



Fit for a king: Members of the Cavalier King Charles Spaniel North London group gather in Cherry Tree Wood shortly before the Coronation earlier this year. Photos Michelle Huberman

Cavalier convention in Cherry Tree Wood

By Eva Weinstein

If you found yourself in Cherry Tree Wood on a drizzly day in early April this year, you may have been lucky enough to find the park bustling with waggy tails and floppy ears – in other words, you may have stumbled across a Cavalier King Charles Spaniel meet-up.

The 'Cavaliers of London' Facebook group holds monthly gatherings across the capital.

Keen to make meet-ups more accessible to North Londoners, local dog-lover Michelle Huberman created the 'Cavalier King Charles Spaniel North London' group which now boasts over 200 members.

Therapeutic

Aside from their good looks and adoring faces, Cavaliers are known for their friendly and sociable nature, so it's no surprise that Michelle has a fondness for the breed, owning six Cavaliers over the last 45 years.

Michelle reveals that tragically losing her young Ruby Cavalier, Aubrey, during the 40-degree C heatwave in the summer of 2022 was a key motivation for getting involved with the group: "If you've lost a Cavalier and you haven't got a Cavalier, or you love Cavaliers, come along! Join the group because it's really very therapeutic," she says.

Michelle urges all dog-owners to join her second Facebook group, 'Coldfall Wood Dog

Owners and Walkers'. With close to 1,000 members, this serves as an online community noticeboard for all local announcements and dog-related concerns.

A resounding success with more than 30 Cavaliers meeting up, the Cherry Tree Wood event was followed by another gathering in Grovelands Park in May, with further events in the pipeline. Join the Facebook group to keep an eye out for information.

From reels to real estate

By Rachel Rubinsohn

To anyone tuned into local social media, Leigh Brown is probably a familiar name and face. An ex-resident of East Finchley with over 20 years as a residential estate agent, Leigh has become a champion of independent business on various networking sites.

His home-produced videos, which offer an insider's guide to the neighbourhood in anything from a 15-second 'reel' to a 15-minute feature film, have been shared widely in community groups online.

On the frontline of the cost of living crisis

In the face of so many graphs and statistics about the cost of living, it is all too easy to lose sight of the human experiences that lie behind each percentage increase in food or energy expenses. Violet Mermelstein explains how Citizens Advice Barnet tries to help.

Jessica has allowed us to share her story. When she was unfairly dismissed from her job, she sought help with Citizens Advice Barnet and began the arduous process of taking a claim to the Employment Tribunal; a process that can take two years to resolve.

In the meantime she was left without a source of income and, despite successfully applying for

Universal Credit, a delay in payments coupled with the rising cost of living left her struggling to make ends meet.

When she is able to, Jessica pays money towards her rent, council tax and energy, going short of food to do so. She feels paying for these is more important than buying food as they keep her in her home. For everyday essentials, she is reliant on the local food bank.

Citizens Advice Barnet is



Help at hand: Citizens Advice offers support on a range of financial and legal issues

continuing to support Jessica through the Employment Tribunal process and with phone, fuel and foodbank vouchers, but her situation is unlikely to change soon.

What we do

Stories like Jessica's make

up the vast majority of the cases we deal with at Citizens Advice Barnet. Financially vulnerable people have been pushed into crisis by the squeeze on household expenses. Of the 1,150 people we saw in July, nearly 80% needed our help with man-

aging benefits or debt.

For Jessica, this help is being provided in meetings concerning her debt, and specialist legal advice concerning her upcoming tribunal. She is also in receipt of fuel and food bank vouchers.

For others, support can include telephone advice appointments, representations on behalf of the person, and support with appeals and other complex issues.

We are increasing our Outreach locations, to make ourselves available in community spaces all over the borough. For a list of locations see: <https://barnetcab.org.uk/get-advice/visit-us/>

How you can get involved

Citizens Advice Barnet is a local independent charity. Our ability to help our community is tied directly to the donations we receive and the people who volunteer their time and effort to deliver our services.

If you would like to get involved, there are many ways to do so. You can donate to us via our website, support us by fundraising when you shop, or volunteer your skills directly. Find out more on the Get Involved pages at barnetcab.org.uk.



Estate agent: Leigh Brown

Alan's Records and Black Gull Books in the High Road, N2, and even a new footpath on Muswell Hill Playing Fields are just some of the ventures to have benefited from this grassroots publicity.

Using his schooling in media, Leigh's four-part series on Hexagon Classics on the Great North Road, N2, sets aerial and interior shots of the car showroom to a rock-infused soundtrack, before delving into the history and evolution of the business with chairman Paul Michaels.

Leigh has now started up his own estate agency business after working in property acquisition across south east England, saying he wants to reflect a heartfelt commitment to local interests and offer a personal, hands-on service to clients. Describing his parallel projects as a 'virtuous cycle', Leigh invites local traders wanting online promotion to get in touch via his website at leighbrown.exp.uk.com.



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