the householder chose to clear the snow by pouring hot

water on it, thereby turning the cleared path into an icy slide. This would be a negligent, not to say silly way of clearing the snow and exposing pedestrians to risk that was not there before.

"Otherwise I adopt the general line that Government agencies are putting out: that wherever snow-clearing would benefit the public the citizen should not withhold his (or her) shovel for fear of being sued."

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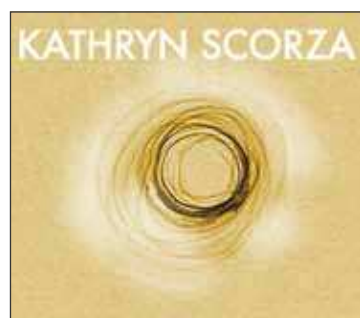
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Inspector Morse lives

By Marian Bunzl, of North London Chorus

A prequel series of the young life of Inspector Morse will be on ITV soon. Set in 1965, one of the young detective's exploits is to join a small amateur choir, played by 20 assorted members of North London Chorus.

On filming day, we started off in the costume and make-up department, consisting of several trailers in the Homebase car park on the North Circular (oh, the glamour of TV!). We gathered for hot drinks in our hospitality suite, as one by one we were called to be transported back to the 1960s.

Period and provincial

Tenors and basses had their hair cut or slicked down, and were provided with smart or tweedy suits. Sopranos and altos had their hair carmen-rolled and backcombed and were dressed in short skirts or dresses and cardigans in subdued colours. Except for bright lipstick, make up was discreet. We were to be provincial, not Carnaby Street.

We lined up in the car park for inspection and, passed as suitably period, were invited to the film unit's lavish catering: a large, colourful cold buffet, two or three hot dishes, and a generous choice of dessert.

Mozart on a loop

The actual filming, in the courtroom of a decommissioned town hall, looked like organised chaos: an army of technicians, a spaghetti of wires, microphones, screens, and a neat little railway track for the TV cameras, presided over by the director in a bright green T-shirt.

We were placed in front of a large back-lit stained glass window, with a podium for our musical director and a piano for our accompanist. Endeavour Morse, played by Shaun Evans, sang among us as we performed a short section of Mozart's *C Minor Mass*, over and over again for endless 'takes'.

Every time the director said "Cut" a flock of young women descended on us with powder puffs and lipstick brushes. Thanks to our MD and accompanist we managed to sing with the same intensity each time.

It was fascinating but exhausting, and we have a new respect for TV actors. We also

appear in episode two in more glamorous clothes, enjoying a post-concert drinks party. Don't miss it.



Dame Edna Everage doesn't look too happy about what she can see in *THE ARCHER*, or maybe standing about on a wet day in Melbourne was getting her down. Photo by Lucy Cormack.

Ingram Road and the watercress minder

By Peter Cox

In the 1880s, most of East Finchley was common land and woodland, but with the coming of the railway the owners of estates in Fortis Green were selling up to speculative builders. Park Hall, at the junction of Fortis Green and the High Road, was sold, and by the 1891 census nine houses had been built in the new Ingram Road.

Starting on the west side and working down from the north, they were all occupied by men aged between 26 and 45 and their families. The men were typically clerks, salesmen and warehousemen, none from the borough and only three from London. (From the censuses we can see how much mobility there was. Only one, shipping clerk William Hustwitt, was there in 1901 and 1911.)

None of the women worked outside the home. Seven houses had a living-in servant; one had a couple lodging in two rooms. The 1911 census tells us that all houses but one had six rooms: kitchen, living rooms, and bedrooms (bathroom and scullery not included).

In 1891, the enumerator has added another, intriguing household. The 'Cottage in watercress beds' was occupied by a 52 year old under-gardener from Cambridge, William Murrell, his 48 year old wife, whose occupation was 'minding watercress beds', and their three children: twin boys of seven and a daughter of five. The watercress beds were 12 narrow rectangles in Cherry Tree Wood, then called Dirt-house Wood. (It was the point where carts arrived with hay from farms to the north and returned with soot and manure from the City.)

By 1901 the watercress beds had gone, William was dead, the family had moved to Prospect

Place, and the twins, then 17, were milkmen.

Peter runs a North London U3A group to help people research their roads and houses, and who lived in them. You can contact him on coxpeter@btinternet.com.

Flyers are up and running

Would you like to get into shape and meet some new people at the same time? Then if you are a runner why not join East Finchley's new social running club, The East Finchley Flyers.

Every Tuesday night at 7pm the club will be running various 5-10k routes from the tube station followed by drinks in the Bald Faced Stag. Three groups will go out every week: gentle joggers up to 5k at an easy pace, medium level of 7k and an upper level of 10k or more.

Ideally you will be able to run for 30 minutes continuously as a minimum but otherwise the club is open to all ages and all levels of fitness. For more information and membership offers, contact runsoc@btinternet.com, co.uk or call or text Nick on 07795 503752.



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Fortismere's music places

Fortismere School is asking parents and students what they think about the school's policy of admitting pupils by musical aptitude.

When admission by musical aptitude was first introduced in 2010, the school's governors promised to review the scheme in 2012/13 to help them decide whether to continue with the scheme.

The current policy is that a maximum of 24 students per year can be admitted for their musical skills, regardless of where they live. So far, a total of 48 pupils have met the criteria. Siblings of these children are also entitled to places at Fortismere.

In the consultation document, the school says it wants to know if the scheme has helped build Fortismere's specialist

status in music and adds: "We will also examine whether admission by musical aptitude has had a significant impact on Fortismere's catchment area and, if so, whether that is a matter of real concern."

