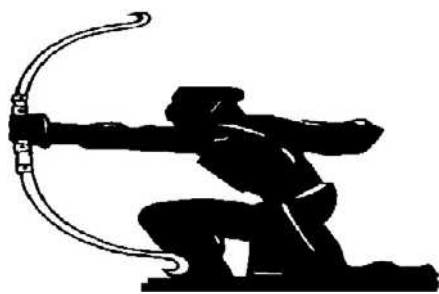


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A community newspaper for East Finchley run entirely by volunteers.



Martin School choir sings carols with the London Metropolitan Brass Band. Photo Mike Coles

A touch of magic at the winter festival

Crowds of people turned out under sunny skies for East Finchley's third Christmas Festival and, as darkness fell, the stars came out as the community carol singing began. The only snow came from a machine. Turn to pages 6-7 for our report and photo special.

Ann Owens Centre update

Age UK Barnet on the future of the day centre. Turn to page 3.

Double dose of darkness

A power company issued an apology after parts of East Finchley were left without electricity for several hours on two consecutive nights in late November.

Homes and businesses close to the tube station and around The Causeway lost power from early to late evening on the first night and during the middle of

the evening on the second night.

UK Power Networks sent out engineers to repair the two separate faults on the high voltage network. The company said 79 properties were affected.

"We understand how difficult it is to be without power and we apologise for any inconvenience caused," said a spokeswoman.

A fourth way for our library?

By Daphne Chamberlain

Members of East Finchley Library Users' Group are thinking positively in the campaign against the Council's proposed library cuts, and encourage us all to do the same. They are putting together a fourth option as an alternative to the three options proposed by Barnet.

EFLUG's Polly Napper says: "Unlike Barnet, we need to be imaginative and entrepreneurial, focused on people's needs and passions. Please share your thoughts and ideas, however small or ambitious, on the Facebook group or via the website contact form so they can contribute to thinking behind our fourth option and perhaps inspire others. We'll compile them into one coherent plan as part of our response to the consultation."

Local feeling against the cuts is strong. We have a library whose membership is increasing, and which is important to every part of our community. At the East Finchley Christmas Festival alone, 622 signatures were added to the EFLUG petition. At the time of writing, signatures had reached 3,705. The number that will take a petition to a full Council

meeting is 10,000.

Also this month, EFLUG is aiming to put a leaflet through every East Finchley door, encouraging residents to "protest the cuts, fill in the consultation, and hopefully to join us".

Members of trade union Barnet Unison, of course, are very much affected by the proposed cuts. The three options inevitably entail loss of jobs for library staff. Hugh Jordan, libraries convenor for Unison and one of only six qualified librarians employed by Barnet, will be speaking to EFLUG's next meeting at 7pm on 7 January at Martin Primary School. The meeting is open to everyone.

EFLUG's new website is www.eflibrary.com. The online petition is at <https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/no-to-closure-of-barnet-libraries>.

Politicians to contact are: Richard Cornelius, leader of Barnet Council, on cllr.r.cornelius@barnet.gov.uk or Leader's Office, London Borough of Barnet, North London Business Park, Oakleigh Road South, N11 1NP; Councillor Reuben Thompson, chair of the Children, Education, Libraries & Safeguarding Committee on cllr.r.thompson@barnet.gov.uk or Conservative Group Room, Hendon Town Hall, The Burroughs, NW4 4BG; and Mike Freer MP for Finchley & Golders Green on mike.freer.mp@parliament.uk or House of Commons, SW1A 0AA.

Turn to page 2 for EFLUG's advice on filling out the council's library consultation.

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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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Council Tax 020 8359 2608
Recycling & refuse 020 8359 4600
Primary Care Trust 020 8201 4700
Benefits Agency 020 8258 6500
Employment Service 020 8258 3900

Haringey Council

Leisure
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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Cruse Bereavement Care 0870 167 1677
Disability Info Service 020 8446 6935
EF Advice Service 020 8444 6265
Gingerbread 020 8445 4227
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National Debt Line 0808 808 4000
NSPCC 0800 800500
Rape & Sexual Abuse helpline 020 8683 3300
Relate 020 8447 8101
Samaritans 08457 909090
Refuge National Crisis Line 0870 599 5443

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Alcoholics Anonymous 0845 7697555
Barnet MENCAP 020 8203 6688
Cancer Support 020 8202 2211
Carers' Line 0808 808 7777
Drinkline 0800 917 8282
Drugs Helpline 0800 776600

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0800 665544
MIND 020 8343 5700
National Blood Centre 0845 7711 7711

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Finchley Police 020 8200 1212
CrimeStoppers 0800 555111
Victim Support 0845 303 0900

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Edgware General 020 8952 2381
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Oak Lane Clinic 020 8346 9343
Royal Free 020 7794 0500
St Luke's 020 8219 1800
Whittington 020 7272 3070
Western Eye Hospital 020 7886 6666

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Library consultation: how to fill out the form

Barnet Council's consultation on our libraries' future runs till 22 February. The East Finchley Library Users' Group is claiming that some questions are worded so that answers can innocently give the council data that can be used to justify cuts. Here is a summary of the group's advice on answering.

Q6: Don't answer! This would rank which days you want the library to be staffed. It could be used to justify reducing hours on particular days.

Q7: Don't answer! This asks you to choose a time of day when you want libraries to be staffed.

EFLUG believe that libraries should be accessible to all groups, and open as long as possible. Different people use the library at different times. Unstaffed opening times would restrict the time children can use the library, and also deter elderly and vulnerable people, and people with disabilities.

Q8: Tick 'I would not feel confident at all' and put your reasons in the comments box at Q10. This asks how you feel about an unstaffed library. Barnet has not explained how an unstaffed building would be either safe or secure.

Q9: Respond with 'I would not feel confident at all'. An unstaffed library would offer neither the same level of service, nor be as safe as a staffed building.

Q23: Tick 'Another option' and explain in the Q24 comments box why you oppose all three options. This key question forces you to rank in order the council's three options, which for East Finchley are: Option 1, Reducing floor space to approximately the size of the current computer room, and possibly relocating to another building. Opening hours longer, but only staffed for 33% of the time; Option 2, Library closed; Option 3, Offered to community to be run entirely by volunteers, but with same reduced size as Option 1, and also possibly relocated.

EFLUG believe all three options are bad, and oppose them all.

Q25: Say no! This asks if you would be interested in volunteering. While volunteers can be good if trained and supported, they should not take the place of paid professional staff. There is no comments box to express this distinction.

