

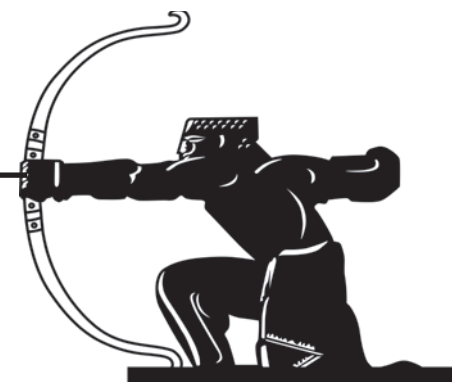


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# The Archer

Local News is our Aim



November 2019 No. 307

**A community newspaper for East Finchley run entirely by volunteers.**



## Pirates and parasols at All Saints'

An energetic cast from The Merry Opera Company brought an hilariously offbeat version of Gilbert and Sullivan's comic opera *The Pirates of Penzance* to the week-long East Finchley Arts Festival at All Saints', Durham Road. Photo by Mike Coles. *An insider's view of the Arts Festival, page 7.*

## Willow House residents can't move back in one year on

By Janet Maitland and Ruth Anders

One year after a devastating fire raged through the roof of Willow House on the Grange Estate, *The Archer* can report that none of the 13 families who lost their homes have been able to move back in. Rebuilding work has not yet started and the cause of the fire is still not known.

More than 60 residents were forced to flee the flats just before midnight on Tuesday 6 November last year, many losing everything except the clothes they were wearing. It took 100 firefighters more than two hours to put out the blaze.

Residents who are still living in the undamaged part of the building next to the burnt-out flats told us that no one from Barnet Council had told them anything since the fire, even though they'd been promised information about how it had started and what steps would be taken to ensure it never happened again.

The block of flats, alongside the High Road, N2, is still covered in scaffolding and surrounded by a security fence. Residents say the main front door is broken and they feel intimidated by groups of young men who congregate behind the building smoking cannabis. We contacted Barnet Homes to see what was happening. They said that no one affected by the fire had been able to move back in as "the safety of our residents is our highest priority" and that although there had been "unforeseen delays", work on refurbishing the block will hopefully now start this month and be finished by next March.



The Willow House blaze in 2018. Photo by Ximenita Pachon

A spokesperson from Barnet Homes said: "At the time of the fire, two households were placed in temporary accommodation but all households had moved into more settled accommodation by 3 January. Two of the households affected were Barnet Homes tenants and we were able to help rehouse them within the Barnet area or neighbouring boroughs.

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## Christmas invitation

The Bishop Douglass Christmas party this year will be held on Thursday 5 December, from 5pm prompt until 7pm. All N2 residents who are over 65 are welcome and should book their place without delay.

As usual, they will be welcomed with a glass of sherry by Year 10 students and then enjoy a traditional three-course meal, followed by carol singing and entertainment by pupils and staff. Games of bingo and a gift from Santa Claus will round off the evening.

Transport to the school in Hamilton Road, N2, can be provided for those who need it. To book your place, phone 020 8883 0433 leaving your name and a contact number and someone will get back to you.

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