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A community newspaper for East Finchley run entirely by volunteers.

Children march to save our library

Children will lead one final protest march in a bid to stop Barnet Council imposing cuts that would see East Finchley Library dramatically reduced in size or closed altogether. The demonstration is being planned at a time when the council's own figures confirm just how popular the library still is.

Campaigners are asking for a massive turnout of children, families and all library users



for the march on Saturday 12 September. It will start at East Finchley Library at 10.15am and go along East End Road to Church End Library where it will be joined by a brass band and a red bus before moving on up Ballards Lane to North Finchley Library.

Decision time approaches

As we were going to press, Barnet Council was due to publish the results of this year's public consultation on the library service. The council's final report, spelling out how the cuts will be made, will be published on 11 September. The community may be asked to run East Finchley Library itself but there is no guarantee this will be feasible. The library may be moved to much smaller



Father Gray Featherstone, back row, and the members of Holy Trinity Church enjoy their summer barbecue on Sunday 12 July, where younger members of the congregation were sporting T-shirts, stickers and balloons in readiness for the library march in September.

premises, or it could be shut completely.

The report will be considered at a council meeting on 21 September, and then probably referred to a full council meeting on 20 October.

September's protest march is therefore one of the last chances for library users to show their feelings. If the photos on this

page are anything to go by, very few young readers want to lose East Finchley's service.

What the numbers say

Figures obtained through a Freedom of Information request and passed to *THE ARCHER* show that East Finchley Library has seen an increase in children's borrowing of 18% over the last five years.

Seven in ten people living in N2 are registered users of the library and East Finchley has the highest frequency of visits in the whole borough.

East Finchley Library costs £150,000 a year to run. Campaigners point out that this is far less than the £180,000 salary paid to Barnet Council's chief executive. Together, Barnet's five threatened libraries account for less than 0.25% of the council's budget.

10,000 borrowers

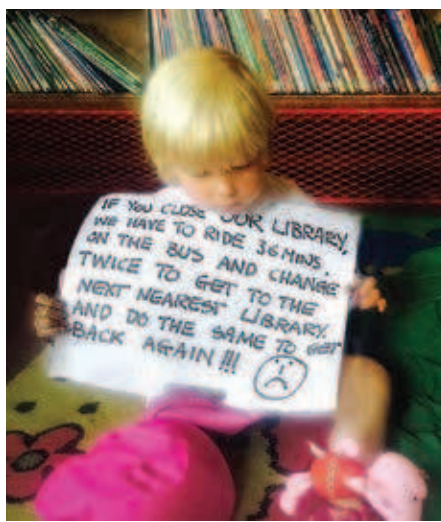
Parent Susie Huntington told us: "Every year more than 10,000 people borrow books from East Finchley Library."



Save our library: Young readers and students put their message across.

That doesn't include the many people who use the library for other reasons like revising for exams, after school clubs, internet access, community groups and surgeries run by our local councillors. The library is particularly important to the children and young people of East Finchley."

March organiser Polly Napper, of East Finchley Library Users Group, said: "We are throwing a final big effort at our children's march on 12 September. We need as many people as possible to come!"



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Recycling & refuse 020 8359 4600
Primary Care Trust 020 8201 4700
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Employment Service 020 8258 3900

Haringey Council

Leisure 020 8489 0000
Alexandra Palace 020 8365 2121
East Finchley Library 020 8883 2664
Gt North Leisure Park 0870 240 6020
Muswell Hill Odeon 0870 505 0007
Phoenix Cinema 020 8444 6789
Tourist Info Service 0870 128 8080
Warner Cinema Village 020 8446 9933

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NSPCC 0800 800500
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Cancer Support 020 8202 2211
Carers' Line 0808 808 7777
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MIND 020 8343 5700
National Blood Centre 0845 7711 7711

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Finchley Memorial 020 8349 7500
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Whittington 020 7272 3070
Western Eye Hospital 020 7886 6666

OAP's Advice

Barnet Age Concern 020 8346 3511
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Independent Age 0800 319 6789
Help the Aged 0808 800 6565

Campaigning lawyers

Two local lawyers have been honoured for the leading roles they have played in the Save UK Justice campaign to prevent cuts to the legal aid system.

Jonathan Black, from East Finchley, and Paul Harris, from Finchley, were jointly awarded the title of Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year. They have been instru-



Out in front: Lawyers Paul Harris and Jonathan Black.

mental in fighting austerity cuts to the system, including organising public rallies and strike action in courts across the country.

Jonathan is president of the London Criminal Courts Solicitors Association, and Paul is a former president of the same association. Both men write weekly blogs about the campaign and can be followed on Facebook and Twitter at Save UK Justice.

Leisure centre

re-think

Residents are being asked for their views on proposals to rebuild Barnet Copthall and Church Farm leisure centres at a cost of £23million.

The council says Church Farm and Barnet Copthall are its oldest leisure centres and require immediate investment to bring them up to modern standards.

Barnet Copthall leisure centre would be replaced with a brand new building nearby with better swimming facilities as well as a larger gym and studio space.

Church Farm would be moved to a larger site nearby, either Danegrove Playing Field in East Barnet or Victoria Recreation Ground in New Barnet.

To maintain the continuity of service both the existing leisure centres would remain open while the new facilities were being built.

The consultation runs from now until 23 September. Residents are being asked to share their views on these proposals by completing an online questionnaire which can be found at engage.barnet.gov.uk or by picking up a paper copy from Church Farm, Copthall, Finchley Lido, Burnt Oak and Hendon leisure centres as well as the council's libraries.

A1 accident witness appeal

Police are appealing for witnesses to a fatal collision, which occurred on the A1 Falloden Way, near the junction with Addison Way, early on the morning of Wednesday 15 July.

A 45-year-old man, reported to be the driver of a red 'old-style' BMW 318, was taken to hospital where he later died from his injuries, after his car collided with a lamppost. No other vehicles are believed to have been involved.

The A1 was closed in both directions for several hours

following the crash, whilst an investigation took place, causing traffic chaos in much of the surrounding area.

Anyone who saw the car travelling north on Falloden Way at around 5.20am should call the Serious Collision Investigation Unit on 020 8991 9555.

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Watchdog finds holes in dentistry services

Research carried out by Healthwatch Barnet, the local health and social care watchdog, has shown that access to NHS Dentistry in the borough still needs to be substantially improved.

In a mystery shopping survey of 50 dental practices, Healthwatch Barnet found that over half of practices were not accepting new NHS adult patients and just under half were not accepting new children as patients.

This contrasts sharply with the fact that over 90% of the practices were accepting both adult and children as new private patients.

Funding frozen

Healthwatch Barnet spokesperson Mike Rich said: "The problem is not with capacity but with the fact that in spite of an increasingly growing population, there has not been any increase in funding for NHS Dental Services in the borough for 10 years."

Access to dental appointments was not the only problem. Many practices did not

have information on costs of treatment on display and not all surgeries agreed a treatment plan before treatment was offered.