Q27: Say no! This asks if you would be interested in running a community library. It could give Barnet an argument to deny this community a key service, available free of charge in other parts of the borough (paid for by your council tax). Librarians would be put out of a job. A community library should only ever be a last resort.

The consultation is available in paper form in the library, and online at <http://engage.barnet.gov.uk>

Planning Applications

Barnet Council

45 Brownswell Road, N2
Single-storey rear extension
183 East End Road, N2
Change of use from Use Class B1 (office) to Use Class C3 (residential) to provide one unit.

Flat 3, 42 Fortis Green, N2

Extension to roof, including rear dormer and three front roof lights to facilitate loft conversion.

58-60 High Road, N2

Part single, part two-storey rear extension, to provide two self-contained residential units. Conversion of existing dwelling into two self-contained flats, including construction of additional storey.

158 High Road, N2

New shop front and shutters.

401 High Road, N2

Six pole-mounted antennas and two 300mm diameter dishes on rooftop. Four ground-based cabinets along southern boundary of building and development ancillary thereto.

49 Huntingdon Road, N2

Single-storey side infill and rear extension. Enlargement of existing rear dormer window to facilitate an extension to existing loft conversion.

75 Huntingdon Road, N2

Single storey side/rear extension, following demolition of existing conservatory.

Strawberry Vale Estate, N2, 1-29 Brook Walk, 1-27 Nursery Road, 1-42 Stable Walk

Replacing existing single-glazed windows and doors with new double-glazed.

4 The Leys, N2

Extending rear patio, side and rear dormers to facilitate loft conversion. New soil vent pipe and rear door.

Haringey Council

27 Annington Road, N2

Single-storey rear extension. Reaching beyond rear wall by 3.8m. Max height 3.9m. Eaves height 3m. 93 Fortis Green, N2
Listed building consent to replace plastic weatherboarding at front with wooden.

Ground floor flat, 28 Lauradale Road, N2

Single-storey rear extension.

Hair expert

Joanne Sutherland from the Jo Sutherland Hair Studio in East End Road has been recognised as one of Britain's top professional hair colourists following her graduation from the hairdressing industry's most prestigious colour course, earning the accolade of Wella Master Colour Expert.

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Ann Owens Centre: services will carry on

By Daphne Chamberlain

Mark Robinson, Age UK Barnet Chief Officer, has contacted *THE ARCHER* about the future of the Ann Owens Centre. As we said last month, the lease on the building is due to end early this year. However, Age UK Barnet has negotiated an extension with Finchley Charities, the landlord of the centre, to use the building beyond April.

We apologise for a misleading headline in last month's issue and for not including a statement from Age UK Barnet. The organisation did not receive our requests for a comment because we used the wrong email address.

As announced last spring, the existing day service is stopping in March, but Mark Robinson has told us that Age UK Barnet will be providing a new range of activities at the Ann Owens and Meritage Centres, suitable for existing users and new ones.

Mark said: "The existing

day service is changing at both centres. New services will be provided. We are working with the day service users to identify alternative services which will be suitable for them.

"The minibus service has not stopped at either centre. It continues and will continue until the service changes next year.

"We agree with The Archer in recognising the importance of transport and we are working with the Neighbourhood Services Provider Group to improve community transport in Barnet."

New lease of life for the Friends of Cherry Tree Wood

By Debbie Linton

Around 20 people helped to reinvigorate the Friends of Cherry Tree Wood by attending the charity's AGM in November following an appeal for new committee members and fresh ideas.

Everyone was keen to revive the charity and to continue to work on issues relating to conservation, protecting the ancient woodland, improving the facilities and security, holding events and liaising with Barnet Council.

Pepe, the current leaseholder of the pavilion building in the park, also came along. He reported on his development and stated he hoped to be open as a café in the summer of 2015.

Oliver Mellman and Nathan Eastwood were elected as co-chairmen. Many others came forward offering to help informally or to come onto

the committee, all bringing a variety of interests, experience and expertise.

We thank Natan Tiefenbrun who chaired the charity over the past three years and did much to build up the charity and its members from 2011 onwards, including holding a very popular sports day.

If you too would like to help the Friends of Cherry Tree Wood please visit the website at www.cherrytreewood.co.uk. For details of the next meeting in January 2015 you can also email info@cherrytreewood.co.uk. We have funds to spend and over 150 members.



In tune: The group's young ukelele players.

Get strumming!

A new ukelele club is up and running and new members are welcome. The club is based at the North London Performing Arts Centre in St James' Lane, N10, and members played their first public gig at East Finchley's Christmas Festival on 6 December. Find out more from Margie Jammy on 07909 439513 or visit www.northlondonukeleleclub.co.uk

Narrow escape for residents in flats fire

By Janet Maitland

A number of people narrowly escaped injury when evacuating a block of flats on Oak Lane after fire broke out on 4 November.

When the blaze started in a flat on the third floor, residents from most of the flats in the block started to leave the building, but burning debris and glass fell onto their escape route.

To stay or to run

"I was very concerned that residents of the block didn't know what to do in the event of a fire," said Christopher Burrows, a Watch Manager with the London Fire Brigade. "If the fire is not inside your home but elsewhere in the building, you're usually safer staying where you are unless heat or smoke is affecting you.

"Your walls, doors and floors will hold back flames and smoke for between 30 and 60 minutes. If you leave your flat, you could be rushing into choking smoke, the fire itself, or firefighters using equipment to bring the fire under control. In this case the fire shattered a window in the affected flat and it was lucky there were no injuries."

The four people who were in the flat also escaped without

injury. Nearly half of the flat was damaged but firefighters managed to prevent the fire, believed to have started in a tumble drier, from spreading to other flats.

In 2013, 54% of all deaths in London were caused by accidental fires in the home. About 60% of all fires in the home start in the kitchen, usually because of cooking.

Safety advice

To find out about fire safety in blocks of flats, go to www.knowtheplan.co.uk

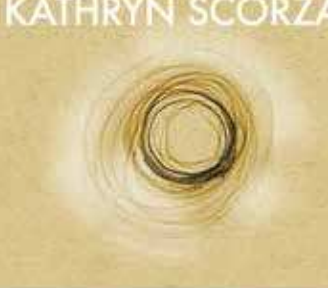
You can book a free fire safety visit from the Fire Brigade by calling 08000 28 44 28. Officers will come to your home, advise you on danger spots such as overloaded plugs, and install free fire alarm(s) with batteries that last 10 years.

CTW leak: watch this space!

Following on from previous reports, Thames Water confirmed a leak from a broken pipe close to the pavilion in Cherry Tree Wood.

