

A community newspaper for East Finchley run entirely by volunteers.

Historic house finally bites the dust

By Daphne Chamberlain

Goodbye, Valona House. One of the oldest buildings in East Finchley has finally been demolished as developers move in to prepare for replacing it with a new block of flats.

Anyone new to the area may not have realised that the hoardings that have stood opposite the Underground station for more than three years were partly concealing a handsome 200-year-old house.

Built in the 1820s from local brick, Valona House was here long before the railway, when the Old White Lion pub was a coaching inn called the Dirt House, Market Place was a famous pig market, and neighbouring manor houses stood around the notorious Finchley Common.

The hire car years

Originally one private house with stables, it was bought in 1953 by Cyril Wilds, a well-known local man who ran a fleet of hire cars. He had started off by keeping his cars in the station forecourt, but now moved them to the courtyard of Valona House, and leased the house as flats.

windows, counted against it.

Controversial development

Despite a petition with more than 1,000 signatures, and vehement objections from many other people, including The Finchley Society, the development application was finally granted in June 2018. Objections to the proposals listed poor design, overdevelopment, encroachment on neighbours' privacy, lack of parking space, and the risk of accidents from vehicles being forced to reverse out into the High Road in a blind spot.

Final approval was hedged around with conditions, which only resulted in new plans, involving even more flats (in one instance below ground level).

Last year it was listed for sale at auction, and bought by Can Deniz, who is also building the flats in the car park behind

Budgens. The current plan is for 24 one-, two- and three-bedroom flats, plus a commercial unit. With the Northern line and bus services on their doorstep,

no parking facilities will be provided.



Bring the house down: Valona House being demolished last month. Photo Mike Coles

Clean-up mystery after the night before

By Ann Bronkhorst

An odd time and place to choose for a get-together, a January night and a damp Coldfall Wood. Our picture shows what was left behind the morning after.

Furious, the Friends of Coldfall Wood arranged to meet to clear up after the unknown revellers, only to be beaten to it by persons unknown. These good people not only removed the chairs and litter and filled in the fire site but also left a message saying: "Have fun but please remove your rubbish".

It's great to know that users of the wood care enough to tackle a mess like this one. The Friends send grateful thanks to some unknown good fairies!



Abandoned: Chairs and litter surround the remains of a fire in Coldfall Wood



Frontage: Valona House as it was in the early 2000s

Minicab business Greater London Hire took over from him in 1968, becoming a valued part of East Finchley life. When their lease expired in 2017, they were forced to move to Bounds Green, and developer Safeland were very soon presenting plans to demolish the house and build 21 flats with two parking spaces.

A last-ditch attempt to save the house by getting it listed was unsuccessful. A fire in the 1980s had destroyed a rear extension, and the replacement, plus possible enlargement of some

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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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A friend on the line

Volunteers from the East Finchley Neighbourhood Support group have started a free Phone a Friend service for anyone who is feeling isolated and alone during the lockdown.

Local residents are on hand to offer a regular friendly chat to anyone who may be missing human company. Call 0843 886 5900 or email EFcovid@gmail.com for a call-back or to schedule a phone chat.

The support group has grown rapidly since the start of the pandemic last March and now provides a range of help for people in need.

Its Food Project supplies healthy tasty food from The Phoenix Cinema every Tuesday between 10.30am-12.30pm for individuals and families who may be struggling to feed

themselves. For assistance email HungryN2@hotmail.com or call the EFNS helpline on 0843 886 5900.

You can also find help with collecting shopping or prescriptions. And there is a book club that meets online every three weeks, along with plans for a Share Your Story video call once a week, giving a chance to connect and chat with others.

If you'd like to volunteer, visit the Community Organisations page at ILoveN2.co.uk or keep informed by joining East Finchley Neighbourhood Support's Facebook group.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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Barnet Council 020 8359 2000	Childline 0800 1111	Health Info Service 0800 665544
Recycling & refuse 020 8359 4600	Citizens Advice Barnet 0300 4568365	MIND 020 8343 5700
Benefits 0800 882200	Cruse Bereavement Care 0800 8081677	National Blood Centre 0845 7 711 7711
Haringey Council 020 8489 0000	EF Advice Service 0300 4568365	
Recycling & refuse 020 88857700	Lone Parent Centre 020 3828 4834	Crime
Benefits 020 8489 2800	Missing Persons Helpline 116 000	Emergency 999
	National Debt Line 0808 156 7718	Police non-emergency 101
Leisure	NSPCC 0808 8005000	CrimeStoppers 0800 555111
Alexandra Palace 020 8365 2121	Rape Crisis helpline 0808 802 9999	Victim Support 0845 303 0900
East Finchley Library 020 8359 3815	Refuge Crisis Helpline 0808 2000 247	
Everyman, Muswell Hill 0872 436 9060	Relate Helpline 0300 100 1234	Hospitals
Garden Suburb Library 020 8458 3301	RSPCA 0300 1234 999	NHS 111
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Extra floors for flats under new planning rules

By John Lawrence

A plan has been submitted to build an extra floor of homes on the top of the two front blocks in Mansfield Heights, the community of 45 houses and flats that sits between Great North Road and Aylmer Road.

Developers Redington Capital are asking Haringey Council for permission to add an extra layer on to the existing three-storey north blocks to provide nine new homes. Residents who have objected to the proposal say they are worried that it contains no mention of additional parking spaces to accommodate new residents and their vehicles.



Mansfield Heights now (above) and proposed (below)



Others have raised concerns over the disruption and pollution that would be caused by the building work. Residents directly opposite on Great North Road say a higher floor overlooking their homes would destroy their privacy.

In August last year, the Government started to streamline some planning procedures. Among them was the introduction of a right to add "up to two additional storeys of residential accommodation on top of existing, purpose-built blocks of flats".

A condition of this automatic planning permission is that developers must apply to

councils for determination of whether approval is needed for specific design issues. This is the application that is currently with Haringey Council for consideration. Mansfield Heights is made up of two interlinked three-storey blocks, a six-storey block and a terrace of houses built in 1956 as housing for Met Police officers but now in private ownership.

The developers originally submitted an application in 2019 to add 12 new flats but this was scaled back to nine when the decision was taken not to add an extra floor to the six-storey south block.

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Barnet Council

10 Ashburnham Close, N2

Single-storey side extension. Replacement of conservatory roof with solid flat roof. New side window opening.

8 Bedford Road, N2

Variation of condition of planning permission for single-storey rear extension, including raising roof height on infill extension.

18 Church Lane, N2

Part single, part two-storey rear/side extension, following demolition of conservatory, workshop and rear outbuilding. Roof extension involving rear dormer window.

83 Durham Road, N2

First-floor rear extension.

East Finchley Cemetery, East End Road, N2

Demolition of existing building. Installation of pre-fabricated unit including two ambulant disabled WC cubicles, following levelling of ground.

Grass Verge Land Adj East Finchley Library, 226 High Road, N2

Proposed 15m Phase 8 Monopole C/W wraparound Cabinet at base

and associated ancillary works.

36 Heath View, N2

Single-storey rear extension. New front porch.

Rear of 20 High Road, N2

Use of premises as Class E(g)(iii) light industrial processes.

12 Howard Walk, N2

Single-storey side and rear extension, following demolition of garage. Roof extension, including rear dormer window and one conservation side roof light. New rear garden shed. Alterations to hard and soft landscaping to front garden.

4-5 King Street, N2

Replacement of existing pitched roof. Mansard roof extension, involving three front and three rear dormers. Creation of one self-contained flat. Alterations to front fenestration, with provision of Juliet balconies and front porch. Associated off street parking, bin store and cycle storage.

39 Lincoln Road, N2

Roof extension, involving side/rear dormer windows and two front roof lights.

12 Manor Park Road, N2

Roof extension, involving rear dormer window, Juliet balcony and two front roof lights. Replacement of existing rear outbuilding.

26 Market Place, N2

Roof extension, involving rear dormer window, two front and one side facing roof lights.

1 Oak Lane, N2

Single-storey rear extension.

Haringey Council

1 The Terrace, Lauradale Road, N2

Rear dormer and four front roof lights.