But it is not all doom and gloom: 82% of people recently report having had a good experience of local NHS dental services in Barnet according to a NHS England patient survey.

Recommendations

Healthwatch Barnet recommended that urgent consideration needs to be given to the amount of funding available for NHS Dentistry in Barnet and clear information about costs should be readily available to all patients when they attend a dental appointment. All patients should receive a clear written treatment plan, including costs, before any treatment is started.

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Good cause: from left to right, Jessica, Sophie, Amber, Ava, Aitana, Francesca and Saskia.

Magnificent Seven make mark for Alzheimer's

Seven young friends took a stall at the East Finchley Festival back in June and raised well over £200 for the Alzheimer's Society.

Aitana, Ava, Jessica, Francesca, Sophie, Amber and Saskia, all aged 10-11, are part of a group called Professional Junior Fundraisers (PJF). They chose their charity because they know a number of family members with Alzheimer's, or who have died with it.

Many of the visitors to the stand found out more about Alzheimer's and how they can

help support the charity. Others were sharing their stories of friends and family members whose lives have been affected by the illness.

"I was amazed how many people told us their Alzheimer's stories at the stand. I'm so glad we chose this charity," said Sophie. The total raised was £236.

One visitor expressed her frustration at not being able to

help a relative who was suffering from Alzheimer's and not being treated properly. So, one possibility for the next PJF fundraiser would be to raise awareness and funds for an advocacy charity to help those who can't speak out for themselves.

For more information about Professional Junior Fundraisers, email: saskiarahughes@gmail.com

Police called to reports of shooting

By Janet Maitland
Police were called to reports of a gun being fired in William Close, N2, on the edge of the Grange estate, at about 6pm on Wednesday 17 June.

Officers were unable to find any victim when they arrived. A knife was recovered from the scene, but police don't yet know if this was linked to the incident.

Police are continuing to investigate. If you have any information, call the police on 101, or call Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111 if you want to remain anonymous.

Shop Assistance: thanks very much!

East Finchley Altogether Better (EFAB) has heard from many kind local people who are keen to be involved in their new Shopping Assistance programme, helping others who are less able to do their own shopping.

Can you help?

If you can offer some of your time on a regular basis to help someone with their shopping, either by going out to do the shopping, taking the person shopping, or simply helping with an online shop, you are invited to get in touch.

All EFAB Shoppers will be given training and support, along with Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks, with no cost to themselves. To join up to become an EFAB shopper, or to register your interest in receiving the service, please contact Lisa Smith on 07909 998453 or

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Mounting worries over shisha bar

By Janet Maitland

A growing number of residents are concerned about plans to open a restaurant and shisha bar in the Old Alexandra pub at the end of Church Lane, N2, even though the owners have withdrawn the original planning application, amended the design of the building and then resubmitted it.

Open-sided extension

The changes to the design are described by one Leopold Road resident as only "small modifications". Seventeen people have objected to the council about the new plans. Eleven residents objected to the original design, which included a large extension, made up of 'canopy structures' backing onto Leopold Road (The Archer, July 2015).

These structures, which were originally not fully enclosed or covered, were intended for restaurant seating and a bar where customers could smoke tobacco in hookah pipes. In the new plans, these structures will be replaced by a single canopy structure with a Perspex roof, which will be also be used for a restaurant and tobacco bar. The sides will still be open.

Effect on children

Some residents have no objections. Others are very worried about the tobacco smoke from the hookah pipes, the smells from the kitchen,

the noise levels and the pressure on parking. There's also the issue of whether a tobacco bar should be so near to Martin Primary School, less than 100m away.

"This smoking den will be opposite a primary school," said one Leopold Road resident. "How will staff and parents feel about walking past that, being open morning to night?"

The other main change to the application is the replacement of the sign of a pink hookah pipe, already attached to the side of the building, with a sign advertising that the new restaurant will be open for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

"The application is being recommended for approval by planning officers," said a council spokesperson.

To see the plans (the consultation is now closed) go to <https://publicaccess.barnet.gov.uk/online-applications> and enter the application reference number 15/02918/FUL.

What could Ray possibly mean?

Ray Davies of The Kinks, who lived on Fortis Green opposite the Clissold pub when he was growing up, was recently interviewed in the Evening Standard. The group's frontman and writer of timeless hit songs such as *Waterloo Sunset* said that New Orleans, which he left after being shot by a burglar in 2004, reminded him of East Finchley. We wonder in what way?



Any suggestions? Or have you been anywhere that reminds you of East Finchley? Email us: the-archer@lineone.net or find us on Twitter and Facebook @TheArcherN2.

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How a rebuilt Old Barn could look

By Janet Maitland

Barnet Council held an exhibition at Martin Primary School on 22 July about its plans to demolish the Old Barn on Tarling Road and replace it with a new community centre (THE ARCHER, July 2015).

Every household within a third of a mile from the site was sent a letter of invitation to come and review the draft plans or look at them on the council website and email their views by 29 July. Residents have been told that even if they missed the deadline, they will be "offered more opportunities to provide feedback after the planning application has been lodged during September".

If you don't live close to Tarling Road, you can still make your views known. There will be a four week consultation period, when you can write to the council, after the application has been made.

You can also look at the plans and take part in a survey sponsored by the Big Local by going to www.grangebiglocal.org. That survey will continue during August and the results will be sent to the council.

More space for all

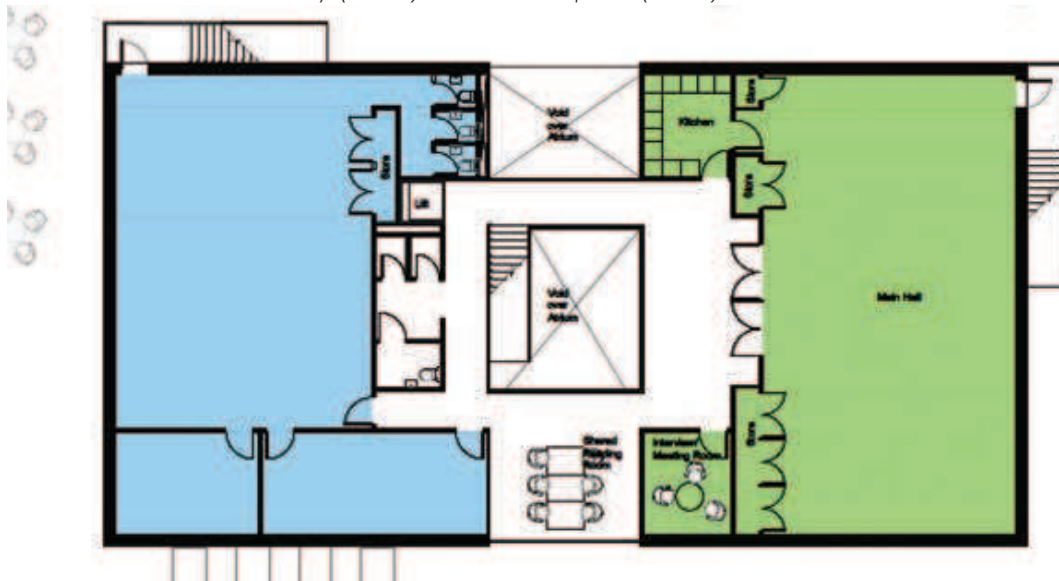
The council originally planned to refurbish the Old Barn and build a new wing intended primarily for the Somali Bravanese community, whose centre on Coppetts Road, Muswell Hill was burnt down in an arson attack in June 2013. Unresolved issues about the land and talks with interested groups, however, have led to the new plans.

