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## Parents fear nursery will not survive

By Lynn Winton

**Parents of children at an “exceptional” East Finchley nursery that is due to be demolished and replaced to make way for a development of 75 homes say it may not survive the upheaval.**

A group of 81 parents at Monkey Puzzle Nursery have signed a letter to Finchley and Golders Green MP Sarah Sackman voicing their concerns about the changes being proposed as part of the Cherry Tree Quarter development on the nursery site opposite East Finchley tube station.

Whilst the developers Places for Barnet have created a new area for the nursery to be repositioned within the development, the parents say it will be a smaller building and have less outdoor space.

“No grass, trees, mud or anything else in the cold, clinical drawings, which are more suited to an outside office space. And regarding size, a significant downgrade on the space we have now.” The letter continues to voice concerns over how the huge building project will be managed safely with small children on site, which is bound to be disruptive and with concerning levels of dust and noise pollution.

Katherine is sceptical that Monkey Puzzle will survive these changes as they stand, saying: “There is real risk that a small, cramped nursery with minimal outdoor space will not survive, and even before then, parents are worried about how the build will be managed.

“We appreciate that in London, affordable housing, none of which is being built on



Fast on their feet: Young players take part in the football tournament at Christ's College Finchley. Photo Mike Coles

## Footballing stars of the future

**While the Women's Euros were well under way in Switzerland last month, there was another female football tournament closer to home at Christ's College Finchley in East End Road, N2.**

The sporting event on Saturday 12 July was to mark the 10th anniversary of East Finchley Women's Football Club and four years of East Finchley

Girls Academy.

The women's club started in 2015 with a dozen players and has grown to have more than 100 members with teams playing competitively in five, seven, eight and 11-a-side formats.

The girls' academy began as a kickaround in Cherry Tree Wood and now has 120 members aged between eight and 14.

The joint celebration day featured an under-eight

tournament against teams from Alexandra Palace and Whetstone, followed by the grown-ups playing their own series of matches.

Coach Andy Francis said: “It was a great tournament with some memorable goals scored and great play all round. Nobody took it too seriously and fun was definitely priority number one.”

Find out more at [efgirls.co.uk](http://efgirls.co.uk) and [efwfc.co.uk](http://efwfc.co.uk)



Established: Monkey Puzzle Nursery. Photo Places for Barnet.

### Safety Issues

Parents' spokesperson Katherine Cox is alarmed by safety and safeguarding issues on the proposed new site and has requested in the letter that play specialists and nursery designers are consulted to guarantee the new space is fit for purpose.

Additionally, she has an issue with the outdoor play area:

this site, is in very short supply. But so are nursery places. And this isn't an ordinary nursery providing standard 'good' provision, this nursery is exceptional.”

Monkey Puzzle owner Paula Murphy, who has been working with Places for Barnet on the...

**Continues on Page 2**

### Tell us the news

Have you got a news story or an interesting photo for us? Our readers are our eyes and ears, and we are always pleased to hear what is going on in East Finchley. Tips, ideas and stories, large or small, are very welcome. Please email [news@the-archer.co.uk](mailto:news@the-archer.co.uk) or leave a message on our free phone line 0800 612 0748. Thank you

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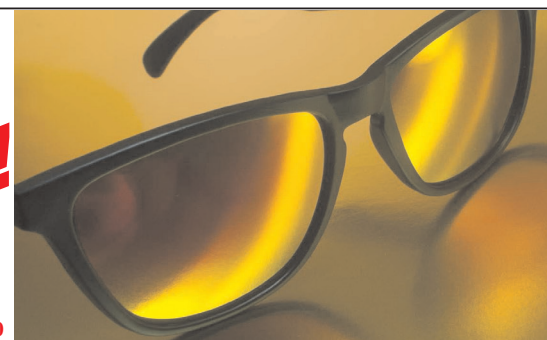
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## The Archer

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Repositioned: The proposed new location of the Monkey Puzzle nursery, in dark pink, at the rear of the Cherry Tree Quarter site. Image Places for Barnet

### Continued from Page 1

new space, responded to The Archer that she was aware of the parent's letter and had seen it prior to it being sent and has made it clear that she is open to talk about any of their concerns.

#### Fully compliant

Places for Barnet spokesperson Marcello Burbante told The Archer that the replacement nursery will be fully compliant with the required standards in terms of the best practice guidelines, design standards, space provision, accessibility, and safety.

He said: "The images presented at the engagement events in April were indicative and provided to give residents and parents an idea of what the space could look and feel like. They do not represent the final detailed design, which will take many months to complete.

"Paula and her team will be

consulted on detail design, including materials and finishes, as the design develops."

"Members of the Places for Barnet design team have the experience required to design spaces of this type and have designed nursery spaces in the past that have been successfully delivered and operated."

"The replacement nursery will be a significant improvement on the existing building, which is an aging, prefabricated structure. Notwithstanding that, there will be a reduction of what amounts to an unusually high quantity of outdoor space for an inner London nursery. This reduction is necessary in order to accommodate the wider redevelopment, which is funding the provision of much-needed social rent homes [in Mill Hill] and the reprovision of the nursery."

Regarding the building work,

Mr Burbante said a detailed construction management plan would be submitted to Barnet Council to minimise noise, dust and disruption, with particular sensitivity to staff and children at the nursery.

#### Keep talking

Sarah Sackman MP thanked all parents for writing to her and said she was pleased that Barnet Council, the nursery and the developers had come up with a solution to keep Monkey Puzzle open.

She said: "This scheme will help to deliver desperately needed social housing across our borough. We have made significant progress, but I know that there is much more to do. In this next phase, it will be vital that the council and developers stick to their plans and continue to engage with all stakeholders, including parents and families."

## BE PART OF IT Volunteers wanted

Compiled by Lynn Winton

N2-based **Number Champions** is an award-winning charity that helps young state primary school children who are behind in maths. It trains volunteers to use games and other creative activities in one-to-one sessions to help children achieve their educational potential. The charity is active across London and is especially looking for N2 volunteers. If you have enthusiasm to help children, confidence in basic numeracy, 1.5 hours/week available in term time, and can volunteer from September, visit [www.numberchampions.org.uk](http://www.numberchampions.org.uk) or contact [volunteer@numberchampions.org.uk](mailto:volunteer@numberchampions.org.uk).