Mansfield Heights, Great North Road, N2

Application to determine if prior approval required for roof extension over detached north and south blocks of flats to provide nine new homes.

36 Twyford Avenue, N2

Single-storey rear extension. First-floor side extension under cat slide roof, with front dormer. Hip-to-gable loft conversion with front roof lights and two rear dormers.

62 Twyford Avenue, N2

Single-storey extension: depth 7.5m, maximum height 4m, eaves height 3m.

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Time to stop dropping these dirty face masks

By John Lawrence

East Finchley workers and residents are being urged to rid the area of yet another unwanted symptom of the Covid pandemic: the blight of hundreds of masks dropped carelessly on our pavements and in our parks.

Eden Ford has lived in Hertford Road, N2, for more than 20 years and daily walks his black German shepherd dog Seren from his home along Durham Road and Summerlee Avenue to Cherry Tree Wood, returning via the High Road.

Noticing so many discarded masks, Eden decided to photograph all those he saw along his route, being careful not to duplicate. The composite picture shows his results. Taken over one week, he photographed no less than 34 masks in only five roads and the park.

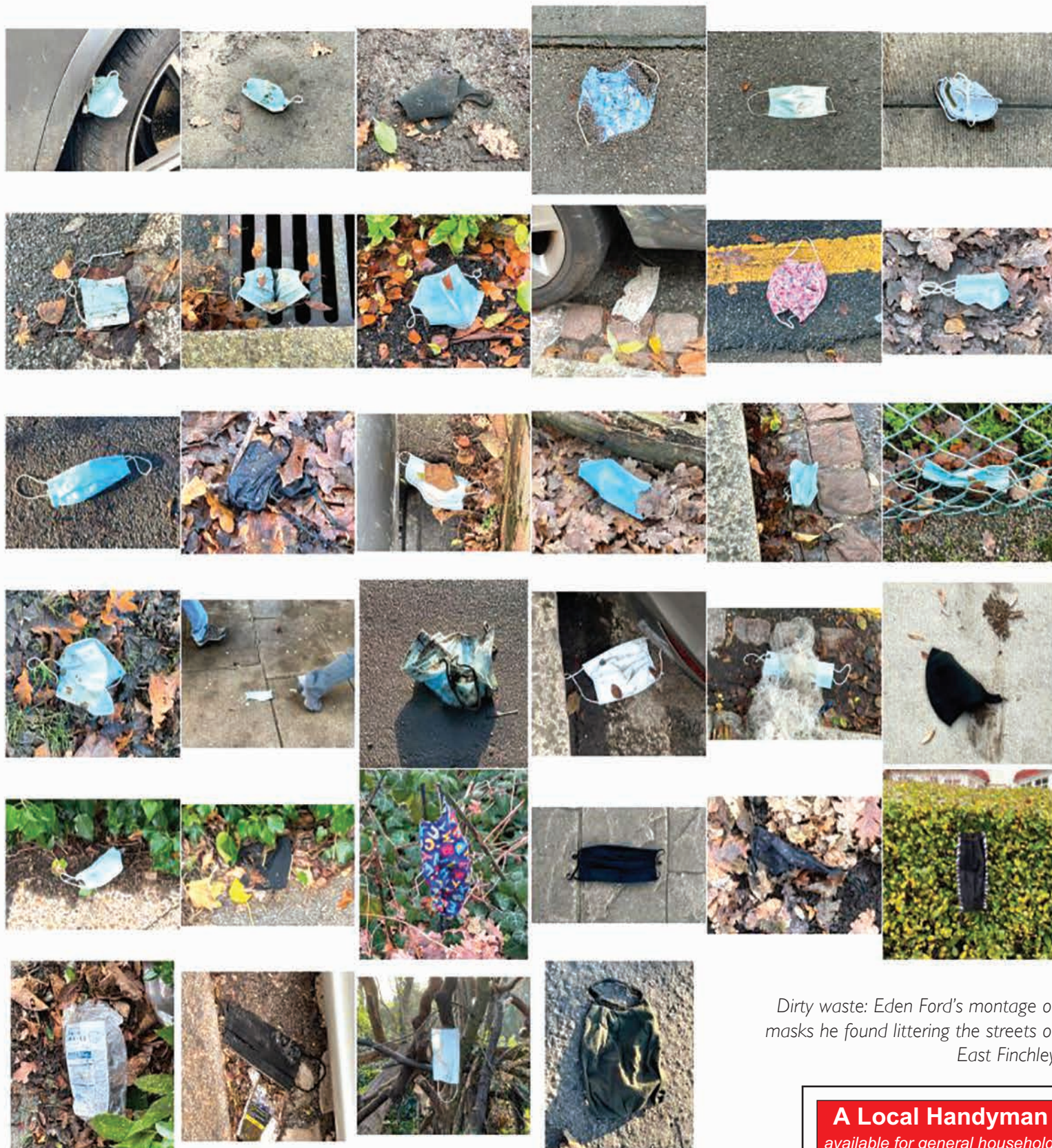
Eden said we had just started reaping the rewards of fewer plastic bags littering our roads thanks to the single-use carrier bag tax when they were replaced by something altogether more heinous.

Eden's message

"We now have what is basically medical waste, something even the boldest of good citizens would balk at the thought of picking up," he said. "Horribly disposable single-use blue masks and brightly coloured reusable masks are hanging from hedges and polluting pavements all about our village.

"The fact is that masks will be with us for some time and people may never want to give them up. Something we can all do is pay much more attention to what happens when our masks are not on our faces. Please dispose of them properly, not on the ground."

Eden has created a Facebook group called Stop Dropping Dirty Facemasks and an Instagram account with the name stopdroppingdirtyface-masks. He urged people to help raise awareness of the problem by posting examples of mask litter they see out on their daily walks.



Dirty waste: Eden Ford's montage of masks he found littering the streets of East Finchley

Clean air zone charges are coming

Households in East Finchley received a leaflet last month reminding them that the Mayor of London will be introducing charges for the worst-polluting vehicles across the capital anywhere inside the North Circular and South Circular roads from October.

The Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) will impose daily charges of £12.50 on cars, motorcycles, vans and minibuses every day of the year except Christmas Day, depending on their emissions.

Mayor of London Sadiq Khan says the expanded ULEZ will help to improve air quality for millions of Londoners, and that four out of five cars in the zone already comply with emission standards and will therefore not incur charges. But there are concerns that the

daily charges will heap extra costs onto the poorest families who cannot afford a new car and onto small businesses who may be running older vans.

To find out what you will pay, enter your vehicle registration at tfl.gov.uk/ulez-21.

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Helping hand: Laura Roberts delivers laptops to Cathy du Vergier and Tristan Green at Martin Primary.
Photo Mike Coles

Laptop scheme helps children learning at home

By David Gritten

The latest lockdown, with entire families now staying home, has thrown up several unforeseen problems, including the needs of children to do school work effectively.

With this in mind, East Finchley resident Laura Roberts has set up a scheme called

Laptops For Lockdown, asking local people to donate unwanted laptops and tablets that children could use for their home schooling.

"Some families might have four or five children and only one of two devices to share between them," she observes. "So their education may be suffering at a time when they need it the most."

Laura has contacted Martin School, near her home, and has already started sending devices

there, to pass on to pupils. She is also in touch with the Archer Academy and Bishop Douglass School.

She first heard about problems being faced by homebound children on BBC Radio. "A headteacher was saying she knew of families with four or five children and only one device. All the kids had to share it

and maybe that laptop also had to help a parent work from home.

"I thought, even in my road, I'm sure there are spare laptops knocking about in cupboards or the bottoms of drawers, not being used. It seemed to me it would be good to unite them with children and young people who needed them."

Tech help needed

Having now identified a

need, Laura also wants to contact locals with some technical knowledge: "Anyone who can fix broken screens, someone who could reset laptops. That would be very helpful."

Laura can be reached at laptopsforlockdown@gmail.com. She also has a website: laptopsforlockdown.com.

N2United: How to build a place to live and work in

By Charles Haydn

In the January edition of *The Archer*, N2United, the community and business network for the area, reflected on how the East Finchley community and particularly many of its businesses had come together to provide much needed support during the times of lockdown.

