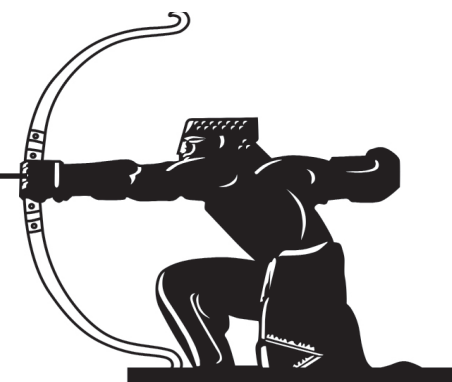
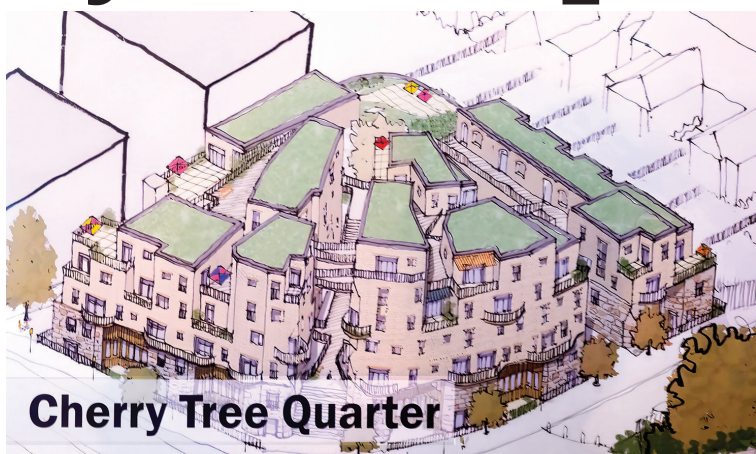




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Homes plan put on hold by developer



Cherry Tree Quarter

On ice: The Cherry Tree Quarter development proposed 75 new homes

By Lynn Winton

Places for Barnett, the partnership between Barnett Council and the Kuropatwa property group to build private sector homes at two sites in East Finchley, have announced that all their upcoming planning proposals are now on hold and that no planning submissions are imminent.

Citing the “substantial feedback both from residents and the local planning authority received”, they have decided to take more time to reconsider the proposals and allow resident’s views to be engaged in future.

The two plans for East Finchley that are now in question are Cherry Tree Quarter, comprising 75 homes and a new nursery space on the Park House site, which is currently

the home of Monkey Puzzle Nursery opposite East Finchley station, and Manor Park Road, where the partnership had planned to build 10 homes on a green space and car park site. Both proposals attracted criticism for trying to crowd too many homes onto the available space and for their impact on existing green spaces, as we’ve reported in recent editions.

Monkey Puzzle Nursery’s move to a new home, as we reported last month, is still going ahead. Owner Paula Murphy has reassured the parents that her plans are unchanged, despite the apparent reprieve from having to operate next to an active building site if house building had started.

Continues on Page 2



Christmas got well and truly underway in East Finchley on Saturday 29 November when the wigwam lights were switched on outside Budgens in the High Road, to the sound of music from Brookland School Choir and the London Metropolitan Brass Band, and with dance from the young students

of Fixation Academy. Our photographer Mike Coles was there to capture the scene.

Everyone on *The Archer* team wishes all our readers, deliverers and advertisers a very merry festive season and a healthy and happy 2026. *The Archer* is YOUR community newspaper and we couldn’t

keep publishing every month without all your contributions. If you have a story for us, please email news@the-archer.co.uk. If you’d like to advertise your business to 10,000 homes and other businesses across East Finchley, please email advertising@the-archer.co.uk. Thank you.

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 or leave a message on our free phone line 0800 612 0748. Thank you

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BE PART OF IT Volunteers wanted

Compiled by Lynn Winton

Age UK Barnet needs volunteers to help in its Tuesday or Thursday day clubs in East Finchley which are for people living with mild to moderate dementia. By chatting to people, helping with activities and serving lunch and refreshments, you will help to make the club a warm, welcoming and stimulating environment for members. To find out more, please contact Lisa on lisa.robbs@ageukbarnet.org.uk or call 0208 432 1422.