**Long Lane Pasture Nature Reserve** is a wildlife haven and peaceful green space providing a home for birds, insects, trees and wildflowers on land opposite the fire station in Long Lane, N3. It is a charity run by volunteers as an urban sanctuary that connects visitors with nature and supports local conservation. Volunteers are welcome to help maintain the Pasture for two hours on a Saturday morning between 10am and 12noon so come on down or visit [longlanepasture.org](http://longlanepasture.org)

**The North London Hospice** shop in the High Road, N2, would love to hear from people of all ages who are interested in helping out. The shop offers places for students from 16 years old and can help with work experience placements. Please drop into the shop and speak to the manager Anastasiya.

**Finchley Foodbank** is looking for a new kind of volunteer to help people with all things digital e.g. searching the internet, sending emails, booking appointments. You will signpost people to help with the cost of living, employment, housing etc. The Foodbank has resources and will be there to support you! You will need to be available for sessions on Tuesdays and/or Saturdays from 11.30am to 2pm twice a month. To find out more about becoming a digital champion volunteer email: [finchleyfoodbank@gmail.com](mailto:finchleyfoodbank@gmail.com)

If you'd like your organisation to be included in this column please email [news@the-archer.co.uk](mailto:news@the-archer.co.uk)



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## PLANNING APPLICATIONS

### Barnet

#### 70 Abbots Gardens, N2

Roof extension involving raising of the side roof, rear dormer window and three front and one side-facing roof lights

#### 4 Park Hall Road, N2

Conversion of the existing dwelling into two self-contained flats

#### 45 Durham Road, N2

Roof extension involving rear dormer window and two front-facing roof lights. Conversion of flat roof space to terrace area with glass balustrade and privacy screening

#### Outside 16 High Road, N2

Removal of existing BT payphone and installation of one new BT Street Hub. Installation of two digital internally illuminated, intermittent, double sided display screens to BT Street Hub.

#### 1-9 The Mead, N2

Addition of a new external

electrical intake cupboard to the front staircase.

#### 23-31 Font Hills, N2

Addition of a new external electrical intake cupboard to the front staircase

#### Flat 2 The Mount, 214 Creighton Avenue, N2

Conversion of the existing basement into habitable rooms. Conversion of existing garage into habitable room, insertion of window to replace garage door. New front entrance porch. Installation of clerestory glazing at the front of the property. New front hardstanding and vehicular access to provide two off-street parking spaces. Associated amenity space to rear of property, landscaping including timber decking and new boundary fence

#### 61-63 High Road, N2

Conversion of rear part of existing ground floor shop and ancillary

first floor C3 unit into three self-contained flats with associated alterations and amenity space including ground and first floor rear extension with new external staircase, external deck and roof terrace. Roof extension to two storey flat roof to create a new pitched roof with side facing rooflights and side facing dormer windows. Alterations to fenestration of existing ground floor shop rear elevation

#### 63 Bedford Road, N2

Roof extension involving L shaped rear dormer, three front-facing roof lights with an additional roof light to dormer roof.

#### 21 Church Lane, N2

Erection of new two-storey dwelling following demolition of the existing dwelling. New front hardstanding to provide off-street parking. Associated landscaping and patio area.





# Ideas to tackle our High Road rubbish problem

By Kate Brown, East Finchley Town Team

East Finchley Town Team have come up with ideas to tackle the problem of business and residential waste spilling onto the High Road in East Finchley, as was reported in the May edition of The Archer. Not surprisingly the summer hot weather makes the question ever more urgent.



Scattered: Rubbish torn out of refuse bags left in the High Road.  
Photo Mike Coles

The group's public meeting in July heard that there are three elements to the problem. First, there are the big 240-litre commercial bins which if kept shut (and preferably locked) will deter foxes. However, if overfilled and the lid propped open then the bins are easy picking for these skilled scavengers. If a business bin is overfilled, then the solution should be for the trader to pay for more frequent emptying.

## Pavement bins

Next are the residential black waste bins and blue recycling bins which again should not be overfilled and ideally should not be put out on the pavement until collection day but due to overdevelopment there is no place other than the pavement for many of these to be stored.

Previous rear access which allowed for storage of rubbish bins has been systematically removed. Town Team members pointed out that giving approval for a dwelling without a system for dealing with rubbish should be as unacceptable as giving approval for a dwelling without a lavatory.

## Sack collection

However, it is the third element, namely the 'sack collection scheme' for properties where there is no space for refuse or recycling bins, which causes the majority of the rubbish spillage over the High Road.

In correspondence shared with Town Team and reported to

its public meeting in July, Alissa Fawcett, Principal Planning Officer for Barnet said: "Each property receives 26 general waste and 26 recycle waste sacks every 13 weeks on an agreed delivery schedule. The filled sacks are to be left next to the nearest litter bin for collections by crews from Monday to Friday."

The meeting felt that a sack collection scheme was not fit for purpose where there are urban foxes. Neither did it help Barnet Council meet its household recycling targets of 28.7%, which was lower than the London average and a decline from a high of 37.4 % in 2016/17. The council recently reset its recycling target at 50%.

## Suggestions

Participants at the meeting suggested the following solutions: 1) No more planning permissions without a refuse strategy; 2) Replace the sack collection scheme with communal 240-litre bins which flats would have exclusive access to (and ideally a key); 3) Limit the number of days when sacks can be put out and put them out in the morning only; 4) Likewise, any rubbish sacks from charity shops should only be put out in the morning, as overnight bags outside these stores tend to be undone by foxes or humans.

The Town Team has taken its ideas back to Barnet Council, which has undertaken to consider if they could work for East Finchley.



Can do: Sasha Cheevers and young friends water the community garden in Prospect Ring. Photo Lauren Fleishman

## How does your garden grow?

By Laura Fleishman

A new community garden has sprung up in Prospect Ring, N2. Fruit, vegetables and plants are all taking root in the raised plot at outside the Gracie House block.

Sasha Cheevers, who has lived in Prospect Ring for 20 years, is one of the residents who started the garden with funding and support from Barnet Homes

and Lux Contractors.

Sasha said: "I lost my dog in January, so the garden has given me an excuse to come out again. For me, it is about

teaching the kids to grow their own fruit and vegetables. We have been planting seeds and they have been taking them home. It gives them something to nurture and look after."

## Silver birches are protected

The Friends of Cherry Tree Wood have succeeded in their bid to place tree preservation orders on the five silver birch trees that stand close to the entrance to the park.

The trees were under threat of the axe because they stand on the Cherry Tree Quarter site, opposite East Finchley tube station, where Places for Barnet is proposing to build 75 homes (The Archer, July 2025).

More than 500 people signed a petition organised by the Friends, which claimed that the 60-year-old birches were part of the local landscape and a gateway into Cherry Tree Wood. Barnet Council's planning and building control team said late last month that preservation orders were now in place, to match the order

already on the mature yew tree that stands next to the birches. The council confirmed that the landowners and existing tenants on the site had been informed.