Groups being consulted include parents, carers, students, staff, local councillors and teaching unions. Responses are invited before the closing date of 15 February.

The consultation document is available from the school or online at www.fortismere.haringey.sch.uk. A public consultation meeting will be held at the school's North Wing Hall on 14 January from 7-8pm.

Stay on your guard at supermarkets

By Janet Maitland

Reporting that thieves have been keeping watch in supermarket car parks waiting for an opportunity to steal groceries or money from your car, police have issued some crime prevention tips.

You could be a victim of theft if you push your trolley to your car, unlock it, stow away your shopping and then take the trolley back while leaving your car unlocked. Some shoppers who have been caught this way have also left their handbag behind. Always lock your car, even if you're only taking your trolley back. And never leave your handbag in the car, locked or unlocked.

Thieves are also on the look-out for unguarded handbags inside the supermarket. Never leave your handbag in the trolley while you search the shelves. Make sure it's always securely fastened and on your person.

You should also be alert around banks. Criminals, often working in pairs, watch for people who've drawn out money at the counter that's been given to them in an envelope. If the envelope is not safely tucked away, it is much easier to steal once the victim leaves the bank.

Distraction is a common method. In two recent cases the thief stepped in front of the victim and pointed to some money on the ground

which they said they'd seen the victim drop. But the money had been planted in advance. As soon as the victim looked down at the pavement, their envelope full of money was snatched.

In another case, thieves had already let down a tyre on a victim's car to distract them when they came out of the bank. So, always put money away before leaving the bank and watch out for anyone trying to distract you.



Finchley Jazz Club rides again, at least for one night. Photo by John Dearing.

Head-teacher's vision

More than 250 people crammed into Brookland Junior School hall at the end of last year to get a first glimpse of Mick Quigley, headteacher of the Archer Academy, and hear about his plans for the new school.

Mick talked about his experience, set out his vision and plans for the curriculum, and answered a series of questions from prospective parents. The school, to be based at the Arts Institute close to East Finchley tube station, welcomes its first 150 pupils in September.

You can find out more about the school, and apply for a September 2013 place, at www.thearcheracademy.org.uk.

Foot-tappin' jazz night

By Betti Blatman

On Monday 19 November, over 80 people attended a special live jazz night at Hall School Sports Ground in East End Road, organised by John Bayne. Former Finchley Jazz Club secretary and *ARCHER* team member Pamela Kent is a cancer sufferer and the event raised over £1,500 for Macmillan Nurses and Cancer Research UK with proceeds from many generous donations, raffles and an auction of a violin, amethyst earrings and a lady's watch.

Starting off with a seven-piece band, led by Peter Rudeforth, the packed audience was treated to fabulous jazz with many top class musicians 'sitting in' throughout the evening and the finale consisting of 16 musicians who played together as a band, ensuring the sound of jazz was heard

throughout Finchley that night.

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East Finchley's first Christmas Festival was a cracker!

By Diana Cormack

"I thought this sort of festival only happened in movies!" is just one of many favourable comments made during the first East Finchley Christmas Festival on Saturday 8 December. Sunny weather added to the pleasure of the people packing the pavements along the High Road, where a variety of stallholders were selling their wares. Some were so successful that they sold out and had to replenish their stock. Local shops and businesses also benefited from the event, which aimed to encourage Christmas shopping here.

There were plenty of activities for all ages. Story-telling for the under-fives in East Finchley Library was enormously popular, as was making decorations for the Christmas tree outside Barracuda, where Father Christmas (fresh from the Santa Fun Run) greeted his many fans. The Turbo Bike Time Trial tested many a would-be Bradley Wiggins while some of the more sedate members of the community tried the Tea Dance. The Phoenix was full for a special screening of *Arthur Christmas*, with plenty of time afterwards for children to be shown over a fire engine by the local fire brigade.

Performing and parading

Prizes for the fancy dress competition were awarded on the festival stage at Viceroy

Parade after the entrants had been piped along the pavement by 393 (Finchley) ATC marching band. Street performers, singers and musicians entertained throughout the day, including local choirs (with an impressive performance by Martin schoolchildren and North London Chorus), East Finchley brass band, rock bands and some super singing by Mari Wilson, a long-time resident of Crouch End. The festival's finale was *The Cabaret of Pottiness* in Finchley Youth Theatre.

It is hard to believe that this brilliant event was organised in only a few weeks by the East Finchley Community Trust and a group of local volunteers. As well as bringing enjoyment to many, it raised £1500 for charity.

Fabulous

Chris Hampson, one of the organisers, said: "What a fabulous day. The library was full of children listening to storytelling in the morning, The Phoenix was full for *Arthur Christmas*, the stage was busy and the performers were all fantastic."

"Father Christmas arrived to a flurry of snow in the grotto next to the Christmas tree at Barracuda, East Finchley Open couldn't help children make decorations quickly enough, the local shops were busy and so were the street stalls."

"You could hear residents saying 'This is why we love East Finchley,' and visitors saying 'What a great place this is!'. The organisers would like to thank everyone for their support. Let's all work hard to make next year bigger and better."



Above: The festive scene outside Barracuda cafe.



Sound of the Suburb were one of the bands playing on the music stage. Photo by John Lawrence.



Brass band music entertained the crowds on the High Road. Photo by John Lawrence.

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Above and top right: The only entry requirement for the 7k fun run was to wear a Santa hat.