Their January meeting focused on ideas about how to maintain the positives of this period and make an already strong community better. Guest speaker was Roger Chapman, an influential voice in the community helping to run the East Finchley Festival for more than 35 years until stepping down in 2018 and now a driving force among the Friends of Cherry Tree Wood. He talked about the importance of community planning to help create the best environment to live and work in.

Looking forward

Underlined by the recent frustration felt by many about the cycle lanes and the lack of consultation before implementation, Roger pointed out that even without Covid-19 and the new way people are working, more people will move into the N2 area given the hundreds of homes under development. Therefore due consideration

should be given to where we want to be in one, five and 10 years' time either from the point of view of an individual, business or organisation.

The meeting also included updates from the Food Project and Tarling Road Community Hub, as well as consideration of existing community ideas like a local loyalty card and a way to improve our daily walks. Businesses will be pleased to hear the popular N2Unique campaign will be extended to include the cafes, restaurants and takeaways currently open.

Full details of the meeting can be found at n2united.co.uk and the next will be on Thursday 11 February, again open to everyone to help, as Roger suggested, "identify the dots and join them together" underpinned by a collaborative and mutually supportive plan. To share your ideas or to help select the next showcased business, email change@n2united.co.uk.

House holds a place in history

By Ivor Gaber

'A.J.P. Taylor, 1906-1990, Historian and Broadcaster lived here' reads the plaque on the neat semi-detached house on Fordington Road, N6, just adjacent to Cherry Tree Wood.

Alan Taylor was one of Britain's most famous historians, and indisputably the first-ever 'telly don', a breed now made famous by the likes of Simon Schama, Mary Beard and Lucy Worsley.

Back in the Fifties, in the days of black and white telly, Taylor would just stand in front of the camera and talk for an hour. No pictures, interviews or videos were needed to illustrate his spellbinding talks.

Between 1955 and 1964, Taylor lived in Fordington Road with his second wife Eve, the sister of the Labour politician Anthony Crosland.



Remembered: The house bearing the AJP Taylor plaque, left



And it was in this house that Taylor wrote some of his most

well-known books, including probably his most famous and certainly his most controversial work *The Origins of the Second World War*.

Taylor's life was filled with controversy and contradiction. A left-winger and founder of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, he was nevertheless devoted to the right-wing press baron Lord Beaverbrook. He had great spats with many of his contemporaries, most notably

Sir Hugh Trevor Roper, and that was perhaps why Oxford never made the 'telly don' a real don.

But as the blue plaque in Fordington Road reminds us, for all the contradictions Taylor, or AJP as he was known, was a great English radical and historian.

Are there other blue plaques in the area? Let us know by emailing news@the-archer.co.uk or leaving a message on our Freephone number 0800 612 0748.

Cemetery collision

A vehicle crash caused serious damage to one of the historic stone walls outside the gates of the Islington and St Pancras Cemetery on the High Road, N2, last month. Several blocks of stone were destroyed and vehicle debris was left along the pavement and gutter in the collision, thought to have happened around 6am.

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Good news: Kevin Lukau, second left, with his basketball training team on the Cherry Tree Wood court. Photo Mike Coles.

Unsafe basketball and tennis courts to be resurfaced

By David Melsome

The ageing basketball and tennis courts in Cherry Tree Wood will be rebuilt over the next few months after Barnet Council found the funding and appointed a contractor to carry out the resurfacing work.

Last September, *The Archer* reported on calls from regular users to repair the badly damaged courts following years of deterioration and an incident where a basketball player was injured during a game.

A Barnet Council site inspection revealed that the one basketball and two tennis courts all required a complete rebuild. They were kept open in the short term thanks to regular sweeping by the council, players and volunteers from the Friends of Cherry Tree Wood.

Plans are welcomed

Once funding was assigned, Blakedown Sport & Play Ltd was appointed as the contractor to carry out the rebuild. This same contractor undertook the refurbishment of the tennis and multi-sport courts in Victoria Park, off Long Lane, N3, last spring.

The Cherry Tree Wood works will replace like for like, leaving the two tennis courts and one basketball court in the same dimensions, adding new nets and posts for both sports and erecting new surrounding fencing.

Roger Chapman, Chair of the Friends of Cherry Tree Wood, said it was really good news for a much-needed local facility. "It's great to see such desperately needed investment in our local park. Parks and open spaces have particularly

proved their value for our physical and mental health and wellbeing over the past year and it's great to see this value being recognised," he said.

Equipment standards urged

Regular basketball player Luke Tiratsoo thanked the council and everyone who worked with them to secure the funding. But he pointed out that it was important for the renovations to use regulation posts, hoops and backboards recognised by sporting bodies so that Cherry Tree Wood could be used for competitive games between amateur teams from across the region, as well as for leisure games. "It may sound like a minor issue, and obviously we are all massively thankful for the resurfacing. We just feel that it's really important we get this thing right," he said.

Grange Big Local reveals first list of grant winners

By John Lawrence

Music therapy and a community garden are among the projects being supported by the first round of cash grants from the Grange Big Local (GBL) team, it has been announced.

GBL put out a call last year for ideas that will make a positive difference to people living in its regeneration area, centred on the Grange estate and the northern end of East Finchley, as well as the wider N2 area.

On offer were grants of up to £500 for individual residents and up to £10,000 for local organisations to get the projects off the ground.

The GBL team said the judging panel "had the difficult task of narrowing down a brilliant pool of applications to just a small handful of recipients". So, in response, they increased the budget for the programme and have announced funding for nine local residents and nine organisations. Among the organisation projects being supported are:

Wild About Our Woods: an eco-therapy and wellbeing pilot based in local community forest garden Barnwood N2, off Tarling Road, offering a tailored programme of nature-based workshops and activities for local residents aged 55+ to

reduce isolation and promote healthy aging.

Something Out The Ordinary (SOTO): a programme of free, online, arts-focused activities in dance, drama, and music for disadvantaged and marginalized children and young people aged between five and 25, aiming to boost mental health and confidence.

North London Music Therapy: The Wednesday Group is a weekly online music therapy group for young people to come together, using lyric writing and online music software to build a community of music makers.

Little Volcanoes: working hand in hand with two local schools, these online science workshops will feature hands-on experiments, drama, and singing, motivating children to not only learn science, but to enjoy the process as well.

Friends of the Archer Academy: The Archer Academy Parents Association are building an outdoor classroom at their lower school site in Eagans Close, N2, that will be

open to students, staff, and the wider community as a space for reading, counselling, gardening and animal therapy.

Akana Theatre: an online programme offering local residents the chance to build their confidence, problem-solve, and work as a team through the medium of improv theatre.

Acting for Health: a community arts project that uses theatre and acting to tackle issues around health and wellbeing.

Tarling Road Little Garden: to celebrate the completion of this community garden funded by Grange Big Local's first Community Grants programme in 2019, Tarling Road Little Garden plan to have a celebration event bringing local residents together later this year.

To find out more about the individual projects Grange Big Local are funding, check their Instagram and Facebook @grangebiglocal or follow them on Twitter at @GrangeBL

Safety fears over Sunday parking

By John Lawrence

Residents of the Thomas More estate in East Finchley say inconsiderate parking by churchgoers is becoming a nuisance and potentially putting their lives at risk.

A small chapel in the East Finchley Cemetery, off East End Road, is hired out by the cemetery's owners, Westminster Council. The congregation who arrive to use it on weekends park their cars on Thomas More Way immediately opposite and sometimes inside the private roads of the Thomas More estate.

One resident told us: "The cars are parked across dropped kerbs and they block our roads. There was one incident where a fire engine couldn't get in. Thankfully, there wasn't a fire that day but we need to keep our roads open for emergency vehicles. "We go to church elsewhere in East Finchley and have no problem with people using the



Packed: Cars parked outside homes in Thomas More Way, with the chapel beyond.

chapel but they must respect the neighbourhood where they're parking. These are not short services and seem to last for hours at a time. We have spoken to the priest and the situation did improve for a couple of weeks but then went back to being bad." Residents are asking for road markings and warning notices to be placed on Thomas More Way, which is under the juris-

diction of Barnet Council. The other roads on the estate have parking restrictions imposed by the estate manager Optivo. East Finchley councillor Arjun Mittra said the matter had been raised with Barnet Council but there was little they could do as Thomas More Way was not connected to an existing controlled parking zone and it was not possible to set one up for a single road.