Roger Chapman, chair of the Friends group, welcomed the news and said it should mean Places for Barnet has to work around the trees. "They could attempt to justify their removal but that has just become much harder," he said. Places for Barnet had said the five trees would be partly replaced with two others elsewhere on the site.

## Work starts on underpass

Work started last month on the project to improve lighting, drainage and safety in the pedestrian underpass between Trinity Road and Manor Park Road, N2.

Dates for the work were originally set for April but these were postponed, with contractors bringing in all the materials and fully closing the route for the first time in July.

A spokesman for coordinators Grange Big Local said they were aiming to keep local residents informed on progress in order to keep disruption to a minimum.

## Fun palace

A reminder that Grange Big Local is hosting a Fun Palace at Tarling Road Community Centre, Tarling Road, N2, on Saturday 6 September with plenty of fun activities for all ages. If you want to run an activity, perform or help out on the day, email [info@grange-biglocal.org](mailto:info@grange-biglocal.org).

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# Residents meet with council over new homes

By Lynn Winton

The residents of Manor Park Road, whose car park and adjoining green space are designated for demolition to make way for a private development of 10 homes, have continued to voice frustration with what they consider overdevelopment and lack of transparency by Barnet Council.

As reported in previous issues, the developers will be Places for Barnet, a 50/50 partnership of Barnet Council and the Kuropatwa property group. Barnet Council has pledged that all their share of the profits of this enterprise will fund social housing in other parts of Barnet.

Manor Park Road spokesperson Susannah Hall explained that the road, along with Cherry Tree Quarter opposite the tube station, are two of the first of 21 sites across Barnet earmarked for development in Phase 1 of the partnership's building plans.

She said: "We are by no means anti-home building, but we question the wisdom of

whether these are the right homes in the right places and whether the cost and effort to build on these small spaces can ever produce enough profit for Places for Barnet's mission to use these private sector homes to fund social housing in other parts of the borough.

"Our concerns are about the shoddy processes and lack of diligence in forming an LLP Joint Venture that assures value for money and credibility in being able to take this and the further sites forward."

## Understanding

However, a long-awaited first meeting with key decision

makers on Barnet Council, which lasted three hours, has given the campaigners some hope that dialogue can go forward to finally resolve issues.

"Naisha Polaine, the council's Executive Director of Growth, was the person who at last understood why there is so much confusion about what's going on and admitted it's incredibly complex for us 'laymen' residents," said Susannah. "We emphasised we are not anti-homes or anti-development but feel their public, community focused consultation process is not fit for purpose, or built to ensure residents needs are equally



Earmarked: The car park and pocket park that would be built on under the plans. Image Places for Barnet

considered.

We are now submitting questions to her and she has personally committed to giving us the answers we need."

## Joined forces

Additionally, members of the Manor Park Road and Cherry Tree Quarter neighbourhoods have combined forces to create 'East Finchley Residents Collaborative' and have set up a crowdfunding appeal at

[www.gofundme.com/f/save-our-streets-green-spaces](http://www.gofundme.com/f/save-our-streets-green-spaces).

This will pay for expert legal and planning advice for both of the proposed local developments. At the time of writing, the total raised stands at £1.800 with a target of £2.800. Susannah Hall can be contacted at [mpreastfinchley@gmail.com](mailto:mpreastfinchley@gmail.com)

# Sweltering race runners hot on their heels

By David Melsome

Runners set off on a 10km course on one of the hottest days of the year when the annual Race the Neighbours returned to Cherry Tree Wood on the last Sunday of June. Three hundred amateur athletes completed the friendly challenge at the start of the morning and were thankful for any shade along the route to Alexandra Palace and back as temperatures edged towards 30 degrees.

Now in its ninth year, event organisers at the North London Hospice extended invitations out to five new postcodes this year. Added to the existing set of neighbours from N2 East Finchley, N10 Muswell Hill, N6 Highgate and N22 Ally Pally & Wood Green were N3, N11, N12 Friern Barnet, Church End & Woodside Park plus N8, N19 Archway, Crouch End & Hornsey.

The coveted Cherry Tree

Cup given to the postcode with the lowest average time was won by N22 Ally Pally & Wood Green, who also won the previous winter version of the race back in January.

The three fastest female runners were Chloe Lane, Barbara Keith and Helena Bale, and the three fastest male runners were Ed Boden, David Kirk and Peter Gould.

Anna Cooper, the hospice's director of fundraising, said:



Go, go, go: Race the Neighbours runners set off in Cherry Tree Wood. Photo North London Hospice

"Everyone who took part helped to raise £15,700 for the hospice which was vital in helping us meet our annual running

costs of £16million so that we can keep providing free end-of-life care to all those in North London who need us."

## From The Archer archives...

By Jane Marsh

10 years ago:  
August 2015

TheArcherAcademy secondary school took formal possession of its new campus in Eagans Close, N2, on the site of the former Stanley Road playing field. The £12million development was funded by the Education Funding Agency, which purchased the site on behalf of the school, and supported by a £500,000 donation from the London Marathon Charitable Trust. The school reiterated its intention to make its sports facilities available to local residents outside school hours.

15 years ago:  
August 2010

Pothole problems are nothing new. Barnet Council launched its 'pothole elimination programme', aiming to mend all the borough's remaining potholes by the end of October. Over 9,000 potholes had already been repaired in the first half of 2010, but there were still many causing problems for road users as a result of adverse weather conditions the previous winter.

25 years ago:  
August 2000

Children from local schools, including Christ's College Finchley and the Finchley Children's Music Group, took part in the Queen Mother's 100th birthday celebrations. In total more than 160 children formed a procession depicting significant events of the past 100 years, a colourful tableau that demonstrated the rich cultural heritage and ethnic mix found in London.

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# Met Police rolls out new channel for crime news

By Janet Maitland

Do you want to find out more about local crime than social media posts can tell you? If yes, you may want to sign up for new online service Met Engage, described by a Met spokesperson as “the place to get information directly from officers who are out in your neighbourhood”.

You’ll receive emails from East Finchley’s Safer Neighbourhood Team (SNT) with updates on local crime cases, warnings about scams, advice on crime prevention and opportunities to share your concerns. A Met spokesperson said SNT will do this “as part of their regular role”.

The force says Met Engage is part of a renewed emphasis on neighbourhood policing, necessary because “the number of Police Community Support Officers has halved since 2010, foot patrols are down and there has been a noticeable decline in public confidence”.

