



## Letters

### Empty site

Dear Editor,

I've been an East Finchley resident for almost five years and have been following the story about the proposed housing development at Cherry Tree Quarter, opposite the tube station.

I couldn't help thinking why are we having a heated discussion about a built-up area and cutting down mature trees when just 12 minutes north of the tube station we have an eyesore of an area on the corner of the High Road and Church Lane where there's nothing to protect.

Sure, it's further from the station, and it will affect the prices of properties, but the developer can compensate for it with more and/or bigger apartments, as they will have considerably more space.

More space comes from not having to give space to a nursery, not having to care about mature trees, and the possibility of taller homes, because to the north the building is bordered by roads, which means a taller building will not drop a massive shadow on other properties.

Of course, it's not going to change anything with the Cherry Tree Quarter development because the developer has already invested in this particular design for this particular place. However, I think Barnet Council should create a strong system of incentives for developers to consider empty, unused spaces first before looking at occupied spaces.

Nik Denisov,  
Address supplied

### Book burning

Dear Editor

Unfortunately, in yet another victory for the rampant and totally unnecessary, completely-out-of-control health and safety culture, pettiness and lack of common sense over our joy of living, and despite several promises it appears that book swaps have not returned anywhere in London.

Last I checked, a free book exchange scheme

was promised to be restored at some London Underground stations [including East Finchley] after it had been controversially suspended over fire safety concerns. But as far as I can see, this has resulted in nothing. Allegedly, the removal of book swap shelves from all Tube stations was a preventive measure prompted by the London Fire Brigade, who classified books as 'combustible material' and therefore a potential fire hazard in underground environments.

Yet, no fires had ever started nor spread due to the presence of these books. And paper Tube maps continue to be widely available, as well as paper rubbish at many stations, which is never cleaned.

So, another victory against common sense, and despite promises that above ground stations would return their book swaps, this has not happened. We are at this stage, I suspect, not far from the point where **firefighters will burn books** for all of our safety. Or maybe we are already there?

Ian G,  
Address supplied

### Festival layout

Dear Editor

Much as I love our Community Festival and am grateful to the organisers, I feel that this year's layout was to the detriment of some stall holders. The alleys between the stalls were particularly wide, resulting in festival goers walking in the middle rather than cruising at the sides to see what was on offer. This made it difficult for stall holders to attract people's attention. Also, I did not find any stalls representing local churches or schools, which was disappointing.

B T Thomas,  
Address supplied

Send your letters to:  
[news@the-archer.co.uk](mailto:news@the-archer.co.uk)

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Sing-song: Pearly Kings and Queens enjoy their party in Maddens Bar. Photo courtesy Niall O'Connor

## All in their whistles and flutes

Pearly Kings and Queens came together for a party at Maddens Bar in the High Road, N2, to celebrate the founder of their tradition.

Henry Croft was born in a workhouse in St Pancras in May 1861, went on to work as a roadsweeper and is buried in

St Pancras Cemetery in East Finchley. His funeral cortege is said to have stretched for half a mile. The modern-day

Pearly Kings and Queens marked his birthday with a visit to his graveside followed by a singalong and knees-up at Maddens.

## The story of the cat and the rat

By Lisa Goldblatt

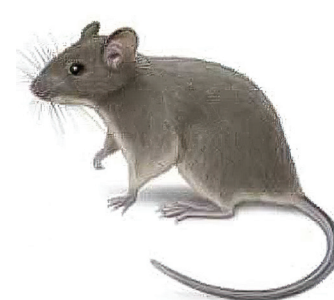
**I have a somewhat unusual cat. Honey loves following me on walks, he is a very fussy eater, he never got the hang of his litter tray so we gave up on that completely, and he enjoys car journeys.**

One of his lesser-liked qualities is that he loves catching things. One of his more memorable hunting trophies was a live rat. It could have been a very large mouse, but I think it was a small rat. Either way it was a rodent.

Honey brought it in alive; after all, the thrill is in the chase. He gave up chasing the mouse/rat which was too good at evading him and said rodent took up residence.

I wasn't aware of the added presence in my computer/TV room, but I did hear some strange noises like chewing and scuffling. I did not want a rodent in my house and, if there were one, I had no idea what to do about it. I did buy some humane mouse traps, putting these in carefully chosen spots around the room but they remained empty.

A good month or so later, I had a friend over and, as we sat on the couch, she noticed something bunched up behind her. It looked like the fibres from a cushion. On further inspection, we found that the mattress (from the sleeper couch) had a



Who knew? Cats and rats can co-exist under the same roof

large hole and the stuffing had been dragged out. It didn't take much to realise that this mattress had become a comfortable nest for our rodent. Of course, there had been other signs, but I had ignored them.

I now had to face the fact that I had been living with a rodent for over a month and it was very much at home, living alongside the cat and the various humans. I had to take drastic measures and this part of the story is not pretty so I will not divulge my means of de-homing this rat, but I will say that it was successful.

Once I had removed my whiskered friend, I had to clean

and sterilise, which involved moving all the furniture and vacuuming behind it.

On doing this, I noticed neat little piles of cat food in three places. The clever rat had been stockpiling my not-so-clever cat's food and keeping it in strategic (but safe) places in his new residence. Which on reflection was the noise I had been hearing: dinner time!

I think the moral of this story is that something as small as a rat (or mouse) can outwit even the best of us and we should never take our natural world for granted. Or an alternate moral perhaps is: get a dog!

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