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Learning to make connections across the globe

Jane Conway tells the story of the very special connection that has grown between pupils at Martin Primary School in East Finchley and children at a school 5,000 miles away in western India.

It was a baking hot day in January, the temperature registering 36°C in the airless classroom. I was visiting Tryamboli Vidyalaya School in Kolhapur, Maharashtra, which has shared a special bond with Martin Primary School since their 'twinning' in 2016.

On this particular day, there was great excitement because for the first time, children from both schools were going to talk to each other. In London, teachers Julie Taylor and Shona Glakin had been at school early to prepare for the video call. At my end, it was the afternoon and a group of children were gathered round my mobile phone in eager anticipation of seeing their London peers. They had prepared some questions in English, their third language after Marathi and Hindi, which they were keen to practise in a meaningful context.



Page turner: Tryamboli girls in an English lesson

is never the need for anything but the lightest jacket.

Their carefully rehearsed questions were immediately forgotten, giving way to spontaneous ones. "Why so many clothes?" they wanted to know. "Why are they wearing things on their hands and

and answers, one of the Indian children carried my phone around Tryamboli School, introducing each class in turn and provoking a chorus of high-spirited greetings. It was with reluctance that they said goodbye, keen to keep the link live for as long as possible. But classes were about to begin in London.

For the rest of my visit, the children wanted my help to form a myriad of questions they could ask Martin School children the next time they spoke to each other. Indeed, they were so keen to communicate further that we spent an afternoon writing letters for me to take back to London. It was heart-warming to see them completely absorbed in their efforts to interact with children thousands of miles away.

How it began

My first encounter with Tryamboli School was in January 2012. My husband had organised a two-month sabbatical from his job at University College Hospital to collaborate on a research project with a medical team in Kolhapur. I had taken leave from my teaching job to go with him.

Kolhapur is a busy industrial town, famous for its brick industry, leather shoes and the Shri Ambabai temple. Although visited by many Hindu worshippers, Kolhapur is not on the tourist track for foreigners and Westerners are rarely seen there.

For our stay we were given accommodation on the outskirts of the town where the urban and rural are juxtaposed; busy streets and rows of overcrowded small dwellings lead to open patches of land where animals graze and wander. Behind our bungalow was a sprawling slum area, a maze of narrow lanes and pathways.

Getting to know you

I soon made friends with a family of four generations sharing one room. I invited the two young boys to play in our garden and their mother, Namretta, and I communicated enthusiastically, undaunted by reliance upon improvised sign language and a limited vocabulary of English and Hindi. Each morning she was up at dawn, busy with her housework, but in her free time she taught me the art of rangoli, decorating our path with

elaborate designs, and patiently allowing me to help sprinkle the different coloured powders in my inexpert way.

Early one morning Namretta came knocking on my door and gesticulated that she wanted me to come with her. I followed her and her boys along the lanes behind the bungalow, past the row of single-roomed houses where women were washing clothes on their doorsteps, and then up three steps and through a gate into a large open area of wasteland where, in front of a low brick building, stood 200 children in neat rows, apparently waiting for my arrival. As soon as they saw me, they started singing a song of welcome in English, and from that instant, my heart was irrevocably bonded with the school.

Tryamboli Primary school had been set up on a charity basis to provide an education for the children living in the neighbouring slums, taking them from aged 4 in Lower Kindergarten to 7th Standard (the same as the English Year 7). It started life in a cow shed and had gradually expanded to a row of small brick interjoined classrooms.

However, it still lacked the most basic resources of water and electricity and only the oldest children had desks – the younger ones sat on a hard, concrete floor all day. Most of the items we take for granted in a school setting were absent, even pens and paper and books. The teachers were

use of computers. Particularly important was the size of the rooms, big enough for the 7th Standard children to sit the state exams which would allow them to move on to secondary school.

When I returned to Kolhapur a year later, in 2013, I carried with me a heavy suitcase of children's story books and encyclopaedias which had been donated by the families of Martin Primary School. I will never forget the excitement of the pupils as they opened up the books and turned the pages, full of wonder at the colourful illustrations. For many of the children there, a book was an unaffordable luxury, the significance of which was movingly articulated by one of the pupils. Now a college graduate in IT, and fluent in English, he told me on my last visit that he had never seen a book before that day. "I knew they existed of course," he said, "but when I held them and looked at them, I started to have a different hope for my future, I started to have a dream."

Partners

The partnership between Martin and Tryamboli Primary schools has grown steadily year by year with a reciprocal sharing of cultures and desire to learn about each other. I have been amazed by the inspired ideas of Martin School pupils who have wanted to show their support and friendship for Tryamboli in many different ways, from raising money for new resources, to hand-made gifts of picture books, wall



Love of reading: Tryamboli boys with a book donated by Martin Primary

dedicated and the children keen to study, but funds were desperately needed to create better conditions and to provide more teaching resources.

Water, classrooms and dreams

With the help of medical colleagues in Kolhapur, and friends and family in the UK, we raised initial funds to build two big new airy classrooms with desks and benches, and to install water and electricity – thus allowing for fans to cool the rooms in the heat and to lay the first steps towards the

hangings, personalised bunting and bookmarks, and, as shown in a recent *Archer* edition, cotton bags with a design showing the partnership between the two schools. In return, the Tryamboli pupils and teachers have made ingeniously resourceful presents out of recycled materials, as well as their own picture books, cards, pottery and Diwali decorations, to send back to London. Few of the children have been further than their Kolhapur neighbourhood, but most of them know the name of East Finchley, London!



Classrooms: The primary school is in the heart of a slum area

Questions and answers

After a few technical hitches, Julie and I had a clear WhatsApp connection, just in time for the children with me to witness the Martin School children bursting into their classroom, fully wrapped-up in winter coats, hats, scarves and gloves. The Tryamboli children were astonished and perplexed; even in a South-Indian winter, there

heads?" When the Martin children were sent off to hang up their coats and put away their backpacks, this stimulated new questions. Where were the coats and bags going? Tryamboli children come to school without outer garments and keep their bags with them, so the concept of a 'cloakroom' was unknown to them.

After a series of questions

All Saints' Church, Durham Road, East Finchley Church of England

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Sunday mass at 10.00 a.m. and Weekday masses as advertised on the website.
Face masks must be worn for the time being.

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The church is also open for private prayer as advertised on the website.

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For more information, contact the Vicar, Fr Ian Chandler, on 020 8883 9315

Email: vicar.saintsabounding@gmail.com or check out our website:

<http://www.allsaints-eastfinchley.org.uk>



Alarm over air pollution from allotment bonfires

By David Melsome

Last March, *The Archer* published a Soapbox column written by Trisha and Peter Portinari pointing out the hazards of air pollution caused, they said, by bonfires on the allotments to the rear of their home in Creighton Avenue, N2.

We've now been contacted by a resident of one of the tower blocks in Prospect Ring raising the same concern. The resident accompanied his email with photos looking out across East Finchley from his flat, showing bonfires burning on allotment land off the High Road. The resident, who asked to remain

to April.

Compost preferred to fires

Cathy said: "Reminders are issued to plot holders to have as few fires as possible. Only dry vegetation should be burned and everyone is encouraged to compost material as much as possible.

"If a plot holder has a



Smoke signals: A photo taken from Prospect Ring shows an allotment bonfire burning

anonymous, urged allotment holders to have more consideration for the potential smoke and particulate pollution they could be causing by burning waste so close to homes and the neighbouring Martin Primary School.

He wrote: "I see fires and smoke on a daily basis. I get the impression that they have absolutely no regard for the well-being of the surrounding population, particularly children. It's fortunate that Martin School has a limited number of pupils attending due to Covid restrictions."

Lease regulations

We asked Cathy Schling, Secretary of the East Finchley Allotment Holders' Association, for a comment. She told us that the allotment committee was very aware of the need to keep pollution from bonfires to a minimum and had been discussing the best way to limit their number.