They informed Barnet Council, who arranged for the pipe to be repaired. Hopefully this has done the trick, though it is hard to tell as subsequent deluges quickly filled up the former puddle spaces in and beside the path and they are now all covered with leaves.

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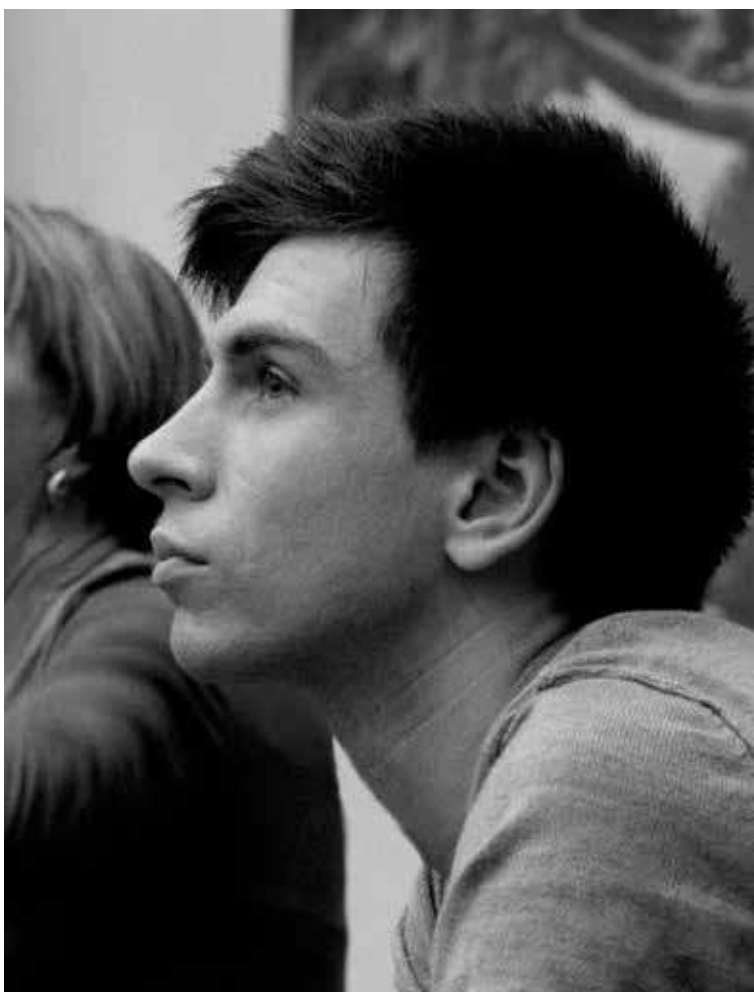
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Dramatic plans: Guy Watson

Making a play for the Post Office building

By Diana Cormack

One very interesting response to our request for suggestions as to how the former East Finchley Post Office could be used came from Guy Watson, of Long Lane, who runs a small professional theatre company.

Guy is producer/director of the Dream Team Theatre Company and wanted to use the building as temporary rehearsal rooms for their next project, scheduled to open in March 2015. He told *THE ARCHER* that using disused shops as rehearsal rooms has happened in several places around London but, at the time of writing, Barnet Council had not proved to be helpful with this. His next step was to contact the commercial letting agents and the landlords.

Gruesome

The project in question is a piece of new writing based on the history of the oldest operating theatre in Europe. *The Academy of Melancholy* by Charlotte O'Leary is set in London in 1824. Described as "a theatrical tale of passion, amputation and body snatch-

ing" it tells how Margaret, determined to keep her penniless family out of the workhouse, is forced to become a nurse at the Old St Thomas's Hospital. Horrified by what she sees and hears in those pre-anaesthesia days with no NHS to support the poverty stricken patients, Margaret disguises herself as a male medical student, enters the gruesome operating theatre and starts on the road to becoming one of London's ground-breaking surgeons.

The Old Operating Theatre, St Thomas's Street, London SE1 9RY is to be the appropriate setting for the production. To find out more visit www.dreamteamtheatre.co.uk and email guy@dreamteamtheatre.co.uk if you can suggest somewhere they might be able to rehearse.

The old Post Office: your views

Last month we asked readers who or what should move into the old Post Office building on the High Road, which has been empty since early summer last year. Here's a selection of your ideas:

Tristan Kirk: As the council seems determined to downgrade or close our library, perhaps the old Post Office could be the library's new home.

Stuart Griffin: Waitrose or an M&S food. Anything but another estate agent or low-end supermarket (Aldi or Lidl would be a disaster).

David Burns: Here's my view, and it will surely be shared by at least half of shoppers. We need a mens' clothes retailer. Then I will look better. Seriously, there's hardly anywhere for miles around where a chap can choose a shirt.

John Dearing: As a resident of the flats above the old Post Office (Viceroy Close), I desperately hope it does not become a club or a restaurant with late night opening, noisy customers and smelly kitchen vents! I think it would suit a bank, as presumably the Post Office installed a considerable measure of physical security, but these days banks are closing branches, not opening new ones. Perhaps Barnet



What's next? The Post Office building in the High Road still has a 'To Let' sign up.

Council will consider relocating the East Finchley library there, once they have sold off the existing (lovely) building to some property developer to convert into yet more vastly overpriced flats. However, rumour has it that those Barnet libraries that are not actually closed completely will have their floor areas reduced by three quarters, so the old Post Office may be too large for a library. Of course with the new (as of 6th April 2014) change of use permitted development rights, it is quite likely that the old Post Office will just be redeveloped as, you guessed it, flats: no planning permission needed! **Ulla Mead:** I would also would like to see Waitrose have a branch in East Finchley and think that many people felt pressurised to sign the petition against them taking over the site opposite

the station all those years ago (before my time here).

David Griffiths: My suggestion, as a use for the old Post Office building, would be a branch of Planet Organic. It is a very good shop and a successful one. And sells really good produce. Like the branch in Muswell Hill.

Tim McNamara: Waitrose should be invited to open one of their small stores in the vacant site.

D Walsh: Replace the old Post Office with a mini Waitrose or failing that a mini Marks & Spencer or Sainsbury Local. The High Road needs retail that's open later than 6pm and brings people into East Finchley. There is parking behind this building which would be a big advantage for shoppers, or else they will continue to take the bus to Muswell Hill.

A mindful New Year

By Sheila Armstrong

Those who want to let go of the old and welcome the new in 2015 could try the yoga and meditation workshop run by Sallie and Sunnah Rose at Holy Trinity Church, Church Lane, on Saturday 31 January from 2pm to 5.30 pm.

The price is £35. Contact sunnahrose@hotmail.com, phone 07941 321772 or visit www.stretchingpeople.co.uk.