As the new building will have two storeys, much of the existing adjacent green space can be retained and improved.

"The design will provide shared space and facilities for community groups and meet the council's commitment to re-provide facilities to the Somali Bravanese Welfare Group, many of whom are local to the area, following the arson attack on their facilities," said a council spokesperson.



The Old Barn as it is currently (above) and the new plans (below)



Rene is still leading the way



Birthday wishes: Rene Bell with grandson Jason and, standing from left, her son Jonathan and East Finchley Methodist Minister Rev Michael Giles.

On Thursday 2 July Rene Bell celebrated her 102nd birthday with family, friends and Church members at the MHA The Meadows Residential Home, Muswell Hill. Rene is the oldest living East Finchley-born resident and has been an active member at the Methodist Church here her whole life.

Rene retired as a steward when she was 96 and continues to lead and host the Wives Fellowship Group which started in 1949. The group meets bi-weekly and about five ladies from the church and the Meadows home attend.

Talks are given by a wide range of speakers including her own Minister Rev Michael Giles and Rev Mike Long, MHA Chaplain. The sum of their combined ages just about equals Rene's 102 years of life and faithful service.

New club for carers

Barnet Carers are recommending CarerSmart, a new club from Carers Trust. Joining CarerSmart is easy and free, and members can benefit from a wide range of offers. These include cash back on shopping from numerous high street retailers, best rates from energy providers, reductions on insurance renewals, discounts on holidays and travel arrangements, free legal advice services, and reduced-price lifestyle activities. Details from www.carersmart.org.

Carers Trust is the UK's largest carers' charity, and is open to carers, people with care needs, and staff and volunteers across the Trust network.

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Two teenagers stabbed in separate attacks

By Janet Maitland

Two teenage boys have been stabbed in separate incidents. On 13 June, a 16-year-old boy was stabbed on a footpath in Muswell Hill when he refused to hand over his bag to three robbers. On 1 July, a 15-year-old boy was stabbed in Archway but managed to travel to East Finchley, where he collapsed on the footpath behind the station.

Old railway line

The Muswell Hill assault happened at about 7.30pm when the boy was walking along the footpath that leads along the old railway line to Alexandra Palace. The victim was confronted by three teenagers who demanded his bag. When he refused, he was stabbed several times in his lower back and thigh. He was taken by ambulance to a central London hospital and was discharged after a few days.

The main suspect is described as a skinny black 16-year-old boy with short hair, wearing a red hoody with a white 'Hollister' logo on the side, blue jeans and Nike trainers.

"If the police and ambulance service had not arrived when they did, the victim could well have died from the wounds inflicted," said a Met spokesperson.

Collapse on The Causeway

In the second incident, the police and ambulance service were called to a badly injured boy on The Causeway in East Finchley shortly after 11am. He was taken to a north London hospital, where his condition was described as serious but not life threatening.

The boy told the police that he was assaulted outside Archway station by four suspects wearing grey hooded tops with the hoods up. Police would like to speak with a second male, who is believed to have been slashed on the arm during the

same incident. Police are not yet able to provide any details about the motive for the attack.

Police report that knife crime fell by 40% between 2009 and 2014. "I'm proud that we've seen a significant drop," said Police Commissioner Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe. "However, in recent months we have, in London, begun to see more young people being injured by knives."

Anyone with any information about either of the attacks is asked to contact the police on 101 or Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111.



In the kitchen: Chris Honor. Photo Manuel Harlan

Full of flavour

Set in a former chocolate factory tucked into the end of Tetherdown next to Fortismere School in Muswell Hill is very popu-

lar deli-café-restaurant Chriskitch. Owner and chef Chris Honor serves up great plates of food for lunch to all who are lucky enough to find a table.

Opening his kitchen only during the day, Chris is very much a family man who balances his classical French training with a healthy desire for a good work-life balance, perhaps attributable to his Australian upbringing. His dishes are unpretentious and inviting.

An unpredictable guidebook

Now he's spreading the same spirit in his first collection of recipes, called *Big Flavours from a Small Kitchen* and available to buy at the Cherry Tree Gift Shop in the High Road, N2.

His book contains 100 of Chris's salads, sweet and savoury bakes, soups and shar-

ing plates that he says are really simple to create at home. A selection featured in the Sunday Times Magazine last month.

Chris says: "It's as much a guidebook as a cookery book because I don't necessarily think in terms of recipes, I think in terms of combinations. Mix up the flavours and textures and, at the same time, make it appeal to the eye. Be generous, make it unpredictable; this is what I do."

Chris has worked with a range of world-class chefs during his diverse career, including Gordon Ramsay, David Nicolas, Chris Janson and Henry Brosi. He has worked all over the world and managed a team of 120 chefs at the Dorchester in London, but wanted to return to his cooking roots when launching his own establishment.

Big Flavours from a Small Kitchen is published in hardback by Octopus and retails at £25.

Choir strikes up

A new term starts in September for the A-Chord community choir, whom you may have seen on stage at the East Finchley Festival in June, and there are free taster sessions on offer.

A-Chord meet weekly in term time on Thursday evenings from 8pm-10pm at The Manor House, 80 East End Road, N3. Fees are £60 per term including refreshments.

If you have ever wanted to join a choir, they are looking for new members. An ear for music would be an advantage but you don't have to be able to read music.

The new term starts on Thursday 10 September when the choir will be learning new songs and everyone is welcome for a free taster session.

They have already started to plan their programme of concerts for the autumn/Christmas season and will be singing at the Princess Alexandra Care Home in Stanmore on Sunday 1 November and holding an even-



Fine voice: A-Chord singers at the East Finchley festival.

ing charity fundraising concert on Sunday 29 November in Muswell Hill.

Further details are available from www.a-chord.uk Find a chord choir on Facebook, or contact Laura Gerlis on laura@a-chord.uk or 07732 120464.

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Asghar Shaikh at Tops Dry Cleaners on Fortis Green. Photo Mike Coles

A clean record for 30 years

By Diana Cormack

In 1964 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 of Coral Travel Agents on the High Road. Years later it was put up for sale and an advert in a trade magazine caught the eye of East End born and bred Asghar Shaikh. He had been working in Kensington for seven years learning the trade and thought this might be a good career move.

