



Clean-up ahead of underpass upgrade

By John Lawrence

A big clean-up operation got underway at a pedestrian underpass in East Finchley which campaigners hope to transform with a £300,000 refurbishment project. Volunteers removed rubbish, vegetation and even an abandoned road sign from the walkway under the Northern line between Manor Park Road and Trinity Road.

Their next step is to go to Barnet Council to ask for approval for the investment, backed by a petition signed by more than 500 people.

The bid to transform the dark and damp underpass is being led by the Grange Big Local regeneration team after it was identified as a heavily-used route where local residents wanted safer surfaces and improved security.

East Finchley-based architects MillsPower have drawn up a proposal that includes installing mirrors or reflective surfaces at each corner, resurfacing the whole path, adding lighting and a handrail through the tunnel, improving drainage, painting and planting, and possibly adding public art works.

Architect and project manager Phyllida Mills said: "We want to make it an enjoyable experience to walk through the underpass. We want to transform it for the community. There are a lot of elements but

each piece on its own is quite small. We have plenty of ideas and a team of willing volunteers and we would like the council to work with us."

Unlock funding

Mariella Hill, from Grange Big Local, said they hoped to win approval in principle from a council area committee this autumn, followed by full approval from the council in January, which would unlock funding up to £300,000 and active support from council teams to work alongside the volunteers.

As we have reported previously, the underpass was constructed in the early 1880s following the tragic death of nine-year-old farm boy William Bowman, who was killed by a train as he crossed the tracks at a level crossing on the same spot.

Hundreds of local people now use the walkway every day, including students going to and from Bishop Douglass School in Hamilton Road.



Dumped: Volunteers pull rubbish and fly-tipped items from behind a fence in the Trinity Road underpass. Photo John Lawrence

A step back in time on guided walk

By Diana Cormack

On Saturday 10 September a large group of people enjoyed a walking tour led by local historian and East Finchley Town Team member Roger Chapman.

They set off from the Manor Park Road side of the tube underpass at 11am, eager to learn about old East Finchley but saddened by the reason for the underpass being built: the death of a nine-year-old boy in 1878 (The Archer, page 12, September 2021).

Once through the underpass, Roger led the group along The Walks, stopping to mention objects and places of interests including old dwellings, public houses, highwaymen's haunts, woodland and commons, even apple trees which might have survived from those days.

Hog market

This ancient walking route through the middle of the 'Old Village' was the main thoroughfare long before the High Road existed. It passed through the place where hog markets were regularly held, East Finchley at that time being one of the main centres for pig marketing, leaving us with the street name Market Place.

Some participants commented on other walkways they noticed adjoining the route and were determined to return to explore the area more



History man: Roger Chapman, right, explains the story of Market Place to his walking tour group. Photo Mike Coles

thoroughly. Everyone enjoyed the stimulating walk and some returned to the High Road to chat about it over coffee.



In rehearsal: The Garden Suburb Theatre cast for *The Game's Afoot*

High jinx in Highgate

With East Finchley resident Mary Musker in charge of the all-important sound-mixing desk, mystery, suspense and lots of laughs will be on offer at the Upstairs at the Gatehouse theatre in Highgate from Thursday 6 to Sunday 9 October when an experienced Garden Suburb Theatre cast performs Ken Ludwig's acclaimed *The Game's Afoot* (or *Holmes for the Holidays*).

It is December 1936 and Broadway star William Gillette, admired the world over for his leading role in the play *Sherlock Holmes*, has invited his fellow cast members to his Connecticut castle for a weekend of revelry. But when one of the guests is stabbed to death, the festivities in this isolated house of tricks and mirrors quickly turn dangerous and it's then up to Gillette himself, who just happens to think he's Sherlock Holmes, to track down the killer before the

next victim appears.

Tickets are obtainable online at www.upstairsatthegatehouse.ticketsolve.com or by calling the box office on 020 8340 3488.

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www.japaneseacupunctureclinicfinchley.com
 1 Bedford Mews, East Finchley N2 9DF

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