A new four-week course in mindfulness meditation with Sallie Rose starts on Thursday 29 January from 7.30pm to 9.30 pm. Contact sallie@meditationow.co.uk, phone 07944 818197 or visit www.meditationow.co.uk.

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Old Barn in the frame to become 'community hub'

By Janet Maitland

Barnet Council is proposing to spend £1 million on refurbishing and extending the Old Barn community centre on Tarling Road to create a 'community hub'.

The centre may also benefit from some of the £1 million lottery funding given to the Big Local to spend on the area bounded by Church Lane, the High Road, East End Road and the A406.

"We can fund local projects that will make a lasting difference to the area; youth and community facilities are likely to be a key priority," said local resident Jon Woolfson, a member of the Big Local steering group.

The plans for the Old Barn include a new wing, linked to the main building, for the local Bravanese community, whose centre on Coppetts Road, Muswell Hill, burnt down in June 2013. Barnet also plans to open up the land adjacent to the Old Barn to create a public open space and accommodate the enlarged centre.

Residents raise concerns

Council officials outlined their plans at a public meeting on 26 November attended by over 100 people. Residents from Brownsell Road expressed their anger that they had not been consulted before and said that the council cannot use the adjacent land to extend the Old Barn because it is protected green space.

"The meeting was the first opportunity for most of us to hear about the council's proposals for the site adjacent to the Old Barn," said local resident Helen Drake. "There needs to be a lot more interaction between the council and local residents, particularly those living in the roads nearest to the site."

"We feel that the way in which the meeting was planned was bound to cause unrest," said

Abubakar Ali from the Bravanese Welfare Association. "Much more time is needed for a dialogue which can allow everyone's interests to be heard and some kind of consensus reached. We haven't had the proper opportunities to build connections and relationships with local people."

Council response

A spokesperson for the council said the land adjacent to the Old Barn was not protected green space, adding: "Historically it was to be laid out for community use. It is currently unusable and we hope that the proposals will bring it back into community use. We've taken into account the feedback from the public meeting. Meetings and consultation will be arranged with local residents and all interested parties during the coming months."

Local resident Will Hudson, who has been an advisor to the Bravanese Community for several years, warned that if council decisions were made before the consultation is complete, this would be a disaster for local relationships and acutely serious for the Bravanese in particular.

The Old Barn was a thriving community centre for over 25 years until it was taken over in 2010 by a group of 'trustees' who discontinued all the services. The centre was finally reclaimed last October by the social and community group Mobilise who have been appointed as interim trustees by the Charity Commission. Anyone interested in getting involved in the Old Barn's future should contact oldbarn@mobilise.org



La Torre visits the Tower. Photo John Lindsay

All the local news (in Italy)

It's not only ARCHER readers who take their local paper to be photographed in various parts of the world. This group of Italians came from Tuscany to be shown round London by Rebecca and John Lindsay

of Cherry Tree Road and had their newspaper with them.

When the couple are visiting the group's home town of Massa

Marittima, they help them with their English studies. John said: "Their paper is a bit like *THE ARCHER* but the council helps to finance it."

Leisure passes for carers

Any registered carer, whether an adult or a child, now has free access to Barnet's GLL-operated leisure centres.

This includes free swimming at Cophall, Finchley Lido and Church Farm, as well as concessionary discounts on badminton, group exercise classes, and many more activities. To get a pass, just email the Prevention and Wellbeing Team at preventionandwellbeing@barnet.gov.uk.

Quick Tips To Speed Up Your Computer

If your computer is a few years old you might be thinking it is already past its sell-by date.

- 1) Reload the operating system from scratch**
Some computers have a recovery partition - CAUTION Make sure you have great backups.
- 2) Increase the RAM.**
This is the usable memory and if you are running with less than 4GB on Windows 7, it will make a big difference for a small cost.
- 3) Upgrade to Solid State Hard Drive (SSD).**
This will make your machine purr and breathe fresh life as a SSD can be 10 times faster to access.

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Stars shine at the winter festival

East Finchley's third Christmas Festival on Saturday 6 December was a huge success. Fine weather and a host of attractions brought crowds to the High Road all day.

Congratulations to all the organisers and entertainers who made it so much fun. With a Christmas bake-off, real reindeer, festive sing-a-longs and a snow machine, you really can't ask for more!

We hope you enjoy reliving the day through the pictures on these pages, all taken by our photographer Mike Coles.

The festival organisers have also sent out their thanks to actors Michelle Collins and Sophie Thompson for being the festival judges, and to all the local businesses who gave their

support so generously, either through sponsorship, taking a stall or offering prizes.

Roll of honour

Here's the roll of honour: Amici, Amy's, A Scott Fishmonger, A P Gentlemen's Barber, Bryson's Printers, Budgens, Cootes Pharmacy, Costa Coffee, Create Theatre School, David Hillel Optometrist, East Finchley Electrical, Es Vida, Fetch 22 pet supplies, Frances Anglo beautician, Genzo restaurant, GLH, Godfrey Cree Solicitors, Gus Gent's Hairstylist, Healing Hands, Jeremy Leaf Estate Agents, Kokos, Mezem, Mightee Fit Health Studio, Mike Freer, Nicky Sharp osteopath, Oakdale Pharmacy, Passobello Flooring, Phoenix Cinema, Prime Locations, Pristine Dry Cleaners, Ryker, Securebase, TD Hair, The Archer, The Bull, The Cherry Tree gift shop, The Exchange, Tony's Continental, Tootoomoo, Top Cleaners, Yama Yama, Yasar Halim.



Michelle Collins gets ready to judge the Dog Show.



The bustling French Market on festival day.



Christmas trees at Tony's Continental.



Festival hosts - Pat 'Have mercy' Leacock, left and Chris Hampson.



Popular local band Sound of the Suburb warm the crowd up.

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The London Metropolitan Brass Band round off the festival as darkness falls.



The Community Trust Christmas tree



It's snow time at the stage!



Michelle Collins, second left, with some of the dog show contestants.



The GLH reindeer are popular again.



Festival-goers sign up to save the library.



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Festival and Community Trust chairman Roger Chapman.

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YOUNG ARCHER



Saddle up, Rudolph

A rodeo reindeer and a human fruit machine were two of the highlights of Holy Trinity Primary School's parents association Christmas Fair on the last weekend of November.

All in all, the event raised more than £3,100 which will help Holy Trinity to create an all-year accessible outdoor play area, as well as buying additional classroom supplies and equipment.