It is not yet known if our SNT will receive any of the Neighbourhood Policing Grant for the Met, which translates into 420 extra police officers and 50 Community Support Officers across the whole of London, which has 600 SNTs.

The East Finchley SNT has one Police Community Support Officer, two Constables and a Sergeant. Back in 2008 there were six support officers, two

Constables and a Sergeant.

## How to sign up

To access Met Engage you create a password and tick the crime types you want to hear about. Other questions, not compulsory, cover your demographics such as disability status and national identity. You can select who will see your data and send you messages, and there are questions about your crime concerns. To sign up for Met Engage go to [metengage.co.uk](http://metengage.co.uk)

You could also go to [www.met.police.uk/area/your-area/](http://www.met.police.uk/area/your-area/) and search for East Finchley. This doesn’t send you emails, but you can message the SNT directly and it provides data about local crime rates, with annotated maps so you can see where each crime took place. You don’t need a password.

A Met spokesperson said this site will not be replaced by Met Engage despite the overlap and that details such as police priorities will be available across both platforms.

## Open House

Everyone is welcome to come along to the community café at Tarling Road Community Centre in N2 every Thursday morning from 10.30am to

12.30pm. There are free hot drinks and wifi available. Email [info@grangebiglocal.org](mailto:info@grangebiglocal.org) if you would like to join the café’s WhatsApp group.

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Blanket coverage: The Celebration quilt stitched by sewers in Barnet

## Quilt-makers join the threads

By Gail Norcliffe

A silver lining from the dark cloud of social unrest involving a number of immigration centres back in the summer of last year was the advent of a project to make a community quilt for Barnet.

Over the course of ten months of stitching by individuals and groups, three beautiful quilts have been created, paraded through the borough, and are now being displayed in various locations, including in East Finchley.

The process of creating the quilts has been particularly crucial to those at the heart of the endeavour. Each of the quilts has its own name, Unity, Celebration and Solidarity, to reflect the spirit in which they were made.

Dozens of patches were hand sewn by a wide range of community groups and a number of workshops were arranged for the purpose. Some contributors were expert in

needlework and others complete beginners, but the creative process enabled friendships and networks to be developed.

### Sewing sessions

Input from East Finchley has partly been through the involvement of the Grange Big Local project. A group of N2 friends held sewing afternoons to make their patches, which included supportive multicoloured hands across an outline Barnet map, an embroidered heart emblazoned with the word ‘community’ in gold, and one featuring East Finchley’s very own Archie the Archer at its centre.

Charli Thompson who was one of those behind the original project idea and a driving force

in developing the quilts explains, “The inspiration was primarily from wanting to find a way to connect communities through a positive and creative project. We wanted to do something to counter the riots by creating safe, inclusive spaces and ways for people to express solidarity with those under threat. It has been a very powerful exercise and will continue to grow.”

One quilt has been exhibited in the Tarling Road Community Hub in N2 as part of the walking tour for the London Festival of Architecture. The plan is now for the quilts to be displayed in a number of Barnet libraries and other community facilities, and possibly for another parade to be held next year.

## Absurd return for young actor

Seven years ago, Iulian Szalla had his first London stage appearance at the Finchley Youth Theatre in the High Road, N2. Now, he is returning to the stage in north London to perform at the Camden Fringe Festival in August for the first time.

He, his father Martin Szalla and a group of London-based friends are known as AB Drama, presenting a show comprising ten short-plays that are partly Kafkaesque, partly Pythonesque and always absurd.

An Evening of Phantasmagorical Absurdity is at the Libra Theatre Café in Chalk Farm Road, NW1, on Wednesday 6 August at 8pm and on Tuesday 11 August at 4pm.

Find out more at [www.abdrama.uk](http://www.abdrama.uk) and [camden-fringe.com/events](http://camden-fringe.com/events)



On stage: Iulian Szalla

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# Students create garden retreat and library

By Diana Cormack

**Months of hard work put in by sixth-form students at Oak Lodge School came to fruition at the end of June with the opening of a new garden and library.**

The school, situated in Heath View, N2, is an academy managed by Barnet Special Education Trust offering 200 places for students aged 11-19 with a wide range of learning difficulties.

Under the guidance of Class P4 teacher Helen McElhinney, 18-year-old Nico Luis has been working for his Introduction to Land Maintenance WJEC exams to fulfil his ambition of becoming a landscape gardener. Since last September he worked with his classmates to create a garden on an unused piece of land at the school. The derelict area now supports patches of perennial plants, edible produce such as strawberries, a glasshouse and a little fish pond.

As well as money, some seeds and plants were donated for the project whilst, despite a tight budget, others were bought.

What was originally the school's multi-faith room is now a book-lined room, which even contains a copy of The Archer. Students bought and built shelves and advertised for books, which were donated by families and staff, before sorting and categorising them and ensuring the library was well-arranged.

Classmates Jack Aggio and Robert Mwamba have been running the library for students across the school. The feedback is excellent, with both engaging and informing students on a good read and completing other roles perfectly.

## Highly rated

Visit [www.oaklodeschool.org](http://www.oaklodeschool.org) for more information about this highly rated place of learning, which has been judged



Peaceful place: Oak Lodge students in the garden they created.  
Photo Helen McElhinney

## Books are back

The P4 Class Sixth Form students were also involved in the creation of a new school library. The previous library years earlier had become an IT room.

'Outstanding' in three successive Ofsted inspections and given Advanced Status by the Autism Accreditation Award Committee of the National Autistic Society.

## Community skip service

The community skip service will be returning to two locations in East Finchley on Saturday 9 August. The free service offers residents the chance to get rid of up to three large household items if they can bring them to the skip.

The two N2 locations will be Vivian Way, at the junction with Deansway, and Trinity Road, at the junction with Elmhurst

Avenue. Find other locations and dates by searching 'community skips' at [www.barnet.gov.uk](http://www.barnet.gov.uk)



On the air: Oak Lodge students with the Dislabeled podcast team. Photo Community Focus

## Pupils turn into podcasters

By David Melsome

**Students at Oak Lodge School in East Finchley found their voices when they took part in a podcast project in conjunction with Community Focus and the City Bridge Trust.**

Eleven boys aged 16 attended an eight-week workshop as part of their Skills for Work class, giving them the chance to talk with each other in a fun and meaningful way. At the end of the eight weeks, the students produced their own 30-minute podcast, complete with their own jingle.

The project was led by Community Focus, the North Finchley-based arts centre for adults and children with

disabilities, whose podcast Dislabeled explores topics around accessibility and inclusion in everyday life.