Coronation Street star Michelle Collins waved her fairy wand to turn on the festival lights.



Above: Roger Chapman, one of the organisers from the East Finchley Community Trust, took his health and safety role very seriously.

Photographs by John Lawrence.

Below: Singer Mari Wilson, a long-time resident of Crouch End, performed some festive favourites to a large crowd.



Not quite all lit up

Actress Michelle Collins switched on the festival's own lights festooning the front of Viceroy Parade. Sadly, the High Road lights were not illuminated until Monday 10 December. A council spokesman told *THE ARCHER* why.

"Our engineers visited East Finchley High Road on the evening of 3 December to switch on the Christmas lights and set the timers to switch the decorations on from 4pm to midnight each day," said the spokesman. "Everything appeared to be working

as programmed, so we were surprised and disappointed to hear the lights hadn't come on during the festival.

"Normally we would have engineers on site for a festive lighting switch on to make sure everything goes according to plan for the event, unfortunately we didn't receive any such request for this event. We are looking into this matter and apologise for any disappointment caused."

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YOUNG ARCHER



Wing Commander Hale presenting David and George Eristavi with their Jack Petchey award medals.

Squadron flying high

By Nick Young

393 (Finchley) Squadron of the Air Training Corps held its annual awards ceremony in November. There were promotions and awards for many of the squadron's members, who have spent the year participating in a wide range of activities including sports, camps and trips abroad.

The squadron band took part in the Lord Mayor's Show, the Remembrance Sunday parade in Finchley and, a week after the awards ceremony, East Finchley's Christmas Festival on 8 December.

Jack Petchey awards

Brothers George and David Eristavi, both of whom are sergeants in the squadron, received Jack Petchey awards from Wing Commander David Hale, who is in charge of the ATC's Middlesex Wing.

The brainchild of the London-born businessman of the same name, the Jack Petchey awards scheme for young people was established in 1999 to recognise "extreme endeavour and to help young people to help themselves". As well as medals

for the winning cadets, 393 (Finchley) Squadron receives £200, but the twist is that it is the Eristavi brothers who get to decide how it spends the money.

The squadron's commanding officer Squadron Leader Michael Albone, described the ATC as "a great mixer, a great leveller for young people of all educational abilities, classes and creeds ... it's good to see them come out of their shells and do something."

The ATC caters for young people aged between 13 and 18. The 393 (Finchley) Squadron, which currently has 35 members, is located at 444 High Road, North Finchley. Further information can be found on the squadron's website www.393atc.50megs.com

Sixth formers debate hot topics

By Issy van der Velde

A sixth form conference at Christ's College Finchley on Wednesday 14 November focused on the raised school leaving age as well as other issues. It was a great success with over 150 students from five different schools attending.

Chairman Nick Byrne and Chief Inspector Andy Mariner connected with the audience instantly with their unique humour and fantastic audience participation techniques. The opinions of panelists Ken Battye and Jules Jack on whether or not



The panel on stage at Christ's College.

we should trust our youth caused some interesting debate amongst the two.

It was wonderful, considering their party political differences, seeing Conservative MP Mike Freer and Labour councillor Alison Moore sharing some of the same views.

The students got to see that as well as being politicians, policemen and youth magistrates, the panellists were also people with families and varying backgrounds. Thank you to all the students and panellists for making it an afternoon to remember.

Fireworks gone but not forgotten

By Fiona Mitchell

Bonfire night, a time of 'oohs' and 'ahhs', toffee apples and the excitement of a firework display. But for a while, East Finchley and Muswell Hill have been left out of the spotlight.

With only one major firework display available for years, things didn't look like they were going to change. The situation reached a critical point when Alexandra Palace cancelled its display for the third year. For lots of residents it seemed bonfire night would be a let-down.

But then Fortismere School stepped in. There had been an enormous gap in the market and Fortismere knew what to do: create a fantastic display with good food and entertainment. They would put the fire back into bonfire night; it was sure to be a success.

Mud, mousles and magic

I was only one of thousands of spectators queuing with my ticket outside the school. Inside, you could hear the shrieks of laughter and the roars of an excited crowd. On entry, you were greeted with delicious aromas of food. Food vans were offering anything from Bowler's Gourmet Meatballs to mousles marinade.

Stepping onto the field, my feet squelched into mud and I was glad I'd worn my wellies. Above my head, kids squealed in delight as a retro fairground ride spun their chairs high into the air.

I saw a crowd at the end of the field and investigated. Fire-eaters were putting on a great show in time to the pop music blaring out of speakers around the field. There weren't just fairground rides; I tried my luck at various classic stalls including hook-a-duck and darts.

Before I knew it, it was 7.30pm. I moved to a good spot and waited for the magic. I wasn't disappointed. Although the fireworks didn't last as long as at some shows, they were of

a much higher quality. Well, I guess that's expected when you hire the same company responsible for the London

2012 Olympics opening and closing ceremonies' displays! It seems firework nights in East Finchley won't be boring again.

Library cards for all

Barnet Council is set to be among 22 local authorities testing automatic library membership for children and young people. The initiative from Arts Council England aims to lead to an increase in children, young people and families using their local libraries, and stimulate more reading for pleasure. Ultimately, it's hoped that 100% of children will become library cardholders.



Love in a shoebox

By Lisa Omar and David Winton

Children from St Theresa's Catholic Primary School, East End Road, got stuck in to help with packing presents for Operation Christmas Child at St Mary's Church in East Finchley.