Finchley Foodbank has supported people in need in Barnet for ten years, and demand continues to grow. It supports more than 500 people a week with emergency food and essentials. Volunteers are crucial and rewarding roles range from receiving/sorting deliveries and donations to restocking and staffing twice-weekly client sessions. Email finchleyfoodbank@gmail.com to find out how you can give back to your community.

Volunteer at the **North London Scouts** group, who are looking for adults to help their Beavers (age six to eight) and Cubs (age eight to ten) have fun, learn new skills, and go on adventures. From games and crafts to cooking, outdoor activities, and trips, no two weeks are the same! You don't need experience, just enthusiasm and a willingness to join in. Whether it's a weekly commitment, occasional help, or support behind the scenes, you'll make a real difference and be part of a friendly team. Interested? Email del@224northlondonscouts.org.uk

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 with sales and donations. They offer places for students from 16 years old as well and can help with work experience placements. Please drop into the shop and speak to the manager Anastasiya.

If you'd like your organisation to be included in this column please email news@the-archer.co.uk

Developer puts plans on hold



On the move: Monkey Puzzle Nursery is leaving its current home in Park House

Continued from Page 1

"We will continue to relocate the nursery to Langley House, further up the High Road where I have now signed a lease," said Paula. "The future of the Park House site is up in the air and Langley House, which we are renovating now to meet our needs, is a marvellous space. "I was lucky to get it as two nursery chains were after it as well and putting in higher offers. It remains to be seen how many years will go by before a building on the Park House site is ready for us. Ultimately we hope to return, but we must have a secure space for the nursery children for as long as necessary".

At the time of going to press she was still in dialogue with Barnet Council regarding her request for an extension to stay until the end of September 2026. Parents of children at

the nursery are urging Barnet Council to confirm the extension, saying youngsters will be severely disrupted without it. They are also questioning the way Places for Barnet have handled the planning application process. *See their full letter to The Archer on page 11.*

Meanwhile, in another strand to this saga, The Friends of Manor Park Road finally received a formal answer to a question they submitted on 11 July to Councillor Ross Houston, Barnet Council's Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Homes & Regeneration. They had asked who were the other developers who were considered and on what basis were Kuropatwa considered to be the better partner option. Councillor Houston's response revealed that The Hill Group as well as Kuropatwa (now renamed as London Place-making Group) were invited

to submit proposals. Calendar records show that meetings with both took place in November 2022 when they gave presentations to the council's Director of Growth, but they cannot find any files or information as to how they came to a decision. The letter states the two lead staff who attended that presentation have left the council and concludes: "We recognise we have not met the standards we would expect in terms of record keeping and have taken steps to ensure that this does not happen in the future."

Turning back to Cherry Tree Quarter, Monkey Puzzle owner Paula Murphy is convinced that the longer-term commitment to keeping a nursery on the Park House site, however it is developed, will be honoured, and this has been confirmed to *The Archer* by Places for Barnet spokesman Marcello Burbante.

It also has the backing of local MP Sarah Sackman, who told *The Archer*: "My priority has always been the needs of the children at the Monkey Puzzle nursery and ensuring that any development that comes forward on the site serves the needs of our East Finchley community for the long term. "Developments need to happen, that is a fact of life given the housing crisis in London, but we must mitigate the impact on the children and the wider community. As your MP, I am not the decision maker on developments, but I am pushing for more family homes that respect the local environment and it's why I have campaigned throughout for a guarantee that a new nursery will be built on the site. We have secured that and must hold developers to account."

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Barnet

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. Ref: 25/4594/FUL

13 Leicester Road, N2

Single-storey side extension with pitched roof and three roof lights. New rear glazed doors and window. Replacement flat roof to rear. Ref: 25/4575/HSE

121 High Road, N2

Submission of details of condition 5 (Demolition, Construction Management and Logistics Plan) 12 (Air pollution mitigation) 13 (Noise mitigation) pursuant to planning permission 25/3020/FUL dated 10/9/2025. Ref: 25/4553/CON. Submission of details of condition 5

(Demolition, Construction Management and Logistics Plan) 10 (Noise Mitigation) 11 (Mitigation Measures - Insulation) pursuant to planning permission 25/1785/S73 dated 04/06/2025. Ref: 25/4550/CON

North of 1 Fairlawn Avenue, N2

Rooftop extension over garage and conversion into office unit. Insertion of one front and two rear facing roof lights. Associated refuse and recycling storage. Ref: 25/4432/FUL