Organisers thanked all the staff, children and parents who made it such a successful event, and also their many spon-

sors including Haven Estate Agents, Pizza Hut, Lee Baron Chartered Surveyors, M & M Asset Management, Jennie Mann, Fletrans Limited Building Services Engineers, Executive Developments Limited, Amy's, Horrible Histories Walking Tours and Tony's Continental.

Looking back to the future

By Diana Cormack

By the time the first *ARCHER* of 2015 has been pushed through your letterbox, most people will have looked back at events of the past year and wished one another happiness for the new one. Being the first month of the year, January is suitably named after a Roman god who could look backwards into the past and forwards into the future at the same time.

A two-faced watchman

Janus watched over the gates of heaven and was the god of entrances and exits. He was shown with two faces which looked in opposite directions, so had no problem seeing who or what was coming or going. This was particularly useful for keeping track of an enemy. A temple in Rome was dedicated to Janus. The doors were kept shut in times of peace but left open when the Romans were at war, ready for the return of their victorious army. The temple had

12 windows and four doors, a window for each month and a door for every season.

During the first month of the year the Romans made offerings of new wine and food at festivals in honour of Janus. They asked him to forgive any wrong they had done in the old year and to bring them happiness in the year to come. As well as being the god of doors and windows Janus (from which we get the word janitor) was also the god of beginnings, which made him the ideal god for the New Year.

Hole in the wall

A new cash machine has been installed in the front window of UOE in the High Road. The ATM complements the Post Office services, which have been hosted inside the store since last summer.



The new ATM has been installed at the UOE post office.
Photo Mike Coles

High-tech revolution lands at Christ's College

By Neil McNaughton

Pupils at Christ's College in East End Road were treated on December 11 to an inspirational talk by Eileen Naughton, managing director of Google for the UK and Ireland. The school was hosting an event, part of the Guardian newspaper's *Speakers for Schools* programme, that was shared online with two other schools and streamed on YouTube so it could be followed by thousands of other youngsters all over the country, who could interact by asking questions online.

Ms Naughton explained the core features of Google's operation and gave the audience an insight into the high-tech future now being developed by the company, with images of driverless cars, head visors for smartphones and ultra-advanced robots. The pace of change is picking up all the time, she said, giving as an example the fact that there is as much computing power now in a modern postage stamp sized microchip as was used to take the first men to the moon in 1969.

Character counts

She encouraged her young audience to believe in themselves and their own capabilities, quoting her own unpromising background in New York compared to her success in business since. Answering a question, she said that companies like Google are looking less for formal qualifications and more for people with personal qualities such as drive, determination and a spirit of innovation. She was particularly anxious that more girls should take up careers in computing and technology. Too many of Google's 55,000 employees worldwide are males, she explained.

The meeting was chaired by Jamie Spafford, a young internet entrepreneur who developed



Eileen Naughton from Google, right, talks to Christ's College students on a national webcast with host Jamie Spafford.

the *Sorted Food* website on YouTube, supplying exotic and unusual food ideas through the net. Ms Naughton said he too was an example of what can be achieved by people with both ideas and the determination to put them into practice.

Are you a young author?

Young authors have the chance to see their work published as part of a short story writing competition being run by Barnet Libraries.

Anyone aged 11-16 can submit a short story of up to 1,000 words on a topic of their choice. The top three entries will win prizes and the overall winning story will be published locally and made available to borrow from Barnet's e-library.

Your entry must be typed and submitted in a Word document format. The closing date is 5pm on Thursday 15 January. For full details go to www.barnet.gov.uk and search for 'Teenage Writing Competition'.

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Youth doesn't have to be alienated

By Daniella Ekundayo

A key problem facing today's youth in society is the lack of interest in politics and current affairs. As a young person you may ask yourself "How does this affect me?" or "What can I do to bring about change?" It is easy to mistake voting as the only forum to express your political views and often feel alienated because you are unable to do so.

Ed Miliband recently attended Wren Academy for a Q&A session where a number of students aged 11-18 were given the opportunity to ask questions. He began with the phrase "Politics is about how we change things" and he touched upon current political issues.

The Labour leader answered a number of questions from students who were concerned with the coalition government's stance on issues such as tuition fees, GCSEs and A-levels. Most importantly, he touched upon plans to create opportunities for young people to engage in politics and avoid a gap between the older and younger generations.

Young and politically aware

Politics is important to young people for a number of reasons. It has a major impact on future

generations. It is due to politics that there has been such rapid social change in terms of women's rights. It is essential that we encourage political discussions among the creative and open-minded youth of society, because this is the only way to ensure that the political world keeps growing and society continues to change for the better.

As a young person it is often difficult to see where you fit in, how you can be politically active or which party best suits your own political beliefs. Even at 16 or 17 there are ways to be politically active. Some of these ways include: volunteering with your local MP, watching the news regularly, keeping up with current affairs on social media and joining campaigns or protests which best suit your ethical beliefs.



Ed Miliband joins students at the Wren Academy.

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FT 640



Shadow Education Secretary, Tristram Hunt, centre, visits the Archer Academy with Sarah Sackman, top right, and Mick Quigley, head teacher, extreme left. Photo Mike Coles

History lesson for visiting MP

A group of Year 7 and 8 students at the Archer Academy shared their love of the past with celebrated historian and Shadow Education Secretary Tristram Hunt MP when he visited the school on 24 November.

The MP spoke to staff and governors about the school and its origins before taking a tour with headteacher Mick Quigley. He then took part in a session with some of the Archer young historians, who talked to him about their favourite periods of history, including topics as diverse as Ancient Egypt, the origins of the East India Company and the French Revolution.

After asking the students some incredibly challenging questions, which they tackled admirably, Mr Hunt was quizzed by the students in turn, both on historical matters (such as what his own favourite period of history is – the 1870s, he answered) and why he decided to be a politician.

Mr Hunt said afterwards: "I was delighted to visit the new Archer Academy and really enjoyed hearing the students talk about their favourite periods in history. I was enormously impressed by their knowledge of and approach to the subject and how well they understood the importance of assessing and recording the evidence."

At the end of the session the

MP, accompanied by Finchley and Golders Green Labour candidate Sarah Sackman, presented the school with a bound set of

The War Illustrated, journals dating from the First World War. The books were donated by East Finchley historian Peter Hart.

Help children learn to read

Was one of your New Year's Resolutions this year to do something rewarding and that makes a real difference to your local community? If it was, you might consider volunteering as a Beanstalk reading helper, to help primary school children learn to read.

Beanstalk is a national charity that gives one-to-one literacy support to children in primary schools with pupils who have fallen behind with their reading. The local branch covers the boroughs of Barnet, Brent, Haringey and Enfield. At the moment it has 178 volunteers helping 534 children but always needs more volunteers.