Tops Dry Cleaners opened on 22 July 1985. Since then Asghar has built up a steady and loyal clientele who appreciate the sort of service he provides. Over the years he has got to know some of them well and a display of signed photographs on the wall reveals that they include a number of media stars.

With dry cleaning, clothing repairs and alterations having been done there for over 50 years, Asghar recently made a move into more modern methods. In January he introduced Wet Cleaning, an eco-friendly process which is water-based and uses special liquids which are kind to even the most delicate materials. Asghar told *THE ARCHER* that no chemicals are involved, so everything comes

out smelling fresh and feeling soft and, after 30 years in the business, he should know what he's talking about.

Expert talks for busy mums

Sorting Self is a series of talks for mums at the Clissold Arms in Fortis Green, giving them time to meet up and learn new ideas.

The next talk is titled Build a Capsule Wardrobe, with Daisy from Wardrobe Workshop, on Monday 7 September at 8pm.

In October, guests can learn about moving from 'Procrastination to Motivation' with Tali Spink, on Monday 5 October. Then Sonia from London Craft Club will give ideas for a home-made Christmas on Monday 2

November.

Tickets are £8 in advance or £10 on the door. There's a £1 discount if you use the code sortingself100 when purchasing. For bookings and information, visit www.sortingself.com or email sortingself@gmail.com. You can also find Sorting Self on Twitter and Facebook.

Exercise in the open air

Lyttleton Playing Fields in Hampstead Garden Suburb and Holickwood Park in Muswell Hill are to be the site of two new outdoor gyms this summer, offering free exercise equipment for anyone to use.

Work has already started and is set to finish this month. Along with a third new gym in Sunny Hill Park, Hendon, the total cost of the Barnet Council project is £48,000, and they bring the total number of outdoor gyms in the borough to 11.

Working from home is a gift

By Diana Cormack

As many of us know, having children makes a huge difference to our lives and sometimes the changes they bring about can send us in entirely new directions. Juliet Holroyd-Doveton, of Huntingdon Road, can bear witness to this.

She had worked in retail for more than 20 years, predominantly as a buyer for large corporate companies. But after having two children Juliet foresaw problems in going back to work for a large company, so she decided to take the opportunity to do something for herself.

Four years ago Juliet took the plunge and started her own business when she began designing and selling personalised gifts from home. 'Croftrose' specialises in wholesale decorative gifts which can be personalised. The lightweight decorations are all originally designed by Juliet and her friend, former East Finchley resident Emma Wass.



Juliet Rose with some of her decorations to personalise.

Photo Mike Coles

They are made of polyresin and each pack includes a special pen to allow clients to customise their chosen items. The Croftrose range of decorations includes Christmas, religious, family, new baby, teacher, medals and cups. A significant number of new products will be added every year.

As well as more resin items, Juliet told *THE ARCHER* that future plans include wooden decorations to personalise. It takes around six months or more for an idea to be developed into the finished product which is decorated by hand using high gloss paint. Visit <http://croftrose.com> to view them or call 020 3151 9180 for more information.

New faces for coffee and chat

East Finchley Altogether Better or EFAB's community-led Coffee and Chat sessions have been seeing new faces each week, with the group chatting informally and sharing local info between themselves.

On Monday 6 July the group enjoyed a presentation by Action Against Hearing Loss (formerly known as RNID), where they found out about where to seek help for hearing issues and learnt some basic sign language.

Casserole Club is due to

send a speaker in the next few weeks, and any other relevant speakers are also welcome to get in touch.

If you would like to join the EFAB Friends come along for a cuppa and a chat; please contact Lisa Smith on 07909 998453 or email us@efab.org.uk

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Tinder-dry wood on alert

By Ann Bronkhorst

We can water gardens and parks but there's no way to water a wood. Coldfall Wood, despite its little stream and its seasonal pond, flooded every winter, and despite occasional showers, is now bone dry.

Tinder-dry might be a better description. And some people can't resist the chance to start a fire, whether out of malice, curiosity or the idea that it's fun. For them, dry woodland equals tinder for an exciting bonfire.

In July youths lit a fire on the adjacent playing fields; luckily they were spotted and the fire was put out but they weren't caught. Before that, local children leaving Year 11 burned their school books in the wood.

Every summer the Friends of Coldfall Wood are on the alert for fires and fire damage. They are asking all the people who walk through this lovely ancient wood to notice and report anyone setting a fire.

In an emergency, textphone 18000 or call 999 for police, fire brigade or ambulance. Fire damage should be reported to the Friends (see below) and to Haringey on 02084891000 or email parkscustomer@haringey.gov.uk

Tree and bat walks

On a happier note, the Friends have two walks planned for August: a Summer Tree Walk, led by Iain Loasby, at 2pm on Sunday 9 August, and a Bat Walk for adults, led by Cindy Blaney, at 9pm on Friday 21 August with another one for families, starting earlier, on 11 September. For details, visit www.coldfall-woods.co.uk



Foodies: Adam, Valerie and family sell their wares at a recent food fair.

Brand new brand on the shelves

Keep an eye open next time you're passing the delicatessen shelves in local shops and you may well spot a new family of food products launched by a family from East Finchley. Adam Bass has launched

Providence Deli, which supplies kosher cooking ingredients for anyone interested in Middle Eastern food. He became aware of what makes good food through his French wife Valerie, and his whole family have helped him sell his products at food shows.

They've started well. Providence Deli products, including dairy-free basil pesto, onion relish and a hot harissa paste, are already on sale in 39 Waitrose stores and, more importantly, in Tony's Continental on the High Road, N2.

Adam, of Talbot Avenue, said: "I've been a customer of Tony's for a while and I'm really pleased they've agreed to stock our range. We'd like to be seen in small independent shops like that."

Adam got the idea to launch his own products after working in branding for 12 years and spending time with big retailers like Tesco.

"There's a big wave of interest in Middle Eastern food but the kosher market is not always well served. Big retailers don't do it very well because it's quite complicated to get right. It's hard to get kosher products that aren't full of additives. So the idea with Providence Deli is to put that right."

Find out more at www.providence-deli.com.

London to Inverness... the long way round!

By John Lawrence

Matt Lewin is planning to walk from East Finchley to Inverness for charity... a hard task in anyone's book, but he's certainly not doing it the easy way.

The 24-year-old will be carrying everything he needs for seven weeks on the high-ways and byways of England and Scotland, and taking a circuitous route via Worcestershire and Cheshire, as well as climbing Scafell Pike in the Lake District and Ben Nevis on the way, a total distance of 1,300km.

"I've got friends in Worcester and Chester who are going to join me for a bit," explains Matt, "and I wanted to hike through as many national parks as I could, avoiding the big cities. I love the Lake District and have never climbed Scafell Pike before, so I couldn't miss it out. And then Ben Nevis is on my way in Scotland."

Going the distance

Matt, a former pupil of Christ's College Finchley, who now works as a Duke of Edinburgh scheme leader in Mill Hill, is raising money for the Help for Heroes charity and for UNICEF's Nepal earthquake appeal.