After encouraging their parents and families to wrap and donate a whopping 100 boxes to the shoebox appeal, some of them joined organiser Cath Walker and other volunteers to experience firsthand how to wrap, donate and pack a shoebox to be sent to children in countries all around the world.

They were told how special items like toiletries and pencils

are needed in every box, and to make the box feel like it had been packed with love. The shoeboxes were distributed to a number of countries including Swaziland and Azerbaijan.

The final count of shoeboxes packed and sent off from St Mary's over four weeks was amazing: just short of 4,000. If you are interested in volunteering for next year, please contact Cath Walker on cwalker50@hotmail.co.uk. Find out more at www.operationchristmaschild.org.uk

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⊙ **Coffee & Kids,** Fri 9.15-11.15, Green Man Ctr. Rachel 8343 6147.

⊙ **Dads' Club:** Get-togethers for dads looking after young children in East Finchley. Adam 07957 441435.

⊙ **EF National Childbirth Trust** contact Ruby Yang or Patrizia Canwell at east-finchleynct@googlemail.com

⊙ **Newstead Parent & Toddler Group,** Thurs 9-12-30, Green Man Ctr. Sajni 8359 3460.

⊙ **Parent & Toddler Group,** Green Man Centre, Julia 8444 2276

⊙ **Stepping Stones,** interactive play session for under 3s. Karen 07957 278860.

⊙ **Teddy Bears' Music,** singing for 0-3s in Holy Trinity Church, N2; Thursdays 9.45am & 10.45am. Liz 07836 284538.



Mary lands a zippy little Italian

By Linda Sansom

It was when Mary Barry was visiting an Italian car show that she fell in love with a Tazzari. No, not a hunky Italian, but this rather zippy model, which has been attracting attention in the streets around East Finchley and North London.

Mary, a sprightly 92, is the proud owner of the Italian-made electric car, which she says she bought "on the spur of the moment", but which she doesn't actually drive herself.

Her daughter Maria, with whom she lives, just off Twyford Avenue, said: "Mum wanted a new car and as her chauffeur I had to have it. We had a test drive where a racing car driver got up to around 70 mph, which is fast for an electric car."

With no after-sales service provided by the makers, when it needed a service and a couple of other repairs the company sent an engineer especially from Malta, from where the right-hand drive models were exported.

One of three

The car is unusual because, although there are plenty of electric cars in England, as far as Maria knows there are only three Tazzaris.

"I use it all the time. There



Small but energetic: Mary Barry with her Tazzari electric car.

is no tax or congestion charge, and there are several electric car spaces where you can plug it in, although not yet in Barnet. The range is about 90 miles, but I have taken it further than I meant, and then I get range anxiety. We have a socket in the drive where I plug it in each night."

The car attracts quite a lot of attention and gets very positive

feedback when she is out, as people often come over to ask about it. "It's so much fun to drive," she added.

Ironically, Mary Barry has never driven, although she has always been interested in cars. "I have photos of her at car shows and she is more fascinated by them than I am," says her daughter.

Guides go large at new venue

By Toni Dietmann, Unit Guider

The 4th East Finchley Guides are moving to a new meeting hall. Since it started in September 2008, the group has met every Thursday at Holy Trinity Church on Church Lane. From this month, it moves to St Mary's on the High Road.

We would like to thank Holy Trinity Church for its generous support over the last four years. Without the encouragement and kind welcome we received from Rev Laurence Hill, which continued after he left through Michael Stanway, East Finchley would not have its Guide unit.

The tree we planted in the grounds to mark our first birthday, which is commemorated by a plaque unveiled by Cllr (now MP) Mike Freer, also recognises that kindness.

Coming home

We now look forward to many years at St Mary's. We are very excited to be moving for two reasons. St Mary's is a much bigger hall so we can significantly increase the number of girls we can welcome to the unit.

Secondly, it seems that we are returning to the original home of 4th East Finchley Guides. When we started, we knew that we were technically 'reopening' the number of an old East Finchley unit, but we didn't know anything about it. On visiting St Mary's we found a storage cupboard with a sign on the front that said '17th Finchley Scouts & 4th East Finchley Guides'. It must be 30 years old. If you have any memories of Guiding in East Finchley, particularly at St Mary's we'd be delighted to hear from you.

The bigger hall means we can grow Guiding in East Finchley. We meet on Thursdays during term time from 7.30-9pm. Guides is open to girls aged 10-14 years. If you are interested in joining, we are having a taster session on Thursday 17 January from 7.30-9pm.

Please email 4theastfinchleyguides@google-mail.com to let us know if your daughter wants to attend. Come along to find out what modern Guiding is all about and read more at www.girlguiding.org.uk

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By Ricky Savage, the voice of social irresponsibility

Your carriage awaits

In the cold grey of a January morning the post-Christmas misery starts to grip the huddled commuters waiting listlessly on the platform. The only sound is them quietly moaning that there's never a Charing Cross train when you want one while they prepare to kill to get the last seat. But not me, because I love the tube.

The sprawling network, Harry Beck's wiring diagram tube map, Charles Holden's art deco stations and Eric Aumonier's Archer statue at East Finchley make it the jewel in the crown of London. And it's been like that since the first Metropolitan Line trains rattled between Paddington and Farringdon 150 years ago.

It's not just the history or the architecture that make me love the tube; it's something else that does it for me. Why? Because I grew up in the suburbs and it became my transport of delight, my spaceship, my time machine and my escape pod from somewhere I didn't fit in.

