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The Archer

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Longest-standing allotment holder Jack Takoushi, 93, right, with fellow vegetable grower Jeremy Corbyn at the open day. Photo Mike Coles

Corbyn's secret plot: We were in on it!

Shortly before last month's general election a number of photos appeared in the national press showing Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn's plot at East Finchley Allotments.

Mr Corbyn, a vegetarian, is a regular Sunday visitor to the allotments and keeps his 250-square-metre plot well-tended. He has grown vegetables there for many years and is one of a number of people from further into town who successfully applied for growing spaces in our area before waiting lists became inordinately long. He often arrives from his home in Islington by bicycle.

Respect for privacy

The Archer approached Mr Corbyn more than a year ago asking for a word with him about his love of allotmenting, and even suggesting he might like to become a gardening correspond-

ent for us. In the most polite terms, he declined our offer.

His allotment, said his team, was his private sanctuary and the only place where he could escape the world of Westminster and endless politicking. A man must have his space, so we respected his request not to expose his plot.

It's been a tumultuous year for Mr Corbyn since, so no doubt he's valuing his peaceful plot on the 12-acre site behind Martin School even more now.

However, should he find a gap in his diary and the fancy take him to address Archer readers on potatoes, courgettes and how to get the best out of your runner beans, we would be all ears!



... A walk on the wilder side: Centenary visitors tour East Finchley Allotments. Photo Mike Coles.

A haven from the hectic rush of daily life

Members of the East Finchley Allotment Holders Association opened their gates wide for a centenary open day to mark 100 years since their site was first turned over to vegetable and fruit growers at the height of the First World War.

Plot holder and Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn was among a large crowd welcomed to the peaceful site off Plane Tree Walk, N2, by long-time secretary of the

Barnet Allotment Federation Richard King.

Jack Takoushi, the site's longest-standing allotment holder, spoke of the health benefits allotments bring:

fresh air, exercise and being close to nature. He's certainly proof of the pudding as he looks nowhere near his 93 years.

Then visitors were able to take guided tours around the 12-acre site, along the way taking in a beekeeping demonstration by North London Beekeepers, some beautiful willow weaving by Mary Poulter and a refreshing homemade cider tasting courtesy of one set of ploholders with eight bountiful apple trees.

First-time visitor Vicky Haynes said: "I come this way every day but I had no idea the place was so large and the allotments so beautiful. It feels totally cut off from the city and it's lovely to see how people are making the most of the land to grow food."

Find out more about the history of the site and applying to become a member at <http://eastfinchleyallotments.co.uk>.

Ideas to keep everyone united

By Chris Stavrou

N2United is now entering its second year and looking for new ways to help businesses, residents and other local groups to network and work together.

Members are inviting feedback from East Finchley residents as well as other businesses that may not yet have attended any meetings, about what they want to see in their local area. What ideas or initiatives will keep people shopping locally and using the services on offer in East Finchley?

The group said: "Hopefully we can create a platform for important local issues to be tackled, reinforcing our special and unique local community. If you have any ideas please email community@n2united.co.uk."

June's meeting of East Finchley's local businesses heard from Asia Mscichowska of East Finchley Open Artists who spoke about the upcoming Open House weekends on 1-2 and 8-9 July when local artists will be exhibiting their work at their homes and studios.

Looking ahead

The next N2United meeting will be on 20 July at 7.0 pm at the Clissold Arms. If you have a local business N2United would love to see you there. They are also looking for speakers for future meetings: a great opportunity to promote your business. Check out www.n2united.co.uk

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