18 Trinity Road, N2

Non-material amendment to planning permission 23/2747/HSE dated 18/08/2023 for 'Part single, part two-storey rear extension with one roof light' Amendments include removal of first-floor extension and reduction of ground-

floor extension footprint. Ref: 25/4320/NMA

22 Deansway, N2

First-floor side extension with pitched roof and one side roof light. Ref: 25/4191/HSE

Haringey

40 Beech Drive, N2

Construction of new ground-floor, single-storey rear extension and dormer extension to the side and rear. Roof slope and associated internal reconfiguration and refurbishment. Ref: IN/2025/2604

78 Great North Road, N2

Conversion of existing dwelling into two dwellings with associated alterations. Ref: IN/2025/2760

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End of an era as KOKOS moves on after 49 years

By Ruth Anders

After a lot of soul searching, George and Maria Stavrou, their son Chris and the team at KOKOS shoe shop in the High Road are bidding a regretful farewell to East Finchley.



Shoe shine: George Stavrou at KOKOS which has been in the family since 1976

Listed two years ago as one of the best repair shops in the world by the Financial Times (The Archer, December 2023) KOKOS has enjoyed the patronage of customers across north London and beyond since it opened in 1976, when George was only 18 years old.

Now, after five decades, the shop is moving to a new address off the North Circular Road at Staples Corner. George told The Archer: "We've come to the end of our tenancy agreement on the High Road and, as much of our business is now online, it's time for the next stage of our journey."

Chris added: "We're re-locating to Staples Corner, near Brent Cross. The only change is our new address. We will of course continue to provide the same trusted, specialist shoe repair service that East Finchley customers

have relied on for decades. "To make things even easier, customers can use 'Send A Repair', our collect and deliver service, so their repairs can be picked up and returned to your door. No need to come out in the rain!"

The team recently posted details of their new address and thanked their customers for all the support and loyalty over five decades. George said: "Not only has East Finchley been our home for all this time but also the community has been our family."

KOKOS will be opening their new premises on Monday 5 January at Unit G14, Atlas Business Centre, Oxgate Lane, Staples Corner, London NW2 7HJ. Pop into the East Finchley shop before Christmas to say a personal farewell, and see more details on www.kokos.co.uk



Patron: Gail Norcliffe, centre, meets Queen Camilla at the celebration of flexible volunteers

Volunteering date with the Queen

By Gail Norcliffe

I had the wonderful honour of representing Bookmark, the reading charity, at a Clarence House reception on Wednesday 5 November hosted by Queen Camilla to mark the launch of GoVo, a platform offering flexible volunteering opportunities.

Approximately 10 volunteers from different charities plus celebrities Gaby Roslin, Ellie Simmonds and Tasha Ghouri were invited to the event. The morning's highlight was Her Majesty the Queen fully entering into the spirit of the occasion as she served baked potatoes to volunteers with pink-haired social media star Spud Man from a customised GoVo van, drawing attention to lunchtime volunteering.

A moment of personal pride came when my fellow

Bookmark volunteer and I were introduced to the Queen. My attempt at a curtsy went a little awry with nerves, but I did manage to chat and I was delighted that Queen Camilla knew all about our charity and was extremely supportive of its work.

To help overcome a national shortage of volunteers, many charities are focusing efforts on encouraging people to take up flexible volunteering during their busy weeks. This could be before or after work or during a lunch break or on days off.

GoVo.org has been developed by the Royal Voluntary Service and lists hundreds of flexible roles for volunteers. This initiative is being promoted by the Queen, the RVS's

patron.

As described in my June 2023 article in *The Archer* ("Joy of helping a child to read from my own home"), Bookmark volunteering can be online, in my case from my kitchen table in N2, and volunteers commit to reading with a primary school age child for two 30-minute sessions a week for six weeks.

Volunteering with Bookmark is very flexible and many volunteers read with children during their lunch breaks or before they start work. It's a fantastic way to help a child from one of the country's most disadvantaged communities discover the joy of reading and find a book that speaks to them. More information is available at bookmarkreading.org

Menorah to light up the High Road

A large Hanukkah menorah at the corner of East End Road and High Road, N2, will be lit at a special ceremony and street party on Tuesday 16 December at 6pm. The event is open to the entire community and will feature music, traditional doughnuts, and latkes, gifts for children and festive fun.