He says: "I served in the Territorial Army for a year and originally wanted to join the Army, hence wanting to support Help for Heroes. Then when I was planning the walk the Nepal earthquakes happened so I wanted to help people over there who were left with nothing."

Matt, of Bedford Road, will need to cover around 30km every day if he's going to complete the challenge in time. "The toughest thing will be doing that

distance day after day," he predicts. "I'm sure it will be harder than I'm expecting but I think I've got the will to do it."

Matt would welcome any donations for his two charities to send him on his way in September. The donation links are too long for us to print here but you can find them along with updates on his progress on Facebook at London to Inverness on Foot, and on Twitter @MattsUKTrek. Please give him any support you can afford.



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YOUNG ARCHER

Apprentice chef with the big time on his plate

By John Lawrence

Anthony Sparks started out trying recipes with his mum at home and now he's mixing with the kitchen team at acclaimed restaurant The Ivy and cooking up dreams of running his own business.

At the age of 15, Anthony developed an adventurous menu of French and Thai dishes that took him to fourth place in the national finals of the Rotary Young Chef competition.

After being noticed there he was offered work experience at Avenue House in East End Road, a work placement at The Ivy and a chance to learn alongside Harrods chocolatier Paul Wayne Gregory.

"I've always been into trying different foods," says Anthony, of Strawberry Vale. "It started with my mum getting me to help in the kitchen at home. I still cook at home but it can be quite controversial! My dad, two sisters and two brothers aren't so adventurous in their tastes, but they always give me feedback on what I make."

His first experience of the catering industry was a week's work experience at a pasta factory in Borehamwood, followed by his success in the Rotary competition. At the Ivy, he got the chance to try all the food stations: colds, meat, fish and more.



Top table: Aspiring young chef Anthony Sparks.

An appetite for stress

"I like the atmosphere in a big kitchen," says Anthony. "It's quite intense and can be hot and stressed but it makes me happy to be putting food on someone's table that they enjoy and that makes their day a little bit better."

Now he's finished his

GCSEs at The Compton School, Anthony is off to Westminster Kingsway College to study for a professional chef's qualification.

And his ultimate goal? "I visualise it most days when I'm working in the kitchen," he says. "I want to have my own restaurant with a couple of Michelin stars."

Laura and Hamza on track

Christ's College Finchley students Laura Aregbe and Hamza Kadir have been selected to represent Middlesex at the 2015 English Schools Athletics Association National Championships.

Laura (Year 12) will be running in the Senior Girls 100m, while

Hamza (Year 10) will be competing in the Intermediate Boys 800m.

Both athletes managed to meet the stringent qualifying times set by Middlesex Athletics, with Laura running 12.17 seconds in the 100m and Hamza clocking 1min 58 seconds in the 800m.

This represents the first time in over 25 years that any CCF pupils have competed at the ESAA National Championships. They will be following in the



Sprinter: Laura Aregbe.



Runner: Hamza Kadir.

footsteps of previous competitors and now Olympic champions Dame Kelly Holmes, Jessica Ennis-Hill and Mo Farah.

Stanley Field handed over to Academy

Another huge milestone was reached by the Archer Academy in late June when the school took formal possession of its new Stanley Road campus.

The £12million development was funded by the Education Funding Agency, which purchased the site on behalf of the school, and supported by a £500,000 donation from the London Marathon Charitable Trust.

The school is keen to ensure that local people of all ages benefit from the investment that has been made, and so will be making the sports facilities available to local people outside school hours.

As well as a suite of classrooms and multi-use spaces for sport and recreation, the new facilities at Stanley Road include: a state-of-the-art all-weather pitch; an indoor climbing wall suitable for all abilities; three cutting edge Science laboratories;

two specialist Art and DT studios and a recording studio.

Big Dig

As reported last month, the school is holding a Big Dig gardening weekend on the Stanley Road campus on 5-6 September between 10am and 4pm, and is inviting members of the community to lend a hand.

You don't need to be a gardening expert or to bring any tools, although extras will be appreciated. All you need is some spare time and a pair of gardening gloves. Families are welcome, refreshments will be provided, and helpers will get a sneak peek at the school grounds. If you can spare a couple of hours, email info@thearcheracademy.org.uk



Jump for joy: Archer Academy students on the Stanley Road all-weather pitch.

THE ARCHER visits The Archer Academy

By Sophie, year 8

Recently we were lucky enough to have a visit from Diana Cormack, a volunteer journalist from THE ARCHER. Not only did Diana tell us all about the background of the newspaper, she also answered our many questions about how newspapers work behind the scenes and gave us tips so that we can develop our journalistic skills.

We found out that THE ARCHER has been run by passionate and dedicated volunteers since 1993. The newspaper really embraces the N2 community and anyone, of any age, can get involved in writing for

the paper. The youngest writer they've had was a five year old!

During the session I raised a question about how THE ARCHER knows whether the news they receive is reliable. The answer is they simply ask people. They work hard to track down sources and witnesses from the community to validate the stories.

During Diana's session I learnt so much about all of the demands of getting a newspaper to press, despite being effortless to read. I have become inspired to write more articles and I am now even considering sending them into newspapers like THE ARCHER!

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Anyone for table tennis?

By Diana Cormack

Years ago I had to give up playing badminton and my beloved tennis due to a neck/back problem. Since then I have been looking for something which suits my competitive nature but does not involve any overarm action.

Reading in *THE ARCHER* about East Finchley Altogether Better's table tennis reminded me that I had once been rather good at it. Admittedly that was when I was a teenager but, despite the many years in between, I decided to give it a try.

The good news is that I can still play pretty well and I've met some nice people who enjoy the game and can have a laugh too. A few of us have had to relearn the rules as they have changed a little over time and there is often banter about the correct score, but this all adds to the fun (as

do some of the double entendres made). I look forward to these Tuesday afternoon sessions and am now reaching and returning shots which I might not have even seen a few months ago!

All equipment is supplied and the provision of hot and cold drinks plus biscuits adds to the friendly atmosphere in the Shree Aden Depala Community Centre, Church Lane, N2 (beside Holy Trinity church).

Everything is free and takes place between 2.30pm and 4pm. Just come along one Tuesday or call Lisa on 07909 998453 for further information.



Energy savers: Mary and Peter outside their home in Heath View.

Don't waste your energy

There's a chance to find out how to make your home more eco-friendly when Mary Hogben and Peter Hale open the doors of their very own 'SuperHome'.

The couple's 1960s, two-storey property in Heath View, N2, has been made 74% less carbon intensive by extensive insulation works and the addi-

tion of solar panels for water heating and electricity. They say they have cut their energy bills by 40%.

Peter says "Our first aim

was to improve the fabric of the home to make it thermally more efficient. It also made sense to use the sun's energy."