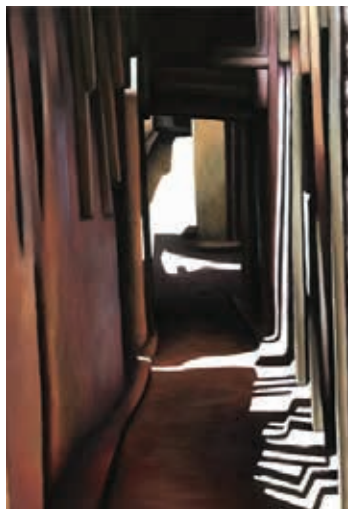
According to the allotment site lease, bonfires are allowed one specified day a month from May to September and at any time on any day during October

bonfire on the wrong day, which happens very rarely, or is burning the wrong type of material, someone from the committee will speak to them and ask them to extinguish the bonfire.

"If a local resident complains about smoke I will try to contact the plot holder and ask them to put it out. If local residents are bothered by the smoke they often ring me and I do try to respond to their complaints."

Judith Ryan, secretary of the neighbouring Fuel Land Allotments, told us fires and barbecues were prohibited between 1 May and 30 September, except on the first Wednesday of July, August and September. The management committee encouraged composting of green waste, rather than burning.

Judith added: "Our rules are also mindful that smoke should not cause a nuisance to others, and in particular, to our close neighbours in Chandos Road. If smoke is blowing that way the rules state that the fire should be extinguished."



Light and shade: Christine Watson's pastels are on show online

Pictures at an exhibition

East Finchley artist Christine Watson has an image in the Royal Over-Seas League Incognito Exhibition, which is online at rosl.org.uk until Monday 15 February. Christine also has three pastels selected for the Pastel Society Annual Exhibition 2021, which can be seen online at www.mallgalleries.org.uk

Plastics campaign group takes battle to the Lords

Ann Inglis, of No2PlasticsN2, updates us on the latest legal moves against single-use plastics and issues a plea.

We at No2PlasticsN2 are, as many of you know, an East Finchley-based group who, by a complete fluke, have been gifted the opportunity with the Environment Bill going through Parliament of influencing legislation in this country.

The Bill has finished its passage through the Commons and is just about to go to the Lords. We want it amended to ban single-use plastic carrier bags outright. We want to demonstrate that there is such a groundswell of opinion in the country on this issue that Zac Goldsmith (Minister of State for DEFRA, and so the most powerful person in the Lords on the environment) will be persuaded to table this amendment.

We will get as many organisations as possible to sign a petition to be launched just before the Bill goes to the Lords. We are doing our utmost to generate a tsunami of support!

We ask for as many people as possible to share the campaign petition we have joined. More than 17,000 people have done so already. To find it, go to change.org and search 'ban all disposable single use plastic'.

Unfortunately, during the passage of the Bill through the Commons, George Eustice MP the DEFRA Minister announced that the cost of single-use plastic carrier bags will be raised from 5p to 10p, which we regard as derisory. He thus publicly nailed his colours firmly to the mast, making it much more difficult for him to change course.

Advice and support wanted

Inexperienced campaigners, we failed to get the Bill amended while it was in the Commons. We would be grateful for advice from anyone with experience of getting a proposal such as ours across to members of the House of Lords.

Currently we have a petition that calls on Zac Goldsmith to table the amendment and summarises the reasons to ban

single-use plastics outright. Find the petition on our website at No2PlasticsN2.com. We are about to launch on the Change.org platform. Please sign it if you can.

Additionally, Muswell Hill Sustainability Group (MHSG) has promised their full support. Could everyone who cares about reducing and possibly even eliminating single use plastics, approach their own favourite organisations and ask them to support the petition?

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Where in the world quiz: the answers

Thank you to everyone who took part in our picture quiz, published in our December edition. We're glad that many of you enjoyed using your daily walks to search for the ten mystery East Finchley locations in our photos.

Winners were chosen at random from all the correct entries we received. Congratulations are therefore due to £30 first prize winner Maria Cogo, £20 second prize winners Holly and Lauren Ketchell and £10 third prize winner Howard Chapman. **And for anyone still flummoxed by any of the photos, here are the answers:**

1. Sign painted on the wall outside the Bald Faced Stag pub, High Road.
2. The old girls' entrance to the former Holy Trinity School, East End Road, now The Learning Experience pre-school.
3. Coat of arms above the Royal Mail sorting office in Market Place
4. Metal bench in the play area in Cherry Tree Wood
5. Front window of the Phoenix Cinema
6. Sign outside the Windsor Castle pub in The Walks
7. Old shop advertisement above Finchley Wines, on the corner of the High Road and Leicester Road
8. Shutters on the front of the kiosk in Cherry Tree Wood
9. The painted side wall of the Clissold Arms in Fortis Green
10. Banner in the booking hall of East Finchley Underground Station
11. The bell tower of Holy Trinity Church, Church Lane
12. The roofline above the Barber Shed and Animal Aid shop in the High Road.

Ripping yarns... all in 50 words or less

Thanks to everyone who got their creative juices flowing for the Fifty Word Story Challenge we set back in April. Here we print some of the best tales we've received.

Can you write a story in 50 words or less? Email: news@the-archer.co.uk or post to The Archer, PO Box 3699, London N2 2DE.

The Mystery

Woman,

by Stroller

Walking along East End Road, a woman passed me wearing a grey skirt, a red anorak with the hood pulled over her head, a face mask and dark sun glasses. As we passed she waved to me. She clearly knew me, but I have absolutely no idea who it was...

Deep Listening,

by Valerie Archer

The wind speaks to each leaf on each tree as it whistles across the Heath. Animated and alive - the leaves weave their dream for the world into fables for the birds who gift songs of

truth to the morning. Do you hear? You may need to tune your ear.

The Developer,

by Laurence Robinson.

The houses he built despite the opposition of neighbours, whose rights he had trampled, would make him a lot of money. Then the estate agent said there was another development planned next door and they were now unsellable. The irony was lost on the developer, and so were his profits.

Red Alert,

by Diana Cormack

"Don't touch that flashing red button, Mr President. It's for automatic atomic attack activation. The flashing blue one is pause for peace talks. That's the one to push...Oh no, why the hell did you do that?" "Hey, Senator, didn't anybody tell you I'm colour blind?"

Prequel to VE

Day,

by Alex Leppard

Gently laying down the lifeless body of the wife he'd just shot, he raised the still smoking gun to his temple. Allowing himself a brief moment of reflection on what might have been, he pulled the trigger. His 1,000 years' Reich was over.

A Welcome

Relief,

by DeBear

I wanted to walk in the countryside but the police were there and said I had to go back home. Oh no, I replied, the virus levels have fallen, and we are now allowed to go out when and where we like. They just smiled and walked away.

The Rocket

Scientist,

by Jake the Peg

"50 words?" he said to The Editor, "For my life's work? It took 50 years, and £50 billion." Outside, 50 rockets with 50 atom bombs rose into the sky. In 50 minutes the world would be blown back into the stone age, as though it were 50 centuries ago.



In memory of a dear friend

People living in the area of King Street, N2, have got used to seeing a collection of cuddly toys perched in the large tree close to Ferrou Court. They were placed there in memory of Kathleen Sturman, who died in June at the age of 39. Friends and neighbours have also put a framed photo of Anfield stadium in the tree, in recognition of Kathleen's love of Liverpool FC.

FUN and MUSIC for BABIES and TODDLERS in N2 on **TUESDAYS** and **THURSDAYS** at 10am



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Willow House fire damage may be repaired by the spring

By Janet Maitland

The long-awaited refurbishment of Willow House on the Grange Estate following a fire that destroyed the roof and made residents homeless two years ago may soon finally be finished.

Barnet Homes, who manage the estate, hope the repairs will be completed in early spring, but this depends on

rent lockdown this isn't always possible in practice.

A Barnet Homes spokesperson told us that an "outbreak of coronavirus cases resulted in temporary shutdowns involving workers having to isolate or undertake tests" early last month. Nevertheless, workmen were hard at it in the pouring rain in mid-January when our photographer took pictures.