"The message of Hanukkah is that each person must be a light," said Rabbi Gancz, director at organisers Chabad of Finchley. "The nature of light is that it is always victorious over darkness. A small amount of light dispels a lot of darkness."

"Another act of goodness and kindness, another act of light, can make all the difference to brighten the lives of our families, neighbours and community."

For more information about the holiday and a local schedule of events visit www.chabad-finchley.com/chanukah



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Restaurant owner steps back saying 'Dining is changing'

By John Lawrence

Owner and chef Aki Toumazos is closing High Road restaurant Genzos this month and stepping back after more than 40 years in the trade, saying eating habits are changing and it's time to hand on to a hungry new generation. Aki and his wife Maria have run Genzos under its various guises since 2007, frequently relaunching it under a new name and with a new menu to keep the business fresh and match the chefs who became available. Their last day in the kitchen will be Sunday 21 December. "I'd like to thank all the customers I've had over the years. Many have been loyal since the day we opened and a lot have become good friends," said Aki. He'd originally planned to sell

all his fixtures and fittings and put the restaurant premises on the market but, following a last-minute offer, will instead keep an interest in a new Vietnamese street food venture to be opened by two young restaurateurs where Genzos is now. Aki, 66, says it's the right time for him to hand over: "Dining habits are changing. You can be a top-quality restaurant charging £100 a head and upwards, or you can focus on faster turnover street food and small plates. The middle ground is much harder to make work. "People don't want to sit down for a starter, main course and dessert so much these days. They prefer to share dishes and have food arrive at the table as and when it's ready. Even in central London, this is how many places operate.

"Eating out has got more expensive so I understand why people prefer to eat out in this way. But it means you need to have a different kind of kitchen operation to make it successful financially." The restaurant trade has been in Aki's blood from age seven when he used to take sandwiches to customers sitting in his father's Arnos Café in Bowes Road, Arnos Grove, and he went on to open a restaurant for himself in Cyprus when he was 25. He plans to spend more time with his three grandchildren and maybe even take the occasional golfing holiday but he won't be away from East Finchley for long. "I've still got plenty of energy and I'm sure I'll help out by being on the serving staff at the new place. I'll just make sure I stay out of the kitchen."



Handing on: Aki Toumazos is giving up the running of his restaurant Genzos after 18 years. Photo John Lawrence

From The Archer archives...

By Jane Marsh

**10 years ago:
December 2015**

The Archer reported the demolition of the Esso Garage on the corner where Church Lane meets the High Road. It took a few days to fully remove the forecourt and shop, but it was unclear how long it would take to deal with the underground fuel tanks. It was generally assumed that the garage would be replaced by flats but, a decade later, the site is still vacant and has become a local eyesore.

**15 years ago:
December 2010**

Peter Bayley, projectionist at the Phoenix Cinema for 50 years, finally retired. He joined what was then the Rex in 1960, having previously worked at the Gaumont in North Finchley, situated where the Artsdepot now stands. Awarded an MBE in 2002, Peter said some of the most important changes he had seen in his working life were the introduction of Cinemascope in the 1950s and the more recent digitisation of film.

**25 years ago:
December 2000**

The installation of new ticket machines at East Finchley station caused rush hour chaos for several days, with long queues forming at both the machines and the ticket windows. When interviewed, the station supervisor admitted that staff had been given no training on the new machines. They had yet to work out how to obtain some tickets, so were of limited help to customers, making the situation even worse.

Mother-and-son team open skincare clinic

By Karly Benson

A new skincare business opened in the High Road, N2, last month. Owner Badia Bassou, who lives just minutes away, drew on 26 years of international experience in anatomy, physiology, laser treatments, and hospitality to open her first clinic.

After acquiring the former loans office in July, the building underwent an extensive yet swift remodel. Previously a branch of Santander bank, complete with a basement safe, the space has been transformed into Ayadi Clinic offering a variety of treatments.

Badia employed her son Youness to lead the interior design, tasking him with converting an open-concept space into a functional clinic. He said the project came with many practical challenges, including flooring, plumbing, and building a foyer from scratch.

The greatest challenge, however, was securing a laser licence, a process particularly difficult in Barnet. After multiple approvals, checks, and certification submissions, the clinic is now cleared to accept clients.