Each Beanstalk reading helper works with three children and sees each child for two 30-minute sessions a week, during term-time, for a whole year. Together they read, play and talk. To find out more, call Harriet Watson on 020 8349 8095 or visit www.beanstalkcharity.org.uk/reading-helpers.

KALASHNIKOV KULTUR

By Ricky Savage, the voice of social irresponsibility

Who needs books these days?

Hi there, hipsters, welcome to the newly hi tech world where a man is not a man without a beard and a coffee. Welcome to the world of downloads and instant gratification. Welcome to reading War and Peace on your smartphone as you surf your way to Crumbs, the new cutting edge pop-up breakfast bar where you can get toasted sour dough with mango marmalade for two quid a slice. Welcome to the future because the future is now.

Time to say goodbye to the has-beens with their weird ideas about paper and pens who think that The Hobbit is a book. Goodbye to those weirdos who measure out their lives in bookshelves and think that every town should have a library. The future is only a download away and a library is a waste of a hip new pop-up opportunity.

Yes, that's right, time to reach for the ground glass and vitriol, you're not going blind, in hipster land a library is a waste of space in their hi tech world. Today's future means turning the library into a Costabucks espresso bar and Peruvian restaurant specialising in pulled guinea pig and roasted lettuce.

Now is the time to get rid of books and save forests for the future. Time to stop cluttering up the world with libraries and bookshops that the future doesn't need. Time for hipsters to rule the world and for texting and sharing to replace this weird desire to hold conversations. Time to shut the library and open up the future? No, time to shave their beards, shut their coffee shops and stop them.

Back in 1953 Ray Bradbury wrote Fahrenheit 451, a novel set in a world where books had been banned and firemen burnt them. Some may think you don't need books or libraries. In truth, I'm not one of them. I've read Fahrenheit 451 and I think Goethe was right. It's a short step from burning books to burning people. And where did I learn to love books? My local library.



Regular Events

Sport & Fitness

- **East Finchley Flyers running club**, Tuesdays 7pm at the tube station, 7k run and socialising. Nick 07593 367134.
- **Finchley & Hornsey Ramblers Group** Call Vivien 8883 8190
- **Glebelands Indoor Bowls Club**, Summers Lane N12. New and experienced bowlers welcome.
- **Keep fit for the Retired** on Wednesdays, Christ Church N12. Call Bridie 8883 5269
- **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. 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.

Music, Dance & Creative Arts

- **Art Classes**. Call Henry on 8888 5133.
- **A-Chord**, friendly choir, all genres, open to all. Thursdays 8pm at NNLS, East End Rd. Laura 07732 120464.
- **Ballroom & Latin American Dance Classes** - beginners & improvers. Wed & Fri eve, Bishop Douglass Sch. 8207 2323.
- **Creative writing classes** in informal, friendly atmosphere. Tel Sallie Rose 020 8444 7217.
- **East Finchley Writers Group**, Weds at the Old White Lion. Contact Carola 8883 5808 or Lilian 8444 1793.
- **East Finchley Poetry Writing Workshops**. Monthly on Saturdays. Contact Dennis Evans 8346 9528.
- **Ladies Keep Fit** Class for over 50s. Tues 10.30-11.30am at Tetherdown Hall. Sheila 8444 0084.
- **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

A festive overture

Review by Barbara Palczynski

St Andrew's Church played host once more to an evening of energetic music-making, thanks to the Fortismere Community Orchestra. The combined talents of teachers, students and parents from Fortismere School is an ever-growing force to be reckoned with, under the trusty baton of Thomas Gregory.

The USP of this now firmly established ensemble is its community spirit and ambitious programming. No shying away from big symphonic repertoire for this band. The programme showcased two lesser-known works (Shostakovich *Festive Overture* and Arutiunian *Trumpet Concerto*) with the exceedingly popular Tchaikovsky *Symphony no. 6*.

The Shostakovich was a brilliant opener with its brass fanfare and bright crisp wind sounds. It set the scene for Peter Desmond, trumpet soloist (and not forgetting his day job as Head of Haringey Music Services), to dazzle the audience with an extremely accomplished performance of Arutiunian's showy concerto.

The Tchaikovsky brought a change in mood with its romantic indulgence and the orchestra seemed to enjoy the contrast, finding their large symphonic voice in the fortissimo sections and playing with real energy. There was a perky, assured clarinet solo in the 3rd movement, and the strings ascended and descended with real pace.

Led by Rebekah Allen, the orchestra reflected the time and commitment of all its members. Their uncompromising ambition to work their way through the great orchestral repertoire will see them return to St Andrew's Church this term on Saturday 21 March, with no less than Rachmaninov *Piano Concerto no. 2* and Dvorak *Symphony no. 7*. Make a note in your new diaries!



On track: Evie Csaky, holding the baby, in rehearsals for *The Railway Children*. Photo Johan Persson

Dance fit

"I really believe in beautiful healthy bodies and what I love about this workout is that it encourages elegant posture and longer, more toned limbs," says Diana Eugeni Le Quesne about Aereoballet, her new full-body workout classes located in East Finchley, Muswell Hill and Highgate.

When Diana moved from Italy to London with her husband and three children she knew she needed to make other changes in her life as well. The travel demands of her successful career in fashion as an art director and choreographer had become less compatible with the needs of her family. Her background and training were in dance, so Aereoballet was born.

"Aereoballet is based on sequences of isometric small moves that lift and tone the body," Diana explains. Based on ballet, jazz, latin and catwalk steps, Aereoballet provides a workout which concentrates on the hips, thighs, seat, abdominals and arms. No previous dance experience is necessary and the classes are suitable for all ages and all fitness levels.

Diana is offering free taster classes and bespoke programmes to meet individual needs. For more information call 07580 041270, email info@aereoballet.co.uk or visit www.aereoballet.co.uk

Evie steamed up over stage role

Landing a role in a major London theatre show is quite a coup for any 10-year-old but Evie Csaky has the added thrills of starring alongside a familiar face from *Downton Abbey* and a fully operational steam train.

Evie, who lives in the county roads, will play the role of Mabel Perks in the production of *The Railway Children*, which runs at a specially created theatre at Kings Cross Station until the start of March.

The young actress will share the limelight with Jeremy Swift, who plays Maggie Smith's butler Spratt in *Downton Abbey*, as her father Albert Perks.

Even more excitingly, the show features a real-life steam engine and carriages which make a dramatic entrance at a significant point in the story.