It helped the Oak Lodge students build confidence in asking and answering questions, especially in group settings. Many reported feeling more confident in using their voices. One student even expressed interest in becoming a voice actor, and the experience gave him greater confidence during his work experience at London Zoo.

Oak Lodge Head of Post 16 Sarah Dann described it as "an amazing project" and is looking to embed it further into the school curriculum. You can find episodes of Dislabeled at <https://dislabeled.buzzsprout.com>

Oak Lodge School is a special academy managed by Barnet Special Education Trust. It offers 200 places for students aged 11-19 with a wide range of learning difficulties.

## School's change of leadership

By Charlotte Charlesworth

**Oak Lodge School in East Finchley is preparing for major changes to its leadership team. Both headteacher Lynda Walker and deputy headteacher Teresa Ellis are set to retire, marking the end of an era for the school for pupils with learning difficulties.**

In her letter to families, Lynda Walker reflected on her 28 years as headteacher: "Throughout my tenure, I have had the privilege of experiencing six Ofsted inspections, with the last three resulting in an 'Outstanding' rating. I am grateful for the opportunity to be part of such a dynamic and forward-thinking community."

Lynda also expressed thanks for the dedication of staff, the support of parents, governors, and trustees, and the collaborative spirit that has driven the school's continued success. She will not be leaving the Oak Lodge family entirely as she will continue to support the school as CEO of Barnet Special Education.



Departing: Lynda Walker

The news of her retirement has touched many in the school community. Skye, a student, said "Mrs Walker was the best head teacher," while Daniel in the sixth form added, "Mrs Walker will be missed a lot and I very much hope the next

headteacher can do as good a job."

## Crucial role

Deputy headteacher Teresa Ellis is also retiring after 24 years of service. Teresa played a crucial role in supporting students and collaborating with external agencies. She established in-school paediatric clinics and drove the highest standards for students with additional needs. Gabi, a student, said: "Ms Teresa always helps me when I am hurting, and she makes me feel better."

To ensure a smooth transition, current Deputy Headteacher Charlotte Charlesworth has been appointed as interim headteacher until April 2026.

## What our dreams really mean

Have you ever wondered what happens in our brains when we sleep or why we dream and what our dreams really mean? Neuroscientist Professor Catherine Loveday will reveal all in her latest talk which takes place on

Wednesday 20 August from 6.45pm to 8pm at the Ann Owens Centre, Oak Lane, N2 8LT. Talks are free but donations welcome. To register, email [teresa.gallagher@ageukbarnet.org.uk](mailto:teresa.gallagher@ageukbarnet.org.uk) or call 07502 989403.

## 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 at [www.the-archer.co.uk](http://www.the-archer.co.uk). The site also gives information on advertising in our pages and how you can contribute to the paper.





# Tests reveal high pollution in two allotment streams

By Margaret Crockett

**“It’s invisible pollution,” declares Judith Ryan, Secretary of the Fuel Land Allotment Management Committee, when asked about contamination of two streams running through their East Finchley site.**

As reported in July’s Archer, the streams run under the county roads and Creighton Avenue before going above ground in the East Finchley Allotments, off Plane Tree Walk, and coursing on towards and through the neighbouring Fuel Land site.

The streams conjoin before flowing in turn into Strawberry Vale and Bounds Green Brooks. They end up in Pymmes Brook, a tributary of the River Lea.

action on the known misconceptions upstream which result in domestic waste from toilets and washing machines draining into the ground water. They cited a likely timeframe of ten years for litigation needed to force householders to undertake the replumbing necessary to rectify the situation. It is unclear whether the householders concerned have been made aware of the role their misconceptions



Testing kit: East Finchley Allotment volunteers learn how to check water quality. Photo Ben Nathan

Although suffering polluted water, Fuel Land allotment holders have been untroubled by the related noxious fumes affecting their neighbours as the streams have already broken to the surface in the East Finchley site.

## Misconnections

“You would expect the water close to the North Circular to be polluted due to traffic fumes, but not where the water runs through allotments,” says Ben Nathan, a volunteer pressing for action to identify and fix the cause of polluted streams.

He reports that Thames Water admitted during a recent meeting with allotment holders that they are powerless to take

play in polluting our community’s watercourses.

## Water testing

Last month, volunteers from the two allotment sites attended water quality testing training provided by Thames21 at East Finchley Allotments. The tests conducted by the team revealed that ammonia and phosphate levels are in the highest category for both streams which is no improvement on previous test results.

Thames21 provided the team with water testing kits and the plan is to gather evidence on the extent of the problem to support pressure on Thames Water and other authorities to take action.

# Road humps, lower speeds

Work began last month to install speed bumps and new 20mph zones in the county roads in East Finchley. As we reported in May, Barnet Council approved the traffic-calming works following concerns that the previous 30mph limit was too fast for these narrow roads.

Hertford Road and Bedford Road were completed first with Huntingdon, Leicester and Lincoln scheduled to follow closely behind.

At the same time, tactile pavement crossing points were installed on all roads at their junction with Durham Road.



Over the hump: New signage in the County Roads



Garden allies: Siân Moxon at her compost heap with friendly slugs

# Redress the natural balance

By Ruth Anders

**East Finchley resident Siân Moxon admits to being “completely obsessed” with counteracting environmental destruction and ameliorating the effects of climate change.**

“London is losing its domestic outdoor spaces at an astonishing rate, through changes for the worse in people’s gardens,” Siân told the Archer. “Nationally one in ten lawns is being changed to plastic grass and a quarter of households are paving over their front gardens. We must try to reverse this.”

The Archer first met Siân in February 2020, and since then she has become Associate Professor of Sustainable Architecture at London Metropolitan University. Now, with many partners, advisers and funders, she and a colleague have developed an important initiative called Wild Ways, a complex five-year study that has emerged from Siân’s award-winning Rewild My Street urban-rewilding campaign.



Siân and her twig pile

Combining design research with behavioural-change methodologies, Wild Ways aims to

address the issue of declining vegetation and biodiversity in city gardens by understanding behaviour in London’s residential back yards. Small changes to our gardens can create significant wildlife habitat, vital in a time of increasing urbanisation and ecological crisis.

## Four stages

The project comprises four stages focusing on different aspects of garden owners’ behaviour: these have included a workshop with 20 London residents to develop an intervention strategy, and a testing of that strategy through Rewild My Street. The response from residents across the London boroughs suggested a more positive reaction from those who belong to conservation organisations. Siân’s crusading efforts

continue in all sorts of areas and last December she visited Martin Primary School in N2 to talk to senior children about how they can make our environment greener. She recently featured in a story about her work on ITV London News.