Among the clinic's offerings, including laser hair removal,

Emsculpt body contouring, and medical-grade facials, the most distinctive is the GeneoX facial. With only a handful of GeneoX technologies available in the UK, the clinic hopes the hydrating, radio-frequency-based treatment will attract clients from across London.

Like all of the clinic's treatments, the GeneoX facial is non-invasive and pain-free. "I'm not for painful treatments," said Badia. "You don't need surgeries or long recoveries to see results."

In the coming weeks, the clinic will also introduce a new Italian laser, expanding its services to treat hyperhidrosis, vascular lesions, and tattoo removals. "I didn't want to give the community a boring laser clinic," Badia said, adding that she aims to broaden treatment options in north London while keeping a focus on personal care.



Skin care: Badia Bassou and her son Youness are open for business. Photo Mike Coles

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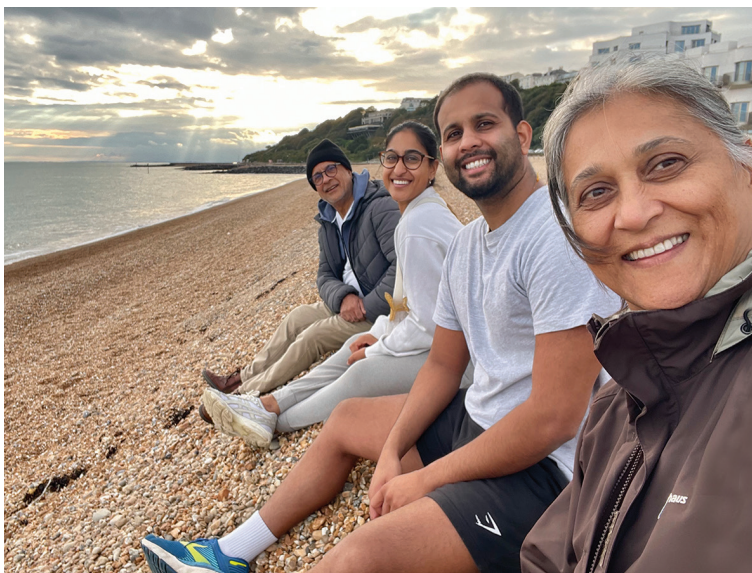
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Treatment centre: The new clinic on the High Road



Channel deep, mountain high



Beach to beach: Prem Pattani is supported by his family ahead of his Channel swim, left, before entering the water at 2.45am and arriving at the French coast 13 hours later

Prem Pattani, whose family business Pristine Curtains Blinds Upholstery has been serving East Finchley from Viceroy Parade, N2, since 2004, became the 35th Indian male in history to swim solo across the 40km Channel between England and France in September. Here he recalls the experience and why he did it.

More people have summited Mt Everest than have successfully swum the English Channel. In the four days leading up to my swim, over 10 experienced swimmers failed to make it to Cap Griz-Nez, France. It's a challenge that called me. Testing my mental and physical stamina, representing my Indian heritage, and doing what I love: adventure.

After a final pep talk with my coach, I plunged into the sea near Dover at 2.45am. It was pitch black, with only a

torch fixed onto my goggles and one on my Speedos so my crew could sight me. And yes, it was a non-wetsuit swim. My only protection from jellyfish, ocean debris and extreme cold waters was a layer of Vaseline spread over my 93kg frame.

Freestyle the entire way, except for pit stops: 10-second windows where I'd flip onto my back, continue paddling one-armed to stay on track, and chug 150ml of lukewarm extreme carbohydrate solution. The pit stop happened every 30

minutes. Among other rules, the Channel Swimming Association stipulates swimmers are not allowed to touch the boat or use any buoyancy devices whatsoever.

After 13 hours and 8 minutes, I stepped onto French soil. My 18-month training regime, up to 12 hours swimming per week across multiple countries under the expert guidance of Red Top Swim London coach Tim Denyer, had paid off.

The English Channel mis-

sion was cool. The BBC interviewed me and I was grateful to be sponsored by the likes of: Pepe's Piri Piri, David Lloyd, Adler Shine and DoubleTree Hilton.

But my project is far larger than the swim. In 2020, I founded The Stamina Club to become a global architect of human and organisational mental stamina. Today's society glorifies surface-level goals with diminishing marginal returns: cosmetics, cars, watches, social media, drugs,

fