



Community garden dream comes true

By Martin O'Donnell

The new Octavia Hill Community Garden was officially opened by the new Mayor of Barnet, Cllr David Longstaff, on Bank Holiday Monday 30 May. The garden, which is next to the Green Man Community Centre in Strawberry Vale, will become a real asset for the neighbourhood and complement the centre's activities.

The garden is the result of collaboration between Peabody, which manages housing in Strawberry Vale, and the Green Man Management Group. It commemorates Octavia Hill, a Victorian social housing pioneer and contemporary of George Peabody, founder of the Peabody Trust.



Mayor of Barnet, Cllr David Longstaff, cuts the ribbon. Photo Mike Coles

Along the garden path

In 2004 local residents were concerned about the future of the piece of rough land adjacent to the Green Man Centre, which had been used as a site compound for some major works on the estate. They approached Peabody for permission to create a garden.

The initial plan featured a lot of hand-cut stonework and was rejected by residents as too costly. Soil reports also showed slightly elevated levels of arsenic in the ground, thought to be related to the centuries-old metalwork found at the site.

Years earlier, when the foundations for the Green Man Centre were being dug, bits of metalwork including horse shoes were uncovered. With help from *THE ARCHER* we discovered that the site had previously contained an outhouse, probably a smithy, at the back of the Green Man Pub. The smithy would have looked after the horses when the Green Man was a coaching inn on the road into and out of London.

Oasis of green space

The toxicity in the soil needed to be addressed, adding

another considerable cost. The Green Man Management Group was determined to see the garden delivered so new plans were developed and Peabody's asset management team was able to contribute additional resources to make the garden a reality. Both the Green Man Management Group and Peabody contributed about £65,000 each to the project.

Jan Kerr, chair of the Green Man Management Group, said: "It is so wonderful to see the garden finally open for local people to enjoy. Octavia Hill would have been delighted to see this little oasis of green space created."

Sippy Azizollah

By now, many of you will have heard the sad news that Sippy Azizollah has died.

Sippy was well known and loved in East Finchley, and a long-time friend and supporter of *The Archer*. We heard the news of her death shortly before going to press, and will publish a tribute to her in the August edition.



Bend and stretch: Martin gets fit camp members working

Fitness training in the great outdoors

Take a stroll on Lyttleton Playing Fields in Hampstead Garden Suburb and you might see a group of keep-fitters being put through their paces in an outdoor fit camp.

Qualified personal trainer Martin Carroll, who used to work in construction and is an amateur boxer and a Thai boxing competitor, runs the classes that involve balance and agility drills, resistance training, Pilates and boxing padwork.

Martin, a long-time resident of East Finchley, said: "I started the outdoor fit camps with the incentive of attracting local people who might be intimidated by walking into a gym or who may prefer to workout outdoors. All fitness levels are welcome; whether you are inactive or active, I promise that you will

improve your health and fitness from week to week and have fun doing it."

His Make That Change Personal Training classes run on Monday and Wednesday evenings at 6.30pm and Saturday mornings at 9.30am at Lyttleton Playing Field. More information from Martin on 07809 593 952.

Woman on crutch robbed in broad daylight

By Janet Maitland
Police are appealing for information after a disabled woman in her 80s was attacked and robbed in the street. The woman was using a crutch to walk along Thomas More Way at about 3pm on 1 March when a man pulled her to the ground and snatched her handbag.

A passer-by who saw her lying on the pavement rushed to help her, thinking that she'd fallen over. She told him she'd been robbed and pointed to the suspect who was getting into the driver's seat of a grey Volkswagen Golf parked nearby.

He is described as about 5ft 6ins tall, of slim build, wearing a tight black woolly hat, grey/black jumper and khaki-coloured trousers. Police say he drove off, turning left into East End Road. The woman was taken to a north London hospital with injuries to her face and knee.

Police say the victim had just been to the bank to withdraw money for a holiday. It is not known if the robbery was random or if she had been noticed in the bank and then followed.

Anyone with any information that may assist the investigation is asked to call the police at Barnet CID on 101 or Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111.

Human error caused chaos at the polls

By John Lawrence

Human error caused the wrong voting lists to be released ahead of the London Assembly and Mayoral elections on 5 May, preventing hundreds of people in Barnet from casting their vote, a report has found.

Independent investigator Mark Heath was called in to find out what went wrong and to set recommendations for action before polling stations opened again for the Referendum on 23 June.

Among his recommendations were a complete review of procedures by Xpress, the company responsible for distributing the voting lists on behalf of Barnet Council, and an undertaking to release the lists a day earlier to allow time for checking ahead of a poll opening.

As we reported last month, scores of voters in East Finchley and across the borough were turned away from polling stations because their names weren't on the list, even though some of them had polling cards with them. Those who were able to return later in the day found they could then vote.

Mr Heath, the Returning Officer for Southampton, estimated from the number of

complaints that hundreds rather than thousands of voters were affected on the day.

Other recommendations

He called for a more robust checking process at all stages of the electoral system and for adequate staff to be employed to make the checks. Communication between polling station inspectors and the election office needed to be better and a public helpline with a minimum of 10 telephone agents, not an answerphone service, needed to be in operation throughout voting hours.

Mr Heath also recommended that Xpress should communicate the problem in Barnet and the measures taken to rectify it to all other counting officers across the country.

You can read the full report and the full set of recommendations online by going to <http://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documentsandsearchingfor'ElectionProblems'>.

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