Growing up, nothing could touch the excitement of going into London to sample the alien world of shops, buses and cars that contrasted with the sleep-inducing banality of home. The local shops were just a shop, but Hamley's was heaven. And when I became a disreputable youth I discovered Camden and Kensington Market and the dark and exciting underbelly of the city and I knew that was where I belonged.

Black leather jacket, jeans, baseball boots, shades and soft pack Marlboro got me funny looks as I shambled through the early evening. The net curtains twitched and the middle classes muttered a chorus of uncomprehending disapproval. But ahead of me was the sanctuary of the tube. My passport to freedom.

First, there was the crawl past back gardens and then the rush of entering the tunnel. Blackness outside, a blur of names of stations I never used, everywhere from Bounds Green to Tufnell Park, from Archway to Turnpike Lane. The unknown and the unknowing of Holloway Road and Kentish Town and then I was there.

Emerging into the night-bright neon of Piccadilly Circus or Leicester Square, into the sleaze and sophistication of the city, heading for bars and clubs and loud music and mind-altering experiences, the suburbs seemed like another planet. There in some club in Wardour Street I could find my own slice of heaven where no one sneered and net curtains didn't twitch. The tube had taken me there and even if it would eventually bring me back wasted but unashamed it was still my transport of delight. So, for that reason and many others, on Thursday 10 January I will celebrate its 150th birthday.

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- **Finchley & Hornsey Ramblers Group** Call Vivien 8883 8190
- **Glebelands Indoor Bowls Club**, Summers Lane N12. New and experienced bowlers welcome.
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- **Muswell Hill Bowling Club**, Kings Ave, N10. New & experienced bowlers welcome. Tel: 8883 0433.
- **Pilates** in East Finchley, qualified teacher. Contact Dee on 8883 7029
- **Pilates class** Weds 3.30 & 7pm at Ann Owens Ctr, N2. Call Penny 8444 2882.
- **Pilates Beginners Classes** Tue 9.30-10.30am, Holy Trinity Church Hall, Church Lane N2. Contact: Michelle 07767 804 564
- **Tae Kwon Do** for children & adults at Finchley Lido Mon & Fri 7-9pm 07949 612 706. www.taekwondo-uktd.co.uk
- **Tai Chi** class at EF Methodist Ch, Weds at 1pm. Call James Drewe 8883 3308 or james@taiji.co.uk
- **Tennis club** with four clay courts off Southern Road. Call 8883 7723.
- **Yoga, breathing & relaxation**. Weekly drop-in classes - N3, N6, N10. Phone Judy on 07956 375607.
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- **East Finchley Writers Group**, Weds at the Old White Lion. Contact Carola 8883 5808 or Lilian 8444 1793.
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- **Learn to sing** at Finchley Methodist Church, Ballards La. Call 8888 4412.
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- **Traditional music** at TOC, Highgate Hill on 1st & 3rd Tue each month from 8.30 pm. Free. All musicians welcome. 07958 282898.

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- **Bingo evening**, 8pm Sundays, at the Constitutional Club, The Walks, N2.
- **Bingo Club** Mondays 7-9 pm, Green Man Centre, Contact: Jan 8815 5452
- **Contact Lunch Club** Tuesdays at the Green Man. Call 8444 1162 to book.
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- **Northside Bridge Club**, EF Methodist Church, Thurs 7.30-11pm. 8346 8145.
- **Jewish Friendship Club** for over 60s, Tues 1-3 pm at Muswell Hill Synagogue, Tetherdown. Anita 8886 6140.
- **Muswell Hill Tetherdown Bridge**, contact 8883 4390



Karen Davies, who makes unique handmade kiln-formed fused glassware under the name Hearts of Glass, was one of the artists at the East Finchley Open fair. Photo by John Lawrence.

Enlightening artwork

By Adam Justice-Mills

On a beautifully sunny day, the East Finchley Open artists held their own Winter Fair at the Treehouse School in Muswell Hill.

Mentioned recently in a Guardian article by Zoe Williams, the Treehouse School is part of a national charity, Ambitious About Autism, helping young people with complex autism. It's also specially built to be the greenest school in the country. The aim of the event was to raise money for their charity, so we were pleased to donate £200 to them after the event.

A big thank you to more than 500 people who came along on the day, many of them seeing our work for the first time, with a lucky few winning a piece of art in our prize draw. Thanks also to the school and the parents for their support, lovely cakes

and great atmosphere.

We were also delighted to play our part in the first East Finchley Christmas Festival in early December. Encouraging creativity in the local community is a big part of what East Finchley Open is about. Our 'make your own Christmas decorations' stall gave us a chance to say thank you to all those in the area who have encouraged us in our work over the past nine years.

Our next event is in the Highgate Gallery from 8-21 March, where we will be showing new work on the theme of 'Cycles'. More details in next month's *ARCHER* and on www.eastfinchleyopen.org.uk.

Buddy, won't you buy a book?

By Daphne Chamberlain

The Olympics took place off the Cornish coast, and the slowcoach champion was Tommy the Turtle. If you live underwater you will know this already. I got my information via Aubrey Rose from Hadley Wood. He had told his grandchildren tales of Tommy, high-jumping champions Smoky the Salmon and Freddie the Flying Fish, and security guards Sammy the Shark and Billy the Whale. Then, when he sat next to teacher Elizabeth Newson in a Barnet cafe, a book was born. She was sketching their fellow customers, but soon found herself illustrating Mr Rose's story.