In her own garden, the innovations continue. Siân grows her own sugar snap peas, rocket, nasturtiums, herbs, blackberries and strawberries, while wildlife enjoys the benefit of gaps in her fences, nesting wool, bird feeders and boxes, bee baths, and bug hotels.

Siân’s monthly newsletter provides tips for people wishing to adapt their homes, gardens and streets to encourage wildlife and stop cities going grey. For further details and updates visit [rewildmystreet.org](http://rewildmystreet.org)



**East Finchley Girls Football Academy**  
is calling girls in  
reception & year 1!

**Inspiring girls  
through the world  
of football!**

Weekly training in  
East Finchley

[efgirls.co.uk](http://efgirls.co.uk)







# What helping at the food bank means to me

*Louis Victor joined the Finchley Foodbank team in an effort to give something back to his local community. Here he explains how he has gained a great deal personally from the experience.*



Volunteer: Louis Victor

I have been a volunteer in a variety of roles at Finchley Foodbank for nearly three years and have felt very well supported both by the organisers and by the very strong teamwork ethic among the volunteer team.

In our current society there are many different reasons that people fall into the sort of hardship that prevents them from being able to feed themselves or their families adequately. To know that I am doing something

genuinely valuable and to work in such a kind and supportive environment has brought me real joy.

My enthusiasm for Foodbank work has even led to my wife Caroline joining the team and she has also got a great deal out of it, enjoying the camaraderie and the feeling of helping in a very worthwhile cause.

I love the colleagues with whom I volunteer and have also felt real warmth from the members of our community who come to make use of the service. This absolutely feels like local people coming together to offer much-needed help to their neighbours in a time of need... the sort of thing that makes East Finchley a fine place to live.

Finchley Foodbank needs more dedicated volunteers to fulfil a number of roles ranging from receiving deliveries, sorting food donations and restocking shelves to staffing food sharing sessions. Find out more by contacting [finchley-foodbank@gmail.com](mailto:finchley-foodbank@gmail.com)

## Looking for volunteers?

Are you looking for volunteers to help in your community group or organisation? Send your appeal to us and get included in our Be Part of It column, which is published on page 2 every month.

Be sure to give details of what the role involves and the time commitment, along with any contact details for

volunteers to get in touch. Many local organisations have done just that since we first published the column and they tell us it gets results. Submissions are free and are included subject to available space. Please submit your listing up to a maximum of 80 words to [news@the-archer.co.uk](mailto:news@the-archer.co.uk), marking your email 'Be Part of It'.

### LICENSING ACT 2003 NOTICE OF APPLICATION FOR VARIATION OF A PREMISES LICENCE

Notice is hereby given that (a) The Engine Rooms has applied to the Licensing Authority of London Borough of Barnet for a Variation of a Premises Licence to permit:

(b) Supply Of Alcohol and Music

#### Live music

Monday - Wednesday 10:00-00:00

Thursday - Sunday 10:00-01:00

#### Recorded Music

Monday - Wednesday 10:00-00:00

Thursday - Sunday 10:00-01:00

#### Late night refreshment

Monday - Wednesday 23:00-00:00

Thursday - Sunday 23:00-01:00

#### Supply of alcohol

Monday - Wednesday 10:00-00:00

Thursday - Sunday 10:00-01:00

For the premises (c) The Engine Rooms at (d) 82-92 Great North Road, London N2 0NL

A register of licensing applications can be inspected at 2 Bristol Avenue, Colindale, London, NW9 4EW. Appointments to inspect the register can be made by telephoning 020 8359 7443 during office hours.

Any person wishing to submit relevant representations concerning this application must give notice in writing to the London Borough of Barnet, Licensing Team at the address above, giving in detail the grounds of the representation no later than: 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2025. (e) date submitted 5<sup>th</sup> August 2025

The Council will not entertain representations where the writer requests that his identity remains anonymous. Copies of all representations will be included in the papers presented to the Licensing Authorities Sub Committee and will therefore pass into the public domain.

**Representations must relate to one or more of the four Licensing Objectives: the prevention of crime and disorder, public safety, the prevention of public nuisance and the protection of children from harm.**

It is an offence liable on conviction to a fine up to £5,000 under section 158 of the Licensing Act 2003 knowingly or recklessly to make a false statement in connection with an application.

Dated this 5<sup>th</sup> day of August 2025



Table talk: Plenty of interest at last year's HGS U3A open day

## Busy menu of activities for those who like to learn

By Lynn Winton

**U3A, or the University of the Third Age, is the international organisation that offers a host of learning, exercise and social activities for those no longer in full time work.**

For readers of The Archer, the nearest branches are the North London U3A and the Hampstead Garden Suburb U3A, the latter of which is having its annual open day this year on Thursday 11 September from 10.30am to 12.30pm.

Those interested can just turn up, meet the chair and other members and find out what classes and activities to sign up for before deciding to join. A single subscription of £37 covers unlimited classes across

the timetable for 12 months, so for those who love to keep busy you could be out every day in pursuit of enrichment and camaraderie.

### New skills

Since it was founded in 2017, the membership of HGS U3A, which is registered as a charitable body, has climbed to over 750 served by 90 activity groups all run by volunteers.

New groups established in recent months include Philosophy, Rummikub, Chess, French

Literature and growing demand has prompted creation of extra Bridge, Art, Table Tennis and Walking groups.

Carole Spiers is the group's chair and will be there at the open day along with her team to greet newcomers. She has just been awarded an MBE in the King's honours list for services to mental health and stress management. The open day takes place at **The Free Church, North Square, NW11 7AG**. Find out more at [hgsu3a.uk](http://hgsu3a.uk)

## Academy headteacher is top class

**Lucy Harrison, headteacher at The Archer Academy in East Finchley, has been named Silver Winner of the Headteacher of the Year in a Secondary School title at the prestigious Pearson National Teaching Awards after being chosen from thousands of nominees across the country.**



Silver award: Lucy Harrison

She will now progress as a finalist for the Gold Award, which will be announced later this year at a national ceremony in London, to be featured on BBC TV's The One Show.

A spokesperson for The Archer Academy said the award recognised Miss Harrison as an exceptional leader and was an exciting and proud moment for the whole school community.

## Late summer boot sale

The next Muswell Hill Indoor Car Boot Sale takes place from 10am to 1pm on Saturday 30 August at Hornsey Parish Church Hall, on the corner of Cranley Gardens and Park Rd, N10 3AH. Buses W7, W3 and 144 stop nearby. Admission is 50p and refreshments are available. For more information, contact 020 8368 8180.