New roof: The block was partially destroyed by fire

the workforce being able to work. Although construction is allowed by the rules of the cur-

The site was closed during the first lockdown last March and when it reopened in July



Refurbishment: Willow House last month. Photo Mike Coles

there was a slow start because of problems with staffing and materials. However, by December work had sped up and was going well. In fact, just before the latest lockdown, Barnet Homes had been on the point of providing leaseholders access to the flats so they could prepare to reclaim them.

Cost and damp issues

The pandemic has not been the only cause of the long delay. A decision to re-tender the contract because the bids received "did not represent value for money" led to the work being put on hold for a year. Once work started in November 2019, the plan was to finish by March 2020.

But this quickly changed to July when contractors realised how long it would take for the building to dry out. There were

also challenges relating to the building structure which meant that Barnet Homes had to get expert advice and then undertake unforeseen work.

Coming and going

Two of the 13 households forced to leave their homes were tenants who were rehoused by Barnet Homes. One will be moving back in, the other was rehoused permanently elsewhere. Two resident leaseholders will return when the work is complete. The remaining leaseholders rent their properties out. Their tenants either made their own arrangements after they lost their homes, or were helped by Barnet Homes.

Although loss adjusters were able to confirm that the fire was caused by an electrical fault, they were unable to draw any further conclusions.

Plant a tree in remembrance

This winter the Royal Horticulture Society is inviting individuals, community groups, schools and businesses to plant a tree in memory of those who have lost their lives during the pandemic.

Anyone who would like to remember a loved one who passed away is urged to plant a tree of any size, shape or variety where they have permission.

Then they can add the location of their tree to a Roots of Remembrance map, as well as download a dedicatory plaque, on the RHS website at: www.rhs.org.uk/get-involved/community-gardening/remembrance

RICKY SAVAGE ...

"The voice of social irresponsibility"

A world turned upside down

With the virus striking back, we're all living in a Hollywood sequel of the worst kind. But now we have the coming of the vaccine and it's a game-changer because as everyone over 70 gets the jab the world can open up in a seriously surreal way. There will have to be new rules, starting with pubs and restaurants. To go into your local bistro, you'll need to bring ID... to prove you are over 70. No kids or hipsters will be allowed and menus will have to change: an end to the gastro tyranny of quadruple fried chips stacked in a miniature shopping trolley and the return of dumping them in a proper pile on your plate. The same thing goes for hipster coffee that has been passed through the digestive system of an endangered species and served in old jam jars. Instead, it will be all the tea you can drink in white mugs.

Don't get the idea this will be a return to post-war stodge, though; remember that your average 70-year-old would have been hitting their local Chinese restaurant or curry house in the 1970s. These are people who remember when pizzas were special and not just delivered by some kid on a scooter.

And what about live music? They're not looking for an evening of Herb Alpert or Mantovani. No, these people bought The Beatles on vinyl, just like they bought the Stones, Black Sabbath and Led Zeppelin. They probably have much-loved copies of David Bowie in the loft. So if the only people allowed into Glastonbury are the over-70s, they'll want a classic line-up. Just think of Paul McCartney, Robert Plant and Iggy Pop playing on the same bill in a sunny field. Of course, the toilet situation will have to be cleaned up somewhat, but they'll all be there wearing their T-shirts proclaiming "I may be old but I saw all the best bands". And The Coffin Dodgers, the radical biking wing of the Pensioners' Alliance, will come on their Harley Davidsons to drink beer and see fair play. At a festival of this calibre, who could possibly fill the legends slot on the Sunday afternoon? There can be only one choice. He may have had to cancel his "I'm Nearly 80" tour last year but, freshly vaccinated, he'll be fit and ready. Yes, folks, it'll be time for Cliff to remind the crowd why they like to 'Move It'. Like I said, this summer is going to be the world turned upside down.

Good advice for seniors on staying well this winter

By Daphne Chamberlain

Age UK has put together an advice sheet on how to stay safe and well this winter. Here are some extracts:

Keep warm

Cold puts pressure on hearts and circulatory systems, increasing the risk of heart attack or stroke, as well as hypothermia. If you suspect yourself, or another, is experiencing any of these, call 999 immediately, or 112 from a mobile. For symptoms of heart attack or hypothermia and advice on how to help, see NHS websites.

Wrap up well, with layers, and take extra when spending time outside. Keep a comfortable home temperature through the day. Close bedroom windows at night, and curtains at dusk. If necessary, get help with heating costs. The Age UK website www.ageuk.org.uk has advice, as well as tips for keeping hands and feet warm.

Keep moving

Try not to sit still for more than one hour at a time. The Age UK website has simple home-based exercises, plus advice if you are unsure where to start, or find moving difficult.

In East Finchley, the Ann Owens Centre in Oak Lane, and the Green Man Centre on Strawberry Vale offer a range of fitness and exercise classes, but obviously these are affected by Covid-19 restrictions. Please phone 020 8629 0269 for details.

Eat well

If you've lost weight without meaning to, or have a smaller appetite than usual, find out why. It's important to eat, even if you only fancy a slice of cake. Something is always better than nothing.

Try the Age UK "winter

warmer" recipes.

Medical advice

Everyone aged 65 and over, anyone who cares for a friend or family member, front line workers, and anyone in a clinical risk group, or who lives with someone previously asked to shield, is entitled to the free flu jab. For over 65s it will help boost the immune system's response to flu and is not incompatible with the anti-covid vaccines. A flu jab is even more important this year, with the coronavirus threat still looming large.

Check if you're eligible for the pneumo vaccine, which helps protect from pneumonia. For more information, see www.ageuk.org.uk/campaigns. To order printed copies of the full fact sheets, call 0800 678 1602, 8am - 7pm, 365 days of the year.



Unlock nature's clues to our rural past

Natural history expert **Linda Dolata** explains how a walk around East Finchley can transport you hundreds of years back in time.

Over the months, the virus restrictions have encouraged us to take many more local walks, and how lucky we are in East Finchley. A view of the horizon in any direction will usually include mature trees, and our roads are lined with beautiful London planes, limes, ginkgos, hawthorns and sorbus trees.

We have so many green areas. Remnants of an ancient forest can be found in Coldfall Wood, Coppett's Wood, Cherry Tree Wood, Highgate Wood, Queen's Wood, Kenwood, Big Wood, Little Wood; all within a couple of walkable miles.

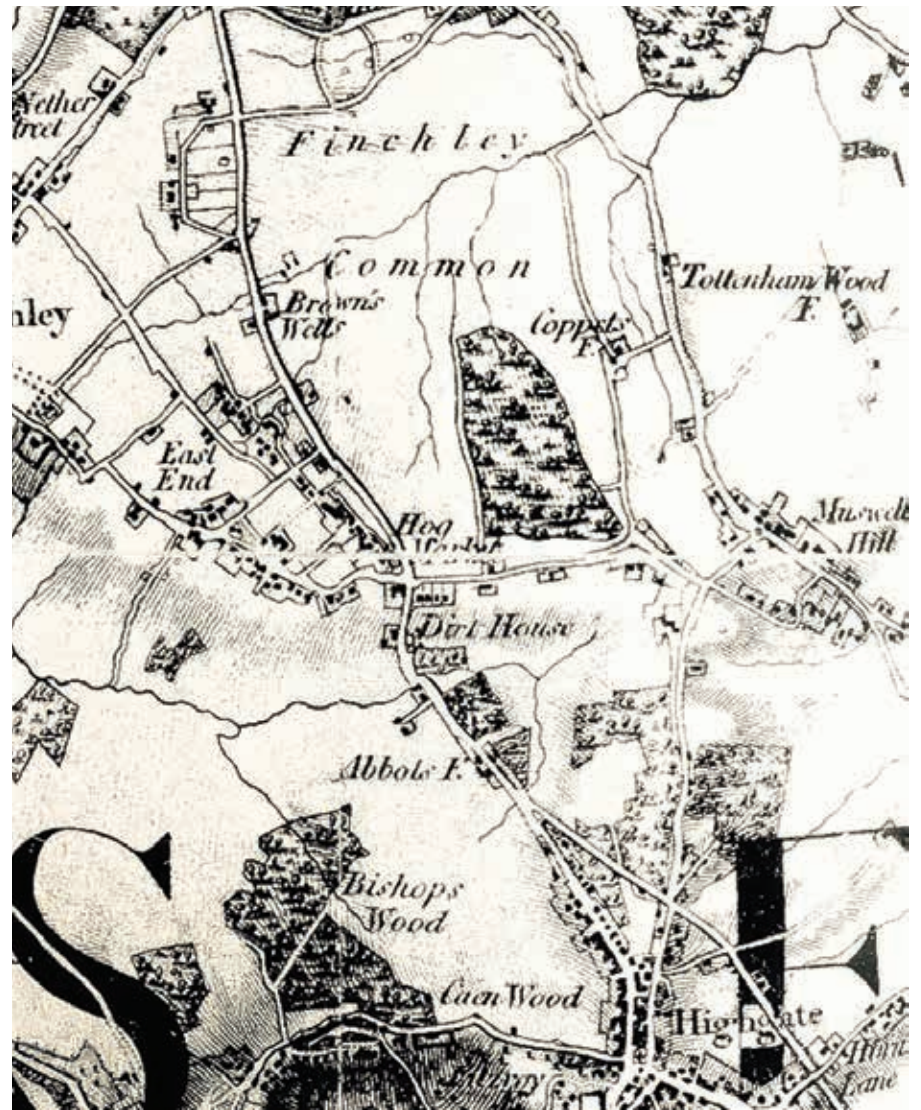
ash and sycamore.

The farms and Common recorded on 19th century maps of our area can still be seen in part as parks, allotments, cemeteries, playing fields, scraps of pasture and private gardens. Some of the older trees in the

rural past. And any patch of bare grass soon shows what survives in the seed bank.

The hawthorns edging the High Road (near the Vue cinema area, for example) show the horizontal limbs that were cut and laid (by a hedgelay) when this was a drovers' road; a veteran oak once on the notorious Finchley Common, now grows surreptitiously within 10 yards of the North Circular behind an ancient hedgerow (Font Hill, off Long Lane); and even the bushes either side of the North Circular show every spring the lambs-tail catkins of the hazels that remain from their coppiced ancestors.

Look carefully and our centuries-old footpaths are still honoured (Ploughman's Walk and Pumphandle Path, off Oak Lane), one at least even having its own little pedestrian bridge over the North Circular from the top of Tarling Road with again hazel and elm, field maples, hawthorn and dog roses pointing back in time



Common land: How East Finchley, then East End, looked in 1822, with the Great North Road and Fortis Green crossroads in the centre and what is today's High Road running north alongside the open land of Finchley Common



Well-trodden: Ploughman's Walk started as a path through fields and is still a much-used route through the middle of homes between Long Lane and Tarling Road

A working landscape

Most of these retain the signs of their past use as working woods, with coppiced hornbeam and hazel, and timber trees of oak, no longer harvested, along with the colonising birch,

East Finchley Cemetery off East End Road survive from that long-gone farmland.

Wood anemones, mistletoe, speedwell, cow parsley, hawkbit... many simple plants still appear, reminders of our more

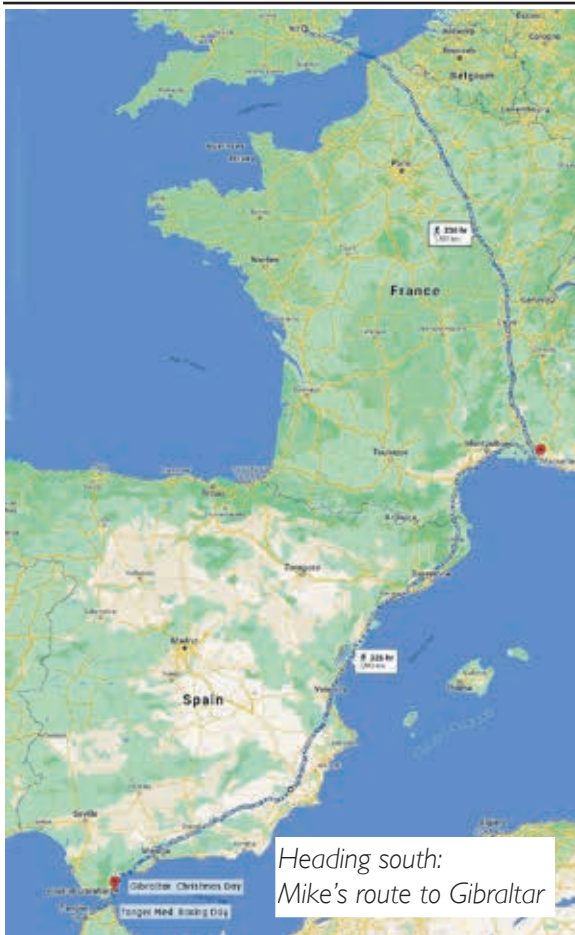
to the hedges that surrounded the path.

Time-travel

I would suggest to anyone who is getting bored with this lockdown to get hold of an old Ordnance Survey map and use it to imagine the past (you can probably use your phones for this). The place names often

hold marvellous clues... manor, wood, coppetts (copse or coppice), glade, lane, way, green, well, grove, hurst (clearing in a wood), ley (meadow).

So, living in a meadow with finches as we do, maybe this winter and spring are a good time to explore the story of its past in depth.



Heading south:
Mike's route to Gibraltar

All the way to Africa on foot

Our photo editor Mike Coles has walked every day for almost a year. Here he updates us on where his daily treks have taken him.

Last spring, with the first lockdown impending, I thought I had better do something to keep fit and sane so I decided to do a 'virtual' walk into Europe. I 'left' London a couple of days before lockdown on 17 March 2020 to walk to Marseilles in southern France.

The actual walking was in local streets and parks, my route plotted by Google Maps and my daily distance recorded by my fitness band and my phone GPS. By the middle of July, after 124 days at an average of 9.6 km per day (about six miles), I reached Marseilles and left the next morning walking towards the Pyrenees. On the first day of September, I reached Sils in northern Spain, and passed the milestone of 1,000 miles of walking. I wasn't ready to stop so carried on southwards through Barcelona, Valencia and Murcia.

On Christmas Day, after 285 consecutive days, I found myself in The Rock Hotel in Gibraltar,

where I last stayed on a work trip in 1972. On Boxing Day morning, I got the ferry to Tanger Med, the largest port in Africa, about 40km east of Tangiers in Morocco. The actual ferry is temporarily suspended because of COVID, but in my virtual world it's still running. Saturday 9 January was a new landmark: my 300th consecutive day of walking, and I was now covering more than 10 km per day, putting me 1,864 miles from London.

The whole of the African continent lies before me so I am now heading south along the Moroccan coast to Essaouira, west of Marrakesh. If I can keep up the pace Google thinks I should be there by 7 March.

Mindful baking

East Finchley resident Ines Lanza is to host a five-week series of free family-friendly online sourdough baking workshops. A Grange Big Local Community Grants funded project, the workshops will be open to local residents of all ages, backgrounds, and baking experience.

Ines said she wants people to come out of the sessions more settled, rested and feeling better connected to others, adding that few things are as comforting as baking a good loaf of bread.

Workshops will take place on Saturday afternoons from 27 February. Sign up by contacting Ines directly at: ines_lanza@yahoo.it. You can follow her on Instagram @mindful_sourdough for more updates on the programme.



Clear winner: Stanley with his British Chess trophy

Chess champ Stanley is best in Britain

Coldfall Primary School's excellent reputation for chess players continues after 11-year-old Stanley Badacsonyi was crowned a British Champion. The Year 6 pupil won eight out of nine games to triumph in the British Under-12 Online Blitz Championships held over the Christmas and New Year holiday.

Stanley said: "It was an honour to play amongst such a strong field of players, which included some England juniors and some Year 7s, but to actually come out on top was amazing and I feel thrilled!"

The British Chess Championships are normally held in the summer. Last year they were due to be held in Torquay but were switched online due to the pandemic. In total there were over 800 entries across the Championships, hundreds of them junior players like Stanley.

Ken Carter

We are sad to have to report that Ken Carter, a former member of The Archer team and a popular figure in East Finchley, died last month.