SuperHomes are properties in the UK most improved for energy use. Mary and Peter will be welcoming visitors on Sunday 6 September and entry is free. To find out more and to pre-book a place, visit www.superhomes.org.uk/168

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Visitors enjoy the local art. Photo Mike Coles

Inside the artist's studio

The beauty of East Finchley Open's artists' weekends is that visitors can meet the people who have created some stunning works of art, often in the environment where they work.

This year's Open House weekends at the start of July saw 45 new and established artists displaying paintings, jewellery, ceramics, wood, glass, sculpture and textiles in 13 homes and studios around East Finchley and Muswell Hill.

The event has been running for 12 years now and seems to get ever more popular.

RICKY SAVAGE ...

"The voice of social irresponsibility"

The big rock'n'roll giveaway

Well, that's it, the world of rock'n'roll is over. No more dirty fingers from cheap newsprint, no more dashing out on a Thursday to read about the important things in life, death and music. No more voting for the ultimate gig or band or narcotic. Why? Because life is about to change forever as the NME becomes a freebie and online app.

Anyone who really cared about music lived in the world of the NME. I did, devouring the words of the unwise along with the thoughts of Julie Burchill and dreaming of the future of rock'n'roll. Whether it was rock critic Nick Kent matching Keith Richards drug for drug or writers Charles Shaar Murray or Steven Wells, your life could be measured in newsprint.

It all started back in 1952 when a bloke called Maurice Kinn decided that the long established Melody Maker needed a competitor. By the time The Beatles conquered America it was selling over 300,000 copies a week. Every year there was the poll winners' concert as the great, the good and the not so great played in front of a herd of screaming teens. This was the first golden age. By 1970 it was losing out not just to Melody Maker, but to a young upstart called Sounds as it managed to miss the psychedelic boat.

Such things did not kill the NME. It regrouped, got new writers, including Kent and Murray, and was soon back up there selling 300,000 copies per week. They still had the poll winners' concert, except this wasn't The Beatles, this was Emerson, Lake and Palmer, and Frank Zappa and Hawkwind with Lemmy belting out 'Silver Machine' in the surreal setting of The Oval. Even punk didn't faze it. Enter the music press's answer to teenage lunacy with Tony Parsons and Julie Burchill as the NME's hip young gunslingers.

Back when The Smiths tried to rewrite culture and later when Oasis did the same there was always the NME. It has outlasted Sounds and Melody Maker. Everything from Elvis to Kurt to Amy via Led Zep and The Who was there in its grubby pages.

Now they're down to 15,000 copies a week, but the NME being the NME, it is about to try and give itself away. So between now and September, if you believe in rock'n'roll treat yourself to a copy, because picking up a freebie outside the tube station just won't be the same.



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- **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 Classes** Tue 9.30, Fri 9.15 & Sun 11am. www.pilatesineastfinchley.co.uk. Michelle 07767 804 564
- **Tai Chi & Qigong** in N2, Weds 1pm. James 8883 3308/07836 710281 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.
- **Yoga**, pregnancy yoga, meditation classes. Call Sunnah 07941 321 772 www.stretchingpeople.co.uk.
- **Women's kick boxing**, Thursdays 9.30am, East Finchley Combat Academy, Church Lane, N2. Contact 07956 340540.

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- **A-Chord**, friendly choir, all genres, open to all. Thursdays 8pm at NNLS, East End Rd. Laura 07732 120464. www.a-chord.uk
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- **Dance conditioning classes**. New body in 10 lessons. Diana: 07580 041270. www.boldbodies.co.uk.
- **East Finchley Writers Group**, Weds at the Old White Lion. Contact Ralph 8444 5903.
- **East Finchley Poetry Writing Workshops**. Monthly on Saturdays. Contact Dennis Evans 8346 9528.
- **Memory Lane Singing Club** - friendly singing club meets every Friday in Finchley. Call Valerie 8458 4508.
- **Over 50s Tea Dance** at Christ Church, North Finchley. Every Weds, 1pm. 020 8444 0280.
- **Learn to sing** at Finchley Methodist Church, Ballards La. Call 8888 4412.
- **Muswell Hill after school ukulele club**, Wednesdays 4.15-5.15pm, ages 6-10. Contact Margie 07909 439513.
- **Traditional music at TOC**, Highgate Hill, on 1st & 3rd Tues each month from 8.30pm. Free. 07958 282898.

Clubs & Social

- **Bingo evening**, 8pm Sundays, at the Constitutional Club, The Walks, N2.
- **Bingo Club** Mondays 7-9 pm, Green Man Centre, Contact: Jan 8815 5452
- **French conversation** in small friendly group with native speaker. 8444 9395.
- **Friends of Cherry Tree Wood** www.cherrytreewood.co.uk or 8883 7544.
- **Haringey Recorded Music Society** informal meetings locally. Call David Moldon on 8361 1696.
- **Muslim Ladies Lunch Club** 1st & 3rd Weds, Ann Owen Ctr., Oak La. Call 8432 1415 to book.
- **North London Bridge Club**, Muswell Hill. Contact 8348 3495
- **Bridge Club**, every Saturday 1.30-4pm, Ann Owens Centre, Oak Lane, N2 8LT. Contact Ray Tiano 07944 562180.
- **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

Come and sing at the Arts Festival

This year's East Finchley Arts Festival opens with a full-throated burst of audience participation thanks to a performance of Handel's *Messiah* where all comers are invited to join in.

Singers are welcome to an afternoon rehearsal followed by a 7.30pm performance, both on Saturday 3 October, the festival's opening day. Refreshments will be provided and money raised from the event will support the festival's charities Noah's Ark Children's Hospice and the Harington Scheme.

Tickets are £15 to sing, and £5 to be in the audience. Book your place and tell organisers your singing voice by emailing eastfinarts@btinternet.com or phoning 020 3509 6418.

Nine days of special performances

The Arts Festival runs from 3-11 October at All Saints Church in Durham Road, N2. Just ahead of the *Messiah* Come and Sing, the very first event is a puppet show at midday on Saturday 3 October.

The rest of the week has a new trumpet con-

certo by Festival Director Geoffrey Hanson played by Paul Archibald and The London Mozart Players.

Massive Violins play a programme of rock and pop classics from Queen to Eminem taking in Clean Bandit, Beach Boys & Britney Spears on the way.

Kosmos, a trio of players including accordionist Milos Milovojevic, will play music featuring jazz, wild Gypsy fiddling, emotive Jewish music and hot-blooded tango. Pop Up Opera return with a performance of *The Italian Girl in Algiers*. Divertimenti play suffragette Ethel Smyth's String Quintet and Schubert's Quintet in C. Then there's the Art Exhibition with 25 local and international artists exhibiting their work; the Greenwich Soul Choir; East Finchley Writers; and a concert by local school choirs. Find all the details at www.eastfinchleyartsfestival.org.uk



Cash for festival coffers

East Finchley Arts Festival director Geoffrey Hanson received a £1,000 donation from representatives at Waitrose, who handed over the contribution as part of the company's Music Matters scheme. The cash will be a huge help in supporting the festival that runs at All Saints Church, Durham Road, N2, from 3-11 October.