Evie says: "I was so excited

to be at the auditions for *The Railway Children*. Once I got a call back I nearly fainted! It was such a brilliant experience and I would really recommend it to someone else.

"The rehearsals really helped me to improve my acting skills. I have learnt that just listening to a scene and imagining that you really are your part can make you react in the right way without knowing it."

Evie was selected from hundreds of children to share the role. She'll be appearing in the production three times a week for the length of the run.

January at the Phoenix

By Elizabeth Taylor-Mead, Phoenix Cinema executive director

One of the great gifts of cinema is that it brings the past into the present; we re-live it through the magic of the big screen.

January's main feature presentation, *The Theory of Everything*, portrays the early life of Dr. Stephen Hawking, with a performance by Eddie Redmayne that has the industry buzzing.

Sharing the month's spotlight are two very different types of battle: *Testament of Youth* is Vera Brittain's landmark WW1 memoir brought to life and *Whiplash* is quite simply an exhilarating, inventive and suspenseful story of a music student and his mentor. Check our website for showtimes: www.phoenixcinema.co.uk.

Imagine working off some of the winter carbo-loading by exercising your brain at our *Use it or Lose It Film Quiz* (11am, Sunday 11 January) and the

Phoenix Film Salon (Monday nights, 5 and 19 January). Nick Walker of Rochester Kino provides the cerebral aerobics. January's quiz is themed around Cities in Film, and our Salon invites you to share your views on our current feature films.

If it's physical exercise you're craving, or at least watching it onscreen, join us on Sunday 25 January at 1pm for *Alf Engers, aka The King*, with rare footage of the great British cycling ace and a Q&A to follow.

Our café chefs are cooking up a (winter) storm, with tasty hot savouries and yummy sweet treats. The menu and bar offerings change with the season so no need to go with 'same old, same old' unless you're a creature of habit. Our wifi is free to our café customers, so that's one habit you'll want to continue year round. See you at the movies!

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

Thursday 15 January

• **A Little of What You Fancy** at Stephens House (formerly Avenue House), East End Road, N3, 2.30pm. Afternoon tea with live musical entertainment: popular Music Hall sing-along songs and memories with lots of humour. Tickets £9.50 via www.stephenshouseandgardens.com, at the House or by phone on 020 8346 7812.

Sunday 18 January

• **Open Sunday at Stephens House & Gardens** (formerly Avenue House), East End Road, N3, 1pm-5pm. The Stephens Collection and The Bothy Gardens are open to visit and explore free of charge. Sunday lunch served in the House, main courses from £7.50, sweets from £2.50. Booking

recommended at the House or by phone 020 8346 7812.

Until Sunday 25 January

• **Singin' in the Rain**, based on one of the world's best-loved movies, Upstairs at The Gatehouse, Highgate Village, N6 4BD. Tickets £14/£12 concs. Box Office: 020 8340 3488.

Sunday 1 February

• **Battle of Barnet**: guided walk around the Wars of the Roses battle site (1471) with City of London guide Paul Baker. Meet at junction of Great North Road and Hadley Green Road at 11am. Tickets £9, £4 for under 12s. For details phone Paul on 020 8440 6805 or visit www.barnetwalks.talktalk.net



Letters

Library is a lifeline

Reading about the proposed plans for the downsizing or closure of East Finchley Library has left me angry and distressed. I have multiple sclerosis and two years ago my mobility further suffered after a brain haemorrhage. East Finchley Library has provided a lifeline to me as one of the few FREE, warm, friendly and educational places where I have been able to take my daughter as a baby, a toddler and now as a nine-year-old.

Over the years, East Finchley Library has proved a joy and a sanctuary to me. We still use it weekly, as, indeed, do all the local schools. For students it provides computer access and a warm, quiet place to study. It is the hub of the vibrant local community. It is shocking to think that Barnet Council could even consider closing or downsizing this irreplaceable local resource.

Yours faithfully,
Harriet Connides,
Manor Park Rd, N2.

Happy years at the library

Dear Editor,
After 14 years as a Kumon instructor, I decided to leave my classes at the end of November 2014. It was a sad decision to make, but I felt the time was right.

I became an instructor in August 2000 with an enthusiasm for helping the children of my first home. I knew East Finchley, having lived in Hertford Road, and attended the Martin schools.

After searching for premises a friend told me to check East Finchley Library as they might be able to accommodate my classes. Well, I did, and that was the start of my relationship with the library.

In September 2000 I started running my classes in the hall upstairs. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has been involved in assisting me in the running of my classes and to thank the past and present managers and staff of the library.

I would like to thank all the students and parents who have passed through the "doors" of Kumon East Finchley. I would also like to thank *The Archer*, the first paper I advertised in.

Yours faithfully,
Ritu Khanna,
Address supplied.

Helping hand

Dear Editor,
As I lugged a large bag of *Archer* newspapers up Hertford Road to one of our deliverers on 5 December a teenage boy offered to help and took the bag to the house. We'd never met and I didn't ask his name, so whoever you are, thank you so much.

Yours faithfully,
Ann Bronkhorst,
Address supplied.

Rock on!

Dear Editor,

East Finchley rocks! What a terrific Winter Festival we had on the High Road in early December. A big thank you to all the organisers for their very hard work in arranging it all, including the weather! The stalls were excellent, providing something for everyone, and I'm sure the shops had a good day as well.

Community spirit can be hard to come by these days, when it feels as though the activities of our political masters are designed to crush it, but it's alive and well in East Finchley and was encapsulated, for me at the festival, by the latest copies of *THE ARCHER* being handed around, very much part of the glue of this community and all done on a voluntary basis.

Yours faithfully,
Harriet Copperman
Diploma Avenue, 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.

Making a memory for children's hospice

Choirs from Coldfall and Rhodes Avenue Primary Schools joined singers from the Crouch End Festival Chorus and Camden Gospel Choir for the Noah's Ark Children's Hospice first Precious Moments Concert.

Held in St James' Church, Muswell Hill in late November and hosted by actress Caroline Quentin, it launched the charity's Make a Memory campaign, which aims to raise funds to support the charity's community services as well as to raise awareness of the work carried out by its staff, volunteers and supporters.

Well-known conductor and musical director of the concert David Temple said: "Noah's Ark is doing an amazing job of supporting and caring for many seriously ill children in our community and this is just one way of showing our appreciation and thanks for all their hard work."

The festive concert raised £9,000 on an evening which Caroline Quentin described as "magical and inspiring". For information about the Make a Memory campaign call 020 8449 8877 or email rsevern@noahsarkhospice.org.uk

A document of life in Bethlehem

By Ann Bronkhorst

Leila Sansour grew up in "legendary" Bethlehem where her father founded the university and hundreds attended his funeral, yet she left at 18 feeling that the town was too provincial, too limiting. Why did she return for just one year and why then stay on for over seven?