Ken, who lived in Leicester Road before moving to the West Country to be close to family, wrote for us on music and reviewed East Finchley Arts Festival concerts each year. He will be much missed, and we hope to publish a longer tribute to him in our next edition.



The Archer online

Did you know you can catch up with past issues of The Archer online? Every edition since the start of 2000 is available on our website www.the-archer.co.uk.

Free art workshops

Local resident Vanya Georgieva is launching a series of free, online art workshops for people of all ages and backgrounds to come together and create.

Supported by funding from Grange Big Local's Community Grants programme, Vanya's 'Art for All' workshops will provide a warm, welcoming space to meet new people and learn new creative skills.

There will be five Saturday afternoon workshops in total, each focusing on a different theme. The first takes place on Saturday 13 February from 2pm with a Valentine's Day special. Vanya will provide free arts kits to any participants who need them. Sign up by contacting her directly at vania_2701@hotmail.com.

Call to take part in once-a-decade population survey

By David Melsome
Every household in East Finchley should look out for an invitation from early next month to take part in the once-in-a-decade event of Census Day.

The census is a survey sent out by the government to build the most accurate estimate of all the people and households in England and Wales. It has been carried out every decade since 1801, with the exception of 1941.

For the first time this year it will be run predominantly online, with households receiving a letter with a unique access code, allowing them to complete the questionnaire on either their computers, phones or tablets. Support will be available to help residents do this and paper questionnaires can be sent on request.

Benefits from a successful census

Emma Taylor, Census Engagement Manager responsible for the N2 area, told *The Archer* that a successful Census 2021 will ensure councils and charities can put services and funding in the places where they are most needed. This includes facilities like doctors' surgeries, schools and new transport routes.

"Barnet already has one of the largest populations in London and it is expected to continue to grow to almost half a million by 2030. That is why it is more important than ever that everyone living in East Finchley takes part to make sure they are included," said Emma.

New and voluntary questions

Census Day itself will be on Sunday 21 March, but households can expect to receive letters with online codes allowing them to take part from early March.

The census will include questions about your sex, age, work, health, education, household size and ethnicity. And, for the first time, there will be a question asking people whether they have served in the armed forces, as well as voluntary questions for those aged 16 and over on sexual orientation and gender identity.

Statistical results will be available within 12 months but, by law, all personal details will be locked away for 100 years. For more information, visit: census.gov.uk.

Letters

Wonderful walks

Dear Editor,

Many of us are sick to the back teeth of walking the same streets, again and again and yet again. Some of us are working as hard or harder than ever and desperately need something completely different to do to escape the unrelenting pressure.

Parents who are home schooling need to take exercise themselves and with their sometimes reluctant children. Retirees, thrashing around at home, with minds often honed over lifetimes but now in complete limbo, need to exercise.

Could there be a way through this? Why could those of us feeling our minds atrophying, not set up quiz/discovery/no-treasure treasure hunt trails that would allow exercisers to take directed walks while exercising their brains as well as their bodies?

Exercisers could learn more about our area or figure out puzzles. These can be educative in all sorts of subjects at all sorts of levels, some requiring solutions or some simply being just plain fun.

They could mine materials presently existing to educate, entertain or both: the geology of the area, what was around before the underground was built, how East Finchley developed over time. What about puzzles along the lines of the TV series *Only Connect*, although for me they would have to be very, very much simpler!

For a range of reasons I am uniquely unable to take the idea forward. Is there anybody out there in our flourishing community who is?

Ann Inglis,
Huntingdon Road, N2.

Pavement courtesy

With a daily walk being essential for many, in the early days when a two-metre gap was advised, most people did make the effort to separate. Passers-by would walk into the road or onto the grass at the path side, couples stepped one behind the other to make space, often with smiles and thank yous exchanged.

Though that does still happen, it is much less frequent. Many make no effort to move aside when passing. Often they are in groups or families with children spread across the walkway. None seem to notice that approaching walkers have tried to make space and few adults instruct their youngsters to do so. They sail by, oblivious in their chatter to each other or into their mobiles.

People stand facing one another at an unsafe distance, leaving you to walk through their

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conversation and their breath. Then there is the lone mobile user planted in the middle of the path blocking any clear passage either way.

The time has come for some rules to be set. We are still uncertain of the correct distance to keep apart. Now my approach is to wave an arm out to the side shouting: 'Make space' but perhaps yelling one of my sister's quotes: 'Keep a coffin's length away' would be more effective?

As on our roads, we should keep to the left. How much easier and safer it could make our walks if this was adhered to, especially if we also made space for on-comers appropriately. Just be kind to one another!

L. C. Ward
Address supplied.

Inept cycle lanes

Dear Editor

Barnet Council finally responded to my letter 'Lost parking spaces' published in your January edition. They say that the cycle lane scheme is a government-funded transport measure which has paid them £315,000 to encourage active travel, which they are using to implement cycling schemes.

There was no prior consultation, but the first six months is the consultation period. So far, 536 people have signed a petition against the scheme. Shopkeepers have complained about the double yellow lines, which have been introduced in places which make no sense but are put in as there is "insufficient space to accommodate dedicated cycle lanes".

It is particularly inept around East Finchley station as the cycle lane starts, stops, starts again and stops just before the traffic lights with East End Road. This means that the few cyclists actually using the lane will move in and out of the non-protected zones, where the cars are. When normal traffic volumes return, traffic congestion and the danger to cyclists will increase. Sometime later, another Barnet reply came saying that they were aware of the congestion, and are "reviewing options to improve the situation".

Barry H White,
Fordington Road, N6.

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The factory that worked round the clock

By Charles Haydn

The recent lockdowns have encouraged the opportunity to explore the highways and byways of East Finchley on our daily walks. My last one left me with more to think about than I expected.

I'd set off to take a look at the Tarling Road community building off Oak Lane. Looking around, I saw someone else doing the same and we got chatting. This gentleman was reminiscing about past times and mentioned that he'd worked at the old Simms automotive factory that occupied an area of some six acres between Tarling Road, Long Lane and Oak Lane until it closed 30 years ago.

He told the story of times gone by when the factory, built on the site of the old Grange manor house in 1919-1920, supplied diesel fuel injectors and other essential parts for a wide range of companies such as Perkins, Rolls-Royce and Vauxhall as well as military tanks and trucks during the Second World War.

Success and decline

An important employer of many local people including this gentleman's father, mother, brother and sister and many of his friends and neighbours, Simms employed East Finchley folk across four shifts, 24 hours a day. On saying our goodbyes he promised to share a selection



Industrial belt: The Simms car part factory occupied land between Oak Lane, top right, and Long Lane, bottom



SIMMS HEAD OFFICE & WORKS, FINCHLEY, LONDON.

Simms

Wish you were here: A 1950s publicity image of the plant

of photographs of the time and they accompany this article.

By the 1950s, the Simms factory was thriving and had expanded to include drawing offices, development shops, a social club and the central instruction school for the company's entire operations.

Then in 1968, Simms was taken over by Lucas CAV and over the following decade the British car and vehicle industry changed rapidly. Manufacturing in East Finchley was steadily run down as UK

manufacturers lost market share.

In 1991, the factory ceased production altogether and the site was taken over by Fairview Homes. Two years later, the first new residents moved into the houses and flats that sit on the land today, along roads like Taunton Drive, Blackdown Close and, of course, Lucas Gardens and

Simms Gardens.

Find out more about the former Simms factory in our archives at www.the-archer.co.uk/archive/2002/2002Nov07.pdf. Do you remember this factory or did you perhaps work there? Please share your stories with us. Email news@the-archer.co.uk or write to The Archer, PO Box 3699, London N2 2DE.

Collective creation

The East Finchley Open Artists group has gone live with an exciting collective creation... its brand new website. You can see the end result at www.eastfinchleyopen.org.uk

The group's 60 artists and craftspeople found their old EFOA site could not host live events during the lockdowns so they decided to use the quiet periods to their advantage by creating a site that was more versatile.

EFOA Chair Lesley Andrew said: "The teamwork and the amount of time everyone has contributed has been amazing. We are all delighted with the new site, which has become the creative tool we need for showcasing our work and artists at a time when web visibility continues to increase in importance."

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