Get healthy as a family

Public Health Barnet is offering children aged four to 11 and their families the chance to live a healthier lifestyle with the help of a 12-week health programme.

The 'Alive N Kicking' scheme is oversubscribed for the summer months but has sessions available in September. The programme helps young people and their families to reach and maintain a healthier weight. It aims to change people's behaviour towards food using a range of activities such as food preparation and portion control, physical activity sessions and family activity circuits.

For more information or to book a place on the programme, visit www.ank.uk.com and click on the Barnet page or ring 020 8102 0530.

Youth club fun day

On Saturday 15 August the Monday Youth Club will be holding a fun day for all the family on Martin School Field from 1pm to 6pm.

There will be music and entertainment on the stage featuring home grown talent, a bouncy castle and slide as well as plenty of games to play including five-a-side football. A variety of stalls will be selling their wares and different sorts of international food will be on sale. Entry is free, so just come along and join in the fun.



Portrait show: One of the works by artist IMPREINT.

Portraits with a balloon

Dan & DeCarlo coffee shop in the High Road is one of several venues around the world to host part of an ongoing art project by London-based artist IMPREINT.

The work, which can be seen in the backroom at 20 High Road, is part of the Portraits project by the artist which began in December 2013 when he started taking photographs of people with balloons in Notting Hill.

The project rapidly expanded when he asked people from around the world to participate

by sending pictures of themselves with balloons. These have been used to create a series of collages.

As well as Dan & DeCarlo, parts of the work can also be seen in Hornsey Library and at locations in Budapest, Syracuse in Sicily and the Georgian capital Tbilisi. The East Finchley part of the work will be on show until 31 December.

What's on at the Phoenix in August

By Nick Walker

The line-up at the Phoenix Cinema in August shines the spotlight on three compelling actresses: Greta Gerwig, Gemma Arterton and Charlotte Rampling.

Mistress America comes from writer/director Noah Baumbach whose previous zany and profound films include *The Squid and the Whale*, *While We're Young* and *Frances Ha*. Regular collaborator, star and real-life partner Greta Gerwig here also acts as co-scriptwriter. The film is an endearing comedy full of energy, chemistry and reflection; something in the mould of a Preston Sturges screwball classic.

Director Anne Fontaine's Flaubert-inspired drama *Gemma Bovary* centres on a young married couple from England, played by Gemma Arterton and Jason Flemyng, who move into an old house in rural France searching for peace and tranquillity yet fail to reckon with their next-door neighbour, whose favourite book is *Madame Bovary*...with amorous and humorous consequences. Fontaine supplies a mixture of wit, drama and sensuality whilst getting good performances from the cast wandering around in this beautiful French landscape.

45 Years is director Andrew Haigh's follow-up to his acclaimed indie film *Weekend* and a wonderful slice of humanity. The movie stars Charlotte Rampling as Kate, a woman who lives in the British countryside with her long-time husband, played by Tom Courtenay.

However something shocking is revealed and Rampling conveys the conflicting emotions of a woman by turns hurt, uncomprehending and angry. Courtenay is just as superb playing a man who is used to feeling but is unable to express his emotions.

For more information and to book tickets drop into our foyer or visit: www.phoenixcinema.co.uk

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

Wednesday 5 to Sunday 23 August

- **Photography Competition show** at Lauderdale House, Highgate, showcasing work from artists of all ages.

Sunday 9 August

- **Summer tree walk**, led by Iain Loasby, at Coldfall Woods, Creighton Avenue, N2, at 2pm. More details at www.coldfallwoods.co.uk

Saturday 15 August

- **Monday Youth Club** fun day for all the family on Martin School field from 1pm to 6pm. Music, entertainment, bouncy castle, games and five-a-side football, along with stalls and international food. Free entry.

Friday 21 August

- **Bat walk**, led by Cindy Blaney, at Coldfall Woods, Creighton Avenue, N2, at 9pm. More details at www.coldfallwoods.co.uk

Sunday 30 August

- **The Highgate Jazz with Soul Festival** returns to Lauderdale House, Highgate, presenting two special concerts. At 6.30pm, Time Out Critics Choice live act Sara Mitra performs original songs, well-known standards and fresh reworkings of traditional numbers backed by her 7-piece band. From 9pm Gilad Atzmon will be promoting his new album *The Whistle Blower* with his acclaimed jazz and Middle Eastern group the Orient House Ensemble. Tickets £17.50 (£15 concessions). Box office: 07976 379891.

Saturday 3 to Sunday 11 October

- **East Finchley Arts Festival**, All Saints Church, Durham Road, N2: nine days of music, literature, performance and arts. Full details at www.eastfinchleyartsfestival.org.uk



Letters

We asked readers what they wanted to see on the site of the Esso garage on the corner of the High Road and Church Lane, which is soon to close (*THE ARCHER*, July 2015).

Garage dreams

Dear Editor,

What do I want there? A large supermarket with a wide range. Or a proper hardware/DIY centre with a big range. Or a big Boots.

But best of all would be the compulsory purchase of Budgens and Iceland and the old Post Office site and their conversion from two stores, neither of which ever has what you really want, to one big superstore with underground parking.

Yours faithfully,
Tom Heinersdorff,
Deansway, N2.

Homes not shops

Dear Editor,

I'm a resident of Leopold Road. To your question, we definitely do not want a supermarket or any food shop on the Esso garage site on the High Road. There are more than enough already. The best use would be to build a nice block of flats for people to live in. This is what is really needed.

Yours faithfully,
Name and address supplied.

All bets are off

Dear Editor,

Regarding the future use of the Esso garage site, I trust that no permission will be granted to any betting shops.

Yours faithfully,
Renzo Fantoni,
Address supplied.

Make it a playground

Dear Editor,

I would like to see a children's playground built on the site of the Esso filling station in East Finchley. I would like it to be to the same design as a plan I had for a jungle-themed playground at the top of the Tarling Road estate, which had a long-disused playground, that I tried to campaign to reopen, before the whole site was sold off for housing.

My plan would include safe, shock-absorbing surfaces, good fencing to protect children from traffic, adventurous play equipment and plenty of plant and flower beds around the playground.

Yours faithfully,
Jake Eiseman-Renyard,
Address supplied.

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.

Perfect pavements

Dear Editor,

I would like to point out that many residents on Fortis Green are delighted with the new pavements (*THE ARCHER*, July 2015). They are a great improvement on the very cracked and unsightly stones they replaced. The work was completed with the minimum inconvenience to residents, by very helpful workers. A job very well done.

Yours faithfully,
Jo McHenry,
Fortis Green, N2.

Happy shopper

Dear Editor,

I had to write to you about the exceptional service provided by our East Finchley Budgens. I have multiple sclerosis, and had a brain haemorrhage three years ago which further altered my already poor mobility.

I walk with two sticks and regularly totter round Budgens, where they are always kind and helpful, but, during the recent heat wave, they surpassed themselves.