# Stockholm prize for pioneering penal reformer

By Janet Maitland

**East Finchley resident Frances Crook was awarded the Stockholm Prize in Criminology by the Queen of Sweden at a 'glorious' ceremony in Sweden in early June.**

We reported last November that Frances won the award for steering thousands of young people away from a life of crime while Chief Executive of the Howard League, the oldest penal reform organisation in the world.

"It was a big four days in Stockholm," said Frances. "I had to give a lecture to a symposium of 500 academics from round the world, do a debate with the Minister of Justice, lead a seminar at the University and give a thank you speech to the Queen.

tackle the huge number of children, 300,000 a year, who were being arrested "just for being annoying" and the 3,500 children who were in prison in England and Wales. By the time she retired after 35 years there were just 500 child prisoners and 70,000 arrests a year.

"Prison just makes children worse," said Frances.

Frances shared her award and her passion for justice with US-based Professor Bryan Stevenson, Executive Director and founder of the human rights organisation the Equal Justice



Honour: Frances Crook, centre, with Bryan Stevenson and the Queen of Sweden

The ceremony was glorious, we had opera singers, a string quartet who played a version of ABBA and a dinner with fireworks."

## Prison time

When she took up her post with the Howard League in 1986, Frances was determined to

Initiative (EJI).

Under his leadership, the EJI won major legal challenges eliminating excessive sentencing, exonerating innocent death row prisoners, confronting the abuse of the incarcerated and mentally ill, and helping children who had been prosecuted as if they were adults.

# Play streets

**Barnet Council is inviting residents to celebrate World Car Free Day by hosting a one-off play street during the weekend of 20-21 September. A play street is a resident-led event which temporarily closes a road to traffic, to create safe spaces where children can play freely.**

Following their launch in 2023, residents can already apply for a play street with multiple dates, up to a period of 12 months. In East Finchley, this has already been done successfully in Leopold Road. Anyone interested in organising a one-off play street

should speak to neighbours to get support, choose a suitable road (no bus routes or main roads) and submit an application at [www.barnet.gov.uk/playstreets](http://www.barnet.gov.uk/playstreets). The deadline for applications is **Friday 15 August**.

## Did you know?

The Archer is printed each month on paper made from 100% recycled fibre, mostly retrieved from old newspapers collected by local authorities

around the country. It is made here in the UK in King's Lynn in Norfolk, some 50km from our printers Sharman and Co in Peterborough.



Swim champ: George Maughan completed a mile in the pool

# George swims the distance

By Lynn Winton

**The Maughan family are no strangers to the pages of The Archer, with Anna lately stepping down after running Finchley Foodbank in the High Road, N2, for many years, and still on the operations team, and Marcus currently General Manager at Food Bank Aid, the North Finchley based charity that supplies 33 food banks with 80,000 items per week.**

Now it's the turn of their son George, who at just 11 years old committed to a hard training schedule in order to swim one mile to raise funds for the East Finchley help point.

George said he felt nervous before successfully completing

the challenge last month. "Midway I was starting to feel tired but determined and so on my last length I swam as fast as I could. My teachers and parents gave me a cheer at the end and I felt really proud that I could help. My next challenge will be

two miles."

George's fundraising page is still open and he hopes to raise as much as possible for the food bank. If you would like to donate, go to [justgiving.com](http://justgiving.com) and search 'George Maughan'.

# Help for those big steps in life

**A mentoring organisation is offering help to young people aged 18-25 who are leaving school or entering the workplace but feel uncertain about the next steps in life.**



Helpful advice: Mentors are available for young people

One Million Mentors aims to support young adults who have questions around career direction, further education, and personal development.

Established eight years ago,

in 2024 the national organisation gave its services free to more than 1,100 people and launched 70 new programmes. Mentors are recruited from people who have faced similar

decisions and want to give back by offering practical support and guidance. Typically, they meet their mentees for one hour a month over the course of a year, cost-free. To find out more, visit [https://1mm.org.uk](http://https://1mm.org.uk)





# Emmy for film maker fascinated by science

Nic Stacey was a student at Fortismere School in Muswell Hill from 1993 to 1999 and has gone on to become a renowned documentary maker. Now his latest film for Netflix has won an Emmy. Here he talks to Jessica Holt about his path to the prize.



International hit: Film director Nic Stacey with his spectacular Emmy Award

Nic Stacey's documentary *Buy Now! The Shopping Conspiracy* is about something dear to his heart, the world of corporations who drive up the over-consumption of goods for their own profit and how their actions are damaging our world and people's health.

It sounds like something you might want to avoid watching but it isn't, and you would be missing a magnificent piece of Emmy Award-winning

entertainment as well as an important message.

## Science stories

Nic's Emmy win is well deserved recognition ten years on from his first nomination for his work on the series *How We Got to Now*, which told the stories behind human innovations. I asked him to explain his fascination with the field of science. Nic says:

"There were lots of people making science films from science backgrounds, but I studied drama at Bristol University, and I felt I could explore scientific ideas in a different way. Science is all around us and I feel people should and would be able to understand it more if ideas were presented in a creative, accessible way."

This approach led Nick to work with actor Jeff Goldblum travelling America looking at the weird stories behind everyday objects like ice cream and bicycles for the Disney+ series *The World According to Jeff Goldblum*.

With Cambridge science professor Simon Schaffer, he investigated an 18th century robot who could write with a calligraphy pen, and Nic has also worked extensively with Brian Cox, professor of physics at Manchester University, on the BBC series *Solar System*.

## Black Friday

*Buy Now! The Shopping Conspiracy* came about, Nic says, because he'd always suspected that large corporations don't have our best interests at heart. "When Black Friday emerged and became a part of our culture it coincided with a company approaching me about the subject of waste. I wrote a script for them, and we took it to Netflix."

If you haven't seen the documentary, it is a wonderful and clever integration of graphics, logos, and interviews with real



Eye-catching: Nic's documentary is available to watch on Netflix

ex-corporate leaders ranging from online shopping businesses to high-end designers. Nic says: "We looked around the streets of New York filming different scenes and then asked ourselves what all the waste we saw would look like if it was in one place. We took the film to the graphics department." The result is etched into my memory: a stunning waterfall of waste cascading down the skyscrapers of New York.

## Mind changing

Perhaps the most poignant moments in the film are scenes of second-hand clothes ending up polluting the beaches of Ghana and the women and children who have to dismantle our discarded mobile phones and laptops, a dirty and dangerous job.

