

**Letters****Stamp of approval**

Dear Editor,

Twice in recent months, I've turned up at the Post Office in the High Road to find it shut due to strike action. Annoying, but looking into the reasons for the temporary closures, I can see why they might be necessary.

There always seems to be a lot of grumbling about the size of the queue in the Post Office but I think the staff do a tremendous job and the fact that so many of us use the place is a sign of how important it is to East Finchley.

To see the office transferred into a shop, or taken over by someone outside the postal business, as the Post Office is proposing, would have terrible consequences for everyone who has come to appreciate a reliable and easy-to-reach local service.

Let's hope that wiser counsels prevail and the Post Office we have stays as it is. In the meantime, we should all use it as much as possible to show how much it is valued.

Yours faithfully,
Stephen Gregory,
Fortis Green, N2.

Plans for pavilion

Dear Editor,

Just to say that I will not have time to see all the plans for this development as they have come out with somewhat short notice. It is, however, very important that we local people are informed as to who is proposing these changes, what type of food will be served and most important of all to use the right name, e.g. Wood and not Park and therefore trees should not be felled without consultation with residents.

What is meant by "right of way"? This area has been sadly neglected over the years and is just used as a muddy dumping ground for cars by people who do not live in the area.

We chose to live here many years ago as it was a safe area for our children to walk about and play. People who live at the end of Summerlee Avenue near to the Wood are also being ignored. Boris Johnson and Barnet Council please note.

Yours faithfully,
Jeanne Wray,
Baronsmere Road, N2.

Send your correspondence to: "Letters Page", The Archer, PO Box 3699, London N2 2DE or e-mail the-archer@lineone.net.

Letters without verifiable contact addresses will not be printed. Contact details can be withheld on request at publication. We reserve the right to abridge letters for reasons of space.

Saturday bridge club

Bridge players are welcome to join a regular Saturday afternoon session at the Ann Owens Centre in Oak Lane from 1.30pm. It's a friendly and non-intimidating place to play, and the venue is accessible to disabled people. For further information, contact Ray Tiano on 07944 562180 or email raymond.tiano@yahoo.co.uk

Menace of the monster weed

By Janet Maitland

Has Japanese Knotweed invaded your garden? Are the new shoots already thrusting up sturdily through your soil even though you thought you'd dug it all up last year?



This weed, pictured, introduced into Britain in the 19th century as an ornamental plant, can grow at the rate of a metre a month, with even concrete and Tarmac proving no barriers. It has taken over huge stretches of woods, roadsides and river banks all over the country.

It's an offence to "cause it to grow in the wild" under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. If it's on your land and it's invading other gardens, a civil action may be taken against

you if you don't get it under control. It's also illegal to dispose of roots, leaves or stems in the wrong place, like your green recycling bin, or the council dump.

How to deal with it

Don't try to dig it up, unless you're prepared to dig to a depth of three metres and over an area that's seven metres wider than your patch of weed, and then to sieve the soil you've dug up to remove every tiny piece of root. The most up-to-date advice is to use a combination of herbicides and cutting to get it under control.

Cut the stems right down to the base every three weeks throughout the spring and summer. This will eventually weaken the roots. Use secateurs, not a strimmer, as a tiny piece of root or stem can produce a new plant in only 10 days.

The advice of the Environment Agency is to put the cut stems into securely tied bin liners and get them collected and taken to an approved site for disposal. For further advice go to www.environment-agency.gov.uk For photographs of the weed and other useful information go to www.cornwall.gov.uk/PDF/JKGuidance.pdf

Tips to kick the smoking habit

It's October again and with it comes Stoptober, a month-long campaign to encourage people to stop smoking. If you have decided to stop smoking this month, here are a few tips from cognitive hypnotherapist Muriel Bouvier to help you on the way.

- Review your reasons to stop smoking and ask yourself how motivated you are (on a scale of 0 to 10). The clearer you are about your reasons, and the more motivation you have, the more likely you are to succeed.
- Remember that cravings are usually mild and only last about 3 to 5 minutes. They also rapidly decrease in number with time.
- During a craving, sip a little water, take some deep breaths and if you like, have a sugar-free mint or gum.
- If you often have a cigarette when your phone rings, change the ringtone of your phone.
- Hold something in the hand that you would normally use to hold your cigarette (a bottle of water or your phone, for example).

Last year, 160,000 people signed up to Stoptober. Why not do it this year? Remember that will power has very little to do with your success. It is mostly changing your thoughts that will make a difference.

For information about her hypnotherapy sessions in East Finchley, contact Muriel on 020 8374 4468 or through her website www.MurielBouvier.com

Nigh-on 50 years in the flower trade

By Nick Young

One of the High Road's longest-serving retailers has retired after almost half a century of serving the people of East Finchley. Florist Michael Blan, 65, has worked at Josephines (60 High Road) for 49 years and took the decision to retire this summer.

He had worked at Josephines since leaving school at the age of 16 in 1964, and ran the shop with his sister Tricia and brother-in-law Jimmy Olney for many years until it was sold to the present owner in 2004.

"Anyone who has served in the same shop and the same area for almost 50 years in a pressured job like floristry deserves a comfortable retirement," said proprietor Michael Doukaki, adding that Michael Blan has "served East Finchley long enough and it's about time for him to put his feet up and enjoy

having spare time... I as well as all our customers would like to wish Mike a happy retirement!"

Josephines has been a part of the East Finchley community since the 1950s and is named after the original owner. In recent years, the business has diversified in order to compete with the supermarkets and the rise of online shopping, and nowadays sells greetings cards, chocolates and champagne as well as flowers. More information can be found on the company's website www.josephinesflowers.co.uk

Any old valves?

By Daphne Chamberlain

If you happen to have any valves hanging around, Bletchley Park could be interested. One of the highlights at the Second World War codebreakers' museum is a copy of Colossus, designed by Tommy Flowers, first used in 1944 and now officially recognised as the world's first electronic programmable computer. The originals were destroyed after the war, but this duplicate is wowing all visitors.

Obviously enormous (room-size), it needs an awful lot of valves. So donating any you have would be a great way of recycling (and you won't need a bin of any colour). Do get in touch with the National Museum of Computing first. There are also many other ways to support the computer gallery, and many other interesting

things to see and hear about at Bletchley Park.

It couldn't be easier to visit by public transport. It's 40 minutes on the train from Euston to Bletchley, and about 300 metres walk from the station. Your admission ticket is an annual entry pass. For more information, visit www.tnmoc.org and www.bletchleypark.org.uk.

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