The hot weather adversely affects my condition and, seeing the effort it took me to get out of my car and walk along the pavement, one of the assistants rushed to my aid, helped me into a chair at the door of the shop, and said that she had seen me struggling more than usual, and did I want to wait and she would run round and get my shopping for me!

I was so touched that I felt I had to write in praise. So thank you Tilly, and everyone else at the East Finchley Budgens: you are all amazing!

Yours faithfully,
Harriet Connides,
Address supplied.

Catch up with *THE ARCHER* at www.facebook.com/TheArcherN2

or tweet us @TheArcherN2



First class party for Postman Bob

By Eugene Myerson

Four years ago, Bob Konig retired from his delivery round in East Finchley after 42 years with Royal Mail. Around 300 grateful residents threw a farewell party for him at the time at the Aquarius Archery Club.

One reason why my neighbours and I admired Bob is that he was the most conscientious postman one could wish for, always prepared to "go the extra mile." Come rain, hail, sleet or snow, we could rely on Bob to deliver our mail without fail. In February 2010 *THE ARCHER* published an article headed 'The mail must get through' with a photo of Postman Bob pushing his trolley through snow.

Bob took holidays, but I cannot recall him ever being absent through illness. And his memory was phenomenal. Bob's friendly, cheerful and courteous manner endeared him to his "customers" in the Fortis Green area south of the former Police Station. I was one of them for 30 years.

Birthday tribute

Born in 1946, he spent his early years in Highgate, later moving to Hornsey. Now Bob is back in N6, in the Highgate Nursing Home, Hornsey Lane. He has motor neurone disease, and is confined to bed or a wheelchair. Despite this, he participates in every activity offered by the home, and has not lost his optimism or his prodigious memory.

On his recent 69th birthday, former Post Office van driver Ros Lusardi and I organised a tea party at the home, attended by former colleagues and residents. A musician played "Happy Birthday" while we sang. We gave him a birthday cake, a book stand that fits on his bed-table, and a framed photo of him accompanying an article in the Ham & High newspaper.

Ros rang Bobby afterwards to get his reaction: "First Class" and "Very pleased." It was the least we could do for this formerly active man who is still remembered with affection and respect.



Bob, pictured in 2010 battling through the snow to deliver his round. Photo by Martin Addison.

Review:

North London Sinfonia

By Sam Warner

A warm, summer's evening is perfect for a classical music concert focused on Spanish music, and on Saturday 4 July the North London Sinfonia orchestra brought their collective talents, including both amateur and professional musicians, to Highgate's United Reform Church.

The orchestra opened with early 19th century Bilbao composer Arriaga's *Symphony in D* in four movements; true proficiency was apparent from the off.

The piece was followed by *Variaciones sobre la Spagnoletta de Giles Farnaby* by Xavier Montsalvatge i Bassols,

surprisingly the first time the piece has been performed outside Spain. A distinctively Spanish feel was certainly apparent thanks to János Agócsi's plucking guitar. Combined with the orchestral swells, it uplifted the audience before the interval.

The many talents of the orchestra shone through in their second half performances of Ravel's *Pavane pour une infante défunte* and *El amor brujo* (*Ballet in one act*) by Manuel de Falla y Matheu. Composed in 12 movements, the work soared with running



strings and dramatic force, and also dipped into serenity. The vocal talents of mezzo-soprano Lotte Betts-Dean were a powerful addition.

Though only an amateur orchestra, there is a pervasive sense of professionalism and passion within the North London Sinfonia. As they continue to showcase a variety of classical styles, their next concert in November cannot come soon enough. For more information, go to www.nlsinfonia.org

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Above: Richard Burr, centre, celebrates the Age UK men's cookery classes with organiser Karen Williamson, left, and cook Syd McGowen - and (above right) with some of the Age UK cookery club members. Photos by Mike Coles

Loss of Quality

It's with some sadness that we have to report the demise of the Quality Tandoori restaurant, which has been a popular part of the restaurant line-up on the High Road since 1981.

Closure came suddenly and the premises were vacated so quickly that we didn't get a chance to talk to the owner about why he was leaving East Finchley after so many years.

Work is already under way to convert the site into a Thai restaurant, in direct competition with Nahling Thai restaurant just a few doors down the road.

It's always sad to see such a long-standing business depart. In this case, the loss of Quality leaves us with two sit-in Indian restaurants in N2: Majjos and Indian Rasoi, both on Fortis Green.

So with the arrival of another Thai restaurant, what exactly

is the tally when it comes to local dining these days? For the record, here's the menu in N2:

Eat-in:

Cafés and coffee shops, 16
Dining pubs, 7
Italian, 5
Indian, 2
Thai, 2
Fish and chips, 2
Eastern Mediterranean, 2
Japanese, 1
Kebab, 2

Takeaway only:

Pizza, 4
Indian, 3
Chinese, 1
Chicken, 1
Sandwiches, 1

Bake Off star tucks in to buffet banquet

Richard Burr was the builder who came so close to winning the Great British Bake Off on television last year. With his cooking pedigree, he was the ideal guest to judge the kitchen skills of beginners from the Age UK men's cookery class at the Ann Owens Centre in Oak Lane, N2.

The men had prepared a massive buffet lunch for local members of the community and Richard was there to sample their dishes.

On the menu were green curry chicken drumsticks, quiche, salad, savoury muffins and Eton mess, washed down with home-made lemonade. As they say, the proof of the pudding was in the eating.

"It was great to speak to older men who've found out how enjoyable cooking can be," says Richard. "They really pulled it off, cooking

wise: the quiche, savoury tarts, cheese muffin and polenta salad I tasted were magnificent."

Put to the test

"In the last year, our volunteers have taught kitchen skills to over 100 men, some of whom have never even cooked an egg before," says Age UK Barnet's Karen Williamson. "This event really put them to the test!"

For more information on men's cookery courses at Age UK Barnet, phone 020 8150 0967.

Musical heroes

Artist Michael Haynes, who works at East Finchley tube station, has turned the soundtrack of his life into an art show. 'This is Music' features portraits of 16 musicians who have inspired him, among them Paul Weller, Amy Winehouse and The Who, all represented in a variety of art styles traditional and digital. Michael's exhibition runs at artsdepot in North Finchley until 13 August.

A foxy thief

On our stall at the East Finchley Festival in June we had a box into which anyone could drop stories or suggestions. One young visitor wrote very industriously for a few minutes, slipped her paper into the box and went on her way. This is her story:

There was a fox who lived in the allotments near my house. I owned two rabbits so this wasn't ideal.

One night I was in my small garden playing with my sister wearing my favourite boots. My mum called us in and I accidentally left my boots outside!

The next morning one boot was gone. I later found out the fox had stolen it and several other school jumpers for bed-ding!

Isabella Conyngham-Francis,
Brookland Rise, NW11.

Thank you, Isabella, for telling us about that. We hope one day the fox returns your boot!

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