Aimed at the 5-9 year-old age group, this picture book includes information about geography and sea creatures as part of the fun and games. **Sea Olympics**, by Aubrey Rose and Elizabeth Newson, published by Chaville Press, ISBN 978-0-9569344-3-7, was promoted in an event at artsdepot at the end of October, which also launched three other Chaville Press books.

Finchley artist Mari l'Anson's **Indian Sketchbook**, ISBN 978-0-9569344-6-8, is a record of her two journeys through India. Mari has a real gift for bringing what she sees before us as if we were seeing it ourselves.

The Friern Hospital Story, by David Beguer, ISBN 978-0-9569344-4-4, tells the story

of the building which started as the Colney Hatch Asylum, and became luxury apartments.

We Used To Write Letters, by Keith Martin, ISBN 978-0-9569344-5-1, is written by the publisher himself. A collection of letters between himself and his family and friends, it not only covers their own lives, but reveals a lot about the changing world around them (the last few pages concentrate on the battle to save Friern Barnet Library.)

The launch event, featuring sofas, singers and a piano, was well-attended and entertaining. One of the songs was "Buddy, won't you spare a dime?" Maybe you will....

Contact book shops, Amazon, or Chaville Press (020 8445 7850 or email keith.martin18@btinternet.com).

January at the Phoenix

By Carina Volkes, operations manager at the Phoenix

It's January so in the film world that can only mean one thing: the start of awards season, and a whole lot of films by Oscar winners.

The month begins from 4 January with Dustin Hoffman's first foray into directing. Starring British greats such as Maggie Smith, Billy Connolly and Michael Gambon as retired opera singers, *Quartet* is a comedy that is guaranteed to put a smile on your face.

Following the dizzying commercial and critical highs of *The King's Speech*, all eyes are on Tom Hooper as he delivers his follow-up, and with *Les Misérables* from 11 January it looks as though he may have done it. Look out for Anne Hathaway delivering a blistering rendition of 'I Dreamed a Dream' performed live in the take without any post-synchronisation work.

We finish the month from 25 January with *The Sessions*, the powerful but funny true-life account of journalist and poet Mark O'Brien, who at the age

of 38 set out to lose his virginity despite being confined to an Iron Lung.

If you're looking for something special, check-out Russian Cannes winner *Elena* on 29 January, or go behind the scenes at the Phoenix with our tours on Sunday 13 January. Places are strictly limited for the tours so be sure to book.

On 13 January we welcome Academy Award winner and film historian Kevin Brownlow to introduce a classic screening 'From the Archives'. It was filmed in 1927 and stars the legendary Clara Bow. The score will be performed live by leading silent film accompanist Stephen Horne.

As always, our café is open daily to take the chill off with our range of hot drinks and a chance to try out our brand new furniture. Happy January, film fans!

Golden jubilee for music society

Review by Ken Carter

On 1 December at All Saints, Durham Road, East Finchley residents, visitors and past singers from the London Ripieno Society came together to celebrate the society's 50th year under the benign guidance of Geoffrey Hanson, its founder.

This was a choral concert, befitting the occasion. We heard Bach's *Magnificat in D*, Haydn's *'Nelson' Mass* and the first performance of Hanson's *Ode to the Human Voice*.

Performers took their places on the raised part of the church, with conductor and soloists at the front, instrumentalists behind and choir at the back. As a result, the choir of some 40 people sounded recessed, but the trumpet did well.

The Baroque works were vigorous without being rushed. Geoffrey Hanson is not disposed, thank goodness, to race ahead fashionably, as if the music were hardly worth lingering over.

Ode to the Human Voice, a musical setting of local writer Fleur Adcock's graceful but probing poem written to celebrate the Ripieno Society's 50th

anniversary, suited Geoffrey Hanson's style - contemporary but mindful of the past, light but conscious of the dark.

There were soloists in each work. Elisabeth Clarke, soprano, took a while to find her style; once found, her singing had grace and intelligence. Pauline Wetherill, second soprano, had a creamier voice, with fewer demands being put on it. Bethia Hourigan, mezzo-soprano, had grave distinction, while William Davies, tenor, had a good, clear, ringing attack and Andrew Thompson had a gruffer, more grounded manner. Nicholas Luff made the organ's presence known.

All in all, the Ripieno Society's high, dignified standard was maintained. Why don't more people in East Finchley come along to enjoy this local treasure?

What's On... E-mail your listings to: the-archer@lineone.net

Tuesday 8 January

- **Egyptian Pharaoh Akhenaten**: talk by Lucia Gahlin, hosted by Hendon and District Archaeological Society; 7.45pm, Avenue House, East End Road, Finchley, N3 3QE. Tea and biscuits.

Sunday 13 January

- **Monthly litter pick** at Stanley Playing Field. Meet 2.0 pm, equipment provided.
- **Heritage tour of the Phoenix Cinema**: a chance to go behind the scenes at this historic picture house. Places are limited and cost £2 per person. Contact box office,

020 8444 6789.

Thursday 31 January

- **Dig for Victory**: talk by Russell Bowes, hosted by The Finchley Society; 2.30pm at Avenue House, East End Road, N3 3QE. Everyone welcome; £2 admission charge for non-members.

Saturday 9 February

- **Supper Quiz in aid of NSPCC**, 7.0 pm for 7.15, Parish Hall, St Mary at Finchley, 32a Hendon Lane, N3. £12.50 (incl. fish supper, byo drinks). Tickets: 83612663 or email holborough43@aol.com

**Letters to the Editor****First World War
memorials**

Dear Editor,

With the approach of the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War there is bound to be renewed interest in the names recorded on our local war memorials. At Holy Trinity Church in Church Lane we have what we thought was a fairly comprehensive list of all those men who died "for King and Country" between 1914 and 1918. However, having compared the war memorial in the church with the one in the school, we find that nine names are listed on both, leaving a further fourteen not included on the church memorial.

