



Treasures carved out of horror and human kindness

Local sculptor Naomi Blake passed away a few months ago. Here her daughter **Anita Peleg** writes about her mother and her plans to open Naomi's house and garden, which are full of her sculptures, as part of the East Finchley Open Artists Open House weekend this month.

For Naomi Blake the little studio in her Woodside Avenue garden was her heaven. For 50 years she gave life and shape to polystyrene and created sculpture that expressed her positive hopes for the future and promoted understanding between faiths.

Today her work stands in many places of worship and public spaces such as Norwich Cathedral, St James Church, Muswell Hill, All Saints Church, East Finchley, New North London Synagogue, Leeds Synagogue, Great Ormond Street Hospital and Fitzroy Square.

Naomi Blake was born in 1924 in Mukacevo, Czechoslovakia, to a large Jewish family within a thriving Jewish population. This all changed under the German-backed Hungarian regime and by 1944 the Jews had all fled or been deported.

After surviving the horrors of Auschwitz, Stutthoff and Brahnau concentration camps, Naomi returned home to find that her home was in ruins and 17 family members, including 10 young nieces and nephews, had been murdered.

A positive legacy

Her journey then took her to Palestine where she rebuilt her life and finally to London and to Muswell Hill, where her career as a sculptor flourished. Despite her concentration camp ordeal and the loss of many family members at the hands of the Nazis, she did more than just



The late Naomi Blake - Sculptor. Photo courtesy Anita Peleg

survive against the odds, she created a positive legacy for the future through her art.

When she died in November last year, we lost an extraordinary member of the community. Those who knew her loved her kindness, sense of humour and positive nature and admired her beautiful sculpture. Her work continues to tell her story and promote her vision and will be on display in her home as part of the East Finchley Open Artists

Open House weekends this summer.

The Artists' Open House weekends take place on Saturday 29 and Sunday 30 June and Saturday 6 and Sunday 7 July. More than 70 artists will be exhibiting in 20 houses in and around East Finchley. Find more details at www.eastfinchleyopen.org.uk



Rugby youngsters pull off the Italian job

By Rod McEwen

Made famous by its beautiful cathedral and being the location of the movie *The Italian Job*, Milan has seen many things but never before a mini Six Nations tournament in which the under 12 Finchley Rugby Club team took part.

A group of 17 boys, dads and mums flew to the city on Friday 3 May to play at Milan Pirati

Rugby Club against junior teams from all over Europe including the Ukraine, Italy, France, Ire-

land and Poland.

The day of the tournament began with the boys standing to attention whilst their national anthems played and I am pleased to report that Finchley turned up in shirts and ties as instructed (although no one else did). The boys played five matches and won three of them.

The tournament showed what a great game rugby is. It engenders real team spirit and I would urge any parents looking to find a sport that treats all participants equally to consider joining Finchley Rugby Club on Summers Lane, N12.

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