"There have been lots of environmental documentaries and people know it's bad, but they don't engage," says Nic, "so my pitch was, why don't we

try and see if we can do something visually that makes people see it in a way that they haven't before and actually recognise western countries are responsible.

"Having people who worked for these massive corporations, close to the top who knew the CEOs telling me personally they had changed their views because of what they saw was going on. You can't argue with that."

## Future films

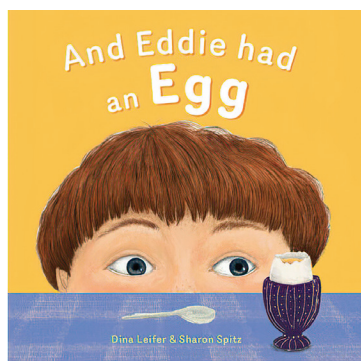
Nic has since reunited with Brian Cox to create films for his live tours. And the future? I want to keep on doing what I'm doing, there's a lot of freedom in the documentary world to really create something different. I want to keep pursuing unusual ideas about hidden weird things."

And, as his Emmy win proves, he is rather good at what he does!

## Last chance for book awards

By David Melsome

Writers are being invited to enter their work for the Jewish Children's Book Awards, which are returning this autumn for their fifth and final year.



Favourite reads: A former winner of a Jewish Children's Book award

The prize, which celebrates new work by Jewish writers and illustrators working in the UK and Europe, has already uncovered and rewarded a host of talent over four successful years.

The final year of the awards

will be exclusively a writing prize. Entrants must submit their own original, unpublished story which should be inspired by Jewish history, values or traditions and be suitable for children aged between four and eight.

The winner of the best story will receive a £1,000 prize and all entries will be considered for publication by specialist children's book publishers Green Bean Books.

"It's been fantastic to see the awards flourish over the past few years," says judge Michael Leventhal. "We've been so impressed by the past entries and are optimistic that this final year will be the best yet. We really want to find exciting, innovative stories and discover how Jewish themes are

explored in fresh, new ways."

Full submission criteria can be found at [greenbeanbooks.com/JCBA2026](http://greenbeanbooks.com/JCBA2026). The closing date for entries is Wednesday 5 November 2025.

## Tell us the news

Have you got a news story or an interesting photo for us? Our readers are our eyes and ears, and we are always pleased to hear what is going on in East Finchley. Tips, ideas and stories, large or small, are very welcome. Please email [news@the-archer.co.uk](mailto:news@the-archer.co.uk) or leave a message on our free phone line 0800 612 0748. Thank you



COMING SOON  
AT ARTSDEPOT

5 MISTAKES THAT  
CHANGED HISTORY  
Wed 10 Sep



OPERAUPCLOSE:  
OPERA COCKTAIL  
Sat 13 Sep



IN POUR TASTE:  
A COMEDY WINE  
TASTING EXPERIENCE  
Sat 20 Sep



NICK HELM: NO ONE  
GETS OUT ALIVE  
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Box Office: 020 8369 5454  
[artsdepot.co.uk](http://artsdepot.co.uk)

artsdepot, North Finchley, N12 0GA





## 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)

Letters without verifiable contact addresses will not be printed. Contact details can be withheld on request at publication. We reserve the right to abridge letters for reasons of space.



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

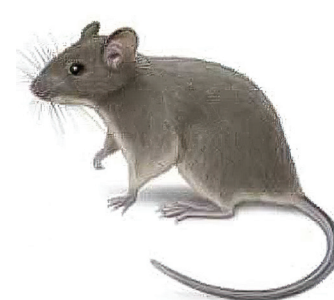
**I have a somewhat unusual cat. Honey loves following me on walks, he is a very fussy eater, he never got the hang of his litter tray so we gave up on that completely, and he enjoys car journeys.**

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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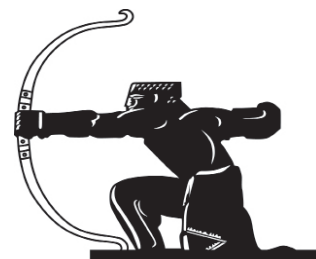
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## Wonder dog Wolfie brings joy

By Gail Norcliffe

Five-year-old German Shepherd Wolfie knows when he's needed. A certified therapy dog, Wolfie and his owner Sarah Michaels are regular visitors to Hammerson House care home in The Bishops Avenue, N2. Former concert pianist Sarah plays recitals for residents while Wolfie specialises in providing emotional support to those who need it most.

Sarah says: "Wolfie has a real gift for sensing who needs him most. I've seen him rest his head on someone's knee, and within minutes they're smiling or opening up in a way they haven't in weeks. He brings people back to themselves. It's incredibly moving."

### Intensive training

Winner for three years of the Primrose Hill Dog Show's most handsome male dog, beautiful Wolfie has the most lovely of natures. He has a tremendous rapport with Sarah and never strays far from her side.

Training for Wolfie's therapy role included an advanced obedience course, requiring a daily hour of intensive work with a trainer for three months. Having successfully completed this training, Wolfie progressed to achieving certification by the charity Canine Concern which supports therapy dog visits across the UK.

Therapy dogs like Wolfie have been proven to help reduce stress, lower blood pressure, and can improve communication in people with cognitive or emotional challenges, such as those with dementia. Wolfie's temperament makes him perfect for this work. Sarah is also looking into how he might be able to help support children with special needs.

### Music lover

Music has played an important



Perfect partnership: Therapy dog Wolfie with owner Sarah Michaels provide emotional support in carehomes.

Photos Mike Coles

role in Sarah's life, so much so that she named Wolfie after Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Classical music is known to have a calming effect on dogs and Wolfie is no exception,

having been soothed by music since puppyhood, with his bed kept under Sarah's grand piano.

Sarah comments: "From the time he was just eight weeks old, Wolfie has been surrounded by

classical music and his sensitivity to music is striking."

During Sarah's piano recitals at Hammerson House, Wolfie will sit calmly in the audience with Sarah's husband. However,

when his favourite piece Cinema Paradiso is played, Wolfie makes a point of going to Sarah and resting his head on her knee, much to the delight of everyone.

During their therapy visits, Wolfie performs a few entertaining tricks and spends time greeting and supporting those who welcome him. A particular friend is a resident of 106 who speaks to him in German. Wolfie's presence in the care home eases anxiety, sparks memories and brings moments of joy.

### Sun shines on care home

Residents and guests enjoyed an afternoon of classic fair games when Hammerson House care home in The Bishops Avenue, N2, held its summer fair. The sun shone on the event, which also featured an extensive raffle with prizes donated by local businesses, and music from eight-piece Simply Grey.

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