Her film *Open Bethlehem*, screened at the Phoenix on 10 December, addresses these questions; it's also the name of a remarkable campaign established against great odds.

Erosion and hope

Bethlehem, shown in grainy archive film and in modern colour, is a place where different faiths and sects have always co-existed, but now an eight-foot-high concrete wall zigzags through and around the city, dividing people, closing roads and destroying livelihoods. We're told little about Israel's case for building the wall but can see for ourselves the results: "the erosion of a city".

Leila, with a few allies, attempts to resurrect the dying tourist industry in Bethlehem; then she has an "epiphany" and creates a unique passport, available to supporters of an open Bethlehem. Gimmick? Symbol? This unusual idea has caught imaginations worldwide and, in her words, has been "a voice for Palestine".



Little town: Leila Sansour explores Bethlehem. Photo courtesy of openbethlehem.org

Low-key but powerful

The film is punctuated by Christmases as she stays on, remembers the past and campaigns for the future, sometimes with little hope. One repeated motif is the ancient family car, brought back to life again and again. As Karl Sabbagh pointed out, however, the film is not contrived but takes a straightforward, mostly linear and documentary approach. There is no stridency, no polemic.

Sabbagh was one of two writers of part-Palestinian heritage who joined Leila Sansour for a Q & A after the screening at the Phoenix. He noted the film's Christian and middle-class context: these are not terrorists. Leila regretted the emigration of such people, with their vision and stamina; with them, she felt, went important memories of Bethlehem's history.

She was calm and factual when dealing with audience questions, and clear-sighted about the difficulties of raising funds for a global campaign. As a start, her documentary will reach millions of viewers, she hopes. To see it, or to obtain a passport, visit www.openbethlehemcampaign.org and follow the links.

War graves

Readers who follow any of the First World War walks in Islington and St Pancras cemetery, described in last month's *Archer*, may want to know more about the young men whose graves are mapped and listed. Two websites are helpful: www.islington.gov.uk/thestreetstheyleftbehind and www.pinterest.com/islingtonww1

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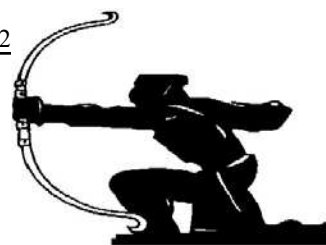
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Visitors always welcome



You looking at me?

Archer reader Gary Naseby shares this startling photo of a sparrowhawk feasting on an unfortunate pigeon in Fordington Road, just outside Cherry Tree Wood, during the middle of a bright day in November.

A warm place to go

A local charity will invite people who are feeling cold at home to warm up at two of their local sites, when their Winter Warmers scheme goes into action.

East Finchley Altogether Better (EFAB) is leading the way in the project, as reported in last month's *ARCHER*.

When the weather is set to drop to 2°C for at least 48 hours, and enough helpers are available, those in need can come in to EFAB's venues for hot drinks, chats and activities, as well as getting advice on energy efficiency and keeping warm at home.

Those who are feeling cold and lonely at home are warmly invited to get in touch via the details below to find out about coming along to one of the sessions.

Community friends wanted

EFAB is looking for more local people to put their names down as potential helpers. The Winter Warmers scheme could

happen on any given day and therefore needs a whole host of 'community friends' who are able to help out.

There are a variety of roles to be filled, including making phone calls to invite people to venues, driving those who can't get there easily, and being on hand at the venues to help out. There is no obligation to attend every session and community friends will only be called upon at times they have said are convenient to them.

To sign up, fill in a quick form at www.surveymonkey.com/s/winterwarmers, email us@efab.org.uk or call Lisa on 07909 998453 for details. Visit www.efab.org.uk for more information.

The penetrating stare of this amazing bird of prey is fixed on the camera as it feasts on its kill. "We couldn't quite believe our eyes at first, and I just happened to have my camera with me to grab these shots," says Gary.

Sparrowhawks are most often seen hunting over farmland and country lanes but they have started to move into towns and cities, attracted by the abundance of prey and relatively safe nesting sites.

Snapshots of the past

Barnet Council has opened up its picture collection to put hundreds of historic images on sale as high-quality prints. You can choose sizes from a small postcard to 20ins x 16ins prints. To see and buy these glimpses into the past, go to <http://boroughphotos.org/barnet/>

Can you deliver?

THE ARCHER is looking for a volunteer to deliver papers to Archer Gardens, the new homes between Lankaster Gardens and Strawberry Vale. Can you spare 20 minutes once a month to deliver the paper to readers there? Please contact us by email at the-archer@lineone.net or by phone on 0800 612 0748. Thank you.

Look in on a neighbour this winter

A campaign to encourage people to think about their older neighbours this winter has been launched across Barnet.

Research from Age UK shows that more than 50% of those over 80 years of age in the UK are lonely. The same research also suggests that malnutrition amongst older people is increasing. It is estimated that 1.3 million people aged over 65 suffer from malnutrition, which most of the time is preventable.

Casserole Club is a meal-sharing project that puts you in touch with an older neighbour to whom you can bring a warm, home-cooked meal, sharing food but also friendship. The project has thousands of cooks across the UK eager to share meals and bring warmth into the life of the older people they meet.

Meals and more

The club is calling on people to pledge to share a portion of good home-cooked food with an older neighbour this winter.

Ingrid Karikari, project leader for the Casserole Club, explains how residents can get involved: "You don't have to cook a meal for an older neighbour, though it is one of the ways you can help. Call round on an older neighbour or family member in the long dark evenings,

offer to pick up the newspaper or shopping if it's cold and icy out, or simply pick up the phone and see how they're doing."

Angela and Diane

One example of how Casserole Club is making a positive difference to people's lives is the friendship between Angela Speight and Diane Collins, both of whom live in Barnet. Eighteen months ago they'd never met. Now they've become close friends.

Angela says: "I've brought her lasagne, sausage casseroles, roast dinners and (Diane's favourite) curry. My children always want to see Diane and her dog too. It's lovely: you make a friend, you know they're eating a good meal and you don't have to throw good food away."

Diane says: "She cooks lovely dinners and gives me big portions, so I put half in the fridge to eat the next day. Last year Angela brought me Christmas dinner. I said I'd be all right over the holiday, but she said: 'No bother.' You don't get many people like that in the world now."

Join the campaign at www.casseroleclub.com

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