We also wonder whether there are other memorials in East Finchley listing additional names. We have 186 listed at Holy Trinity Church and a further 14 at the school, making a round total of 200. Was this the total sacrifice of East Finchley in World War I? We think it was probably worse than that.

I should be very interested to know where else names are listed and would like to make a record of them for passing on to the national archive. I can be contacted on joda@fsmail.net or on 020 8883 4154.

The lists include what might be regarded as East Finchley names and I would especially like to hear from descendants of these, assuming they are still in the locality, for example: Bedwell, Belcher, Bowman, Cattle, Cole, Copping, Hopkins, Kirkham, Lamb, Partridge, Pidgeon, Sears, Southam, Surrey, Tomkins, Webb, Whitebread. I shall of course be happy to show people the complete lists if they contact me.

**Yours faithfully,
Churchwarden,
Holy Trinity Church,
Church Lane, N2**

A Halloween treat

Dear Editor,

A couple of days before All Saints' Day, through the letter box of a house near to where Deansway joins East End Road, a notice came saying that if anyone living there did not want to participate in the 'Trick or Treat' activities of Halloween, no lights were to be visible inside the front of the house, between 5.30 and 7.30pm.

The instruction was strictly obeyed, so astonishment was expressed the following morning when it was found that the hinge of the front gate, which had been insecure for several weeks, had been replaced.

Immense gratitude must be expressed to those who organised the event in such a way that the elderly could receive a treat without risking a trick. That was very kind. Thank you!

**Yours faithfully,
An appreciative resident
(Name and address supplied)**

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**Don't spoil
East Finchley**

Dear Editor,

As I am at present housebound, due to a bad fall injuring my pelvis, I cannot walk or go to meetings. Neither do I have access to the internet. But I do care about the future of East Finchley (especially Cherry Tree Wood, which should be kept sacrosanct and not built on).

East Finchley is a very different place from the backwater it was when I moved here more than 25 years ago, from Belsize Park. It has developed into a very nice place to live in (apart from the hazards and noise of too many motorbikes).

I think there should be no more houses built in East Finchley, as there has already been an increase in the houses and population over the last 25 years.

There is a good selection of local shops, just about right. The recently opened Waitrose in Muswell Hill and the frequent bus services there mean that we do not need or want any more supermarkets. We have Budgens and Iceland, and – even better – the excellent fruit and vegetables provided by Tony's Continental in the High Road.

The shops in East End Road should be encouraged to remain individual traders, and the Post Office there should be re-opened. The Council should not increase the rates so that the traders have to close. East Finchley is now just right as it is. Don't spoil it!

**Yours faithfully,
Margo Mattinson,
Fortis Green, N2.**

**Thank you...
whoever you are**

Dear Editor,

This is to thank the anonymous person who put a blue envelope through my door with the handwritten thought "No act of kindness, however small, is ever wasted" with a £10 note. At first I was very puzzled and couldn't fathom it, until I spotted what was a website www.givemondays.com.

I discovered an anonymous community of givers who perform random acts of kindness – on Mondays! At present the suggestion is to give £10 but in the future the hope is to develop more community projects. I have lived in East Finchley for many years and it was a lovely reminder of what a great community we have and all the projects that already exist. Thank you. Much appreciated.

**Yours faithfully,
Jane Townsend,
Huntingdon Road, N2.**

Allotments**at the ready**

Allotment holders in East Finchley will shortly be getting their plots ready for the spring and the growing season ahead.

A reminder that Budgens in the High Road is one of the stockists of Your Allotment magazine, which is written for the allotment community across north London.

**War memorial saved...
but where next?**

By Bruce Boyd

At a Barnet Council planning committee on 5 December, the proposal for the demolition and redevelopment of the ex-Royal British Legion building in Brackenbury Road was approved (Soapbox, THE ARCHER, December 2012).

However, strict conditions were placed on the developer with regard to the old Manor Park Mission Great War memorial plaque contained within the building. In short, apart from making a suitable record of the plaque, the developers must come up with a plan for its safe removal and suitable relocation elsewhere within the local area.

This plan has to be approved by Barnet Planning and the relocation take place before redevelopment work can start on the old Manor Park Hall. Assuming that the plaque can be safely removed, the question remains about where it should go?

Most fitting

One suggestion was the garden of the Finchley Memorial Hospital in North Finchley but that is rather too far away from its original location and the plaque would be exposed to the elements.

The best suggestion would seem to be inside Holy Trinity Church in Church Lane, N2. Apart from being the closest place of worship to its existing location, it already has existing memorials to the war dead of both world wars. Furthermore there are also the graves of world war service casualties in the adjacent churchyard. Surely, the most fitting place?

The parish team of Holy Trinity headed by Fr Gray

Featherstone certainly agree. They would welcome the relocation of the plaque to the church but ultimately the decision seems to be down to the planning service in consultation with the developers. It is not known if the Royal British Legion will have any say in the matter, although it could be

argued that they relinquished any rights to this when they left the memorial behind!

Do you have any views or ideas about this? If so, contact THE ARCHER and also East Finchley's councillors Arjun Mittra, Colin Rogers and Alison Moore, as well as Barnet Council's planning department.

**From asylum to
apartments**

In 1851, one of north London's most striking buildings opened its doors for the first time. The Second Middlesex County Pauper Lunatic Asylum (later known as Colney Hatch Asylum, latterly Friern Hospital) was the largest asylum in Europe and at its peak housed over 2,600 patients. The term Colney Hatch became synonymous with mental illness.

Chairman of the Friern Barnet & District Local History Society David Berguer has written a history of Friern Hospital which covers its design and building, its operation and the treatment of mental illness and, with the arrival of a new policy of "care in the community", its run-down, closure and subsequent conversion into luxury apartments, Princess Park Manor, and the creation of a retail park and 30 new roads.

The Friern Hospital Story: The History of a Victorian Lunatic Asylum runs to 180 pages and contains 140 photo-



The cover photograph from David Berguer's book

graphs, illustrations and diagrams. The book is available direct from the publisher Chaville Press, 148 Friern Park, N12 9LU at £14.99 plus £3 postage and packing or from bookshops. ISBN 9 780956-934444.

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Councillor Old (back left) helps other volunteers to clean up Stanley Field on the December litter pick. Photo courtesy of Friends of Stanley Field.

Stanley Field and the canal boat

By Ruth Brown

Volunteers who were litterpicking on Stanley Field found two large bunches of keys that looked suspiciously as though they'd been deliberately thrown over the fence from the path. One set was clearly the keys to a boat.

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They took the keys to the front desk of Fortis Green police station, which is staffed five days a week by a rota of volunteers. They were very friendly and helpful, and turned into amateur detectives, making phone calls around the country.

They finally managed to track down the canalboat owner, who was happy to be reunited with the keys that had been stolen when his property had been broken into. He was very grateful to all the volunteers involved.

Campaign continues

The Friends of Stanley Field hope they won't find any more stolen property at their monthly litterpicks! Seven or eight helpers have been coming to help, keeping the field a green and pleasant open space for the many local people who enjoy it for sport and recreation every day. Joggers and dog walkers mark a well-worn path round the field, and the grass pitch is kept short by kids playing football.

December marks a year since Barnet rejected the Big Society SportsEF bid to keep Stanley Field for sport, funded by the London Marathon Trust. Barnet began negotiations with developers, but a year on, the final fate of the field is still uncertain.

The campaign for Stanley Field has always enjoyed the support of the East Finchley Labour councillors and, in December, Conservative councillor Graham Old, representing Church End, helped out at the litterpick. If you want to help too, the next litterpicks are at 2pm on Sundays 13 January and 10 February.

Crazy for You

Review by John Lawrence

As the dark days of January close in around us, who wouldn't want to be whisked off to the bright lights of Broadway? Fortunately, anyone on a budget can achieve the effect by taking a short bus ride to Highgate.

There, the ever-inventive Ovation company is presenting George and Ira Gershwin's *Crazy for You* in the Upstairs at the Gatehouse theatre, running until the end of January.

Making miraculous use of the limited space available, a fizzing cast of 14 conjures up New York's chic theatreland one minute and then a drowsy Wild West frontier town the next as the story follows would-be impresario Bobby Child and his quest to win the heart of the beautiful Polly by putting on a show at her father's crumbling old playhouse.

There are two stories behind this production. First, *Crazy for You* is a modern-day Gershwin musical, dating back only as far as 1992. Creator Ken Ludwig

justice to such a massive show in a tiny theatre with no stage machinery, limited wing space and precious little room for scenery. Whatever they said worked, and they've delivered in style.

The intimacy of the theatre is perfectly suited to the tenderness of *Someone to Watch Over Me*, sung to perfection by Ceili O'Connor as Polly, but it also comes alive in a riot of tap dancing and hand waving for the big dance routines. You can't help but be swept away by the spirit of it all when 14 people are hoofing their hearts out to a live band just a few feet in front of you.

Cleverly, John and Katie have arranged the auditorium so that the action takes place in a long stage area between



Bela (James Doughty), left, and Bobby (Jay Rincon). Photo by Minyahil Giorgis.

based the production on Gershwin's 1930 hit *Girl Crazy* and was given permission to use other songs from the Gershwin back catalogue, effectively creating a greatest hits show.

There are some great numbers in there: *Embraceable You*, *Things Are Looking Up, But Not For Me* and *Nice Work If You Can Get It*, plus a storming Act 1 dance finale for *I Got Rhythm*.

Secondly, Ovation's John and Katie Plews had to fly to New York to convince the Gershwin estate that they could do

an audience split in two and banked on either side. Every time I looked across at the faces opposite me, they were wreathed in smiles. For a winter escape, you couldn't go anywhere better.

Crazy for You runs Upstairs at the Gatehouse, Highgate Village, until Sunday 27 January; Tuesday to Saturday at 7.30pm and Sunday at 4pm. Tickets priced £14-16, with concessions available. Box office: 020 8340 3488, or www.upstairsatthegatehouse.com

Cyclists: a laser or a coconut?

By Daphne Chamberlain

Are you a cyclist? If so, did you know you can now defend yourself with a laser, or even transform your bike into a horse?

In case manoeuvring vehicle drivers don't see you, a handlebar-mounted laser can project a bright green image of a bike onto the road. See www.kickstarter.com for details and pictures of this new design, which is not without controversy.

And, showing that cyclists pay homage to the past as well as the present and future, you could fix a Trotify on your front wheel. This is a wooden device fitted to the front brake mount which clacks together two halves of a coconut as the wheel turns. See www.trotify.com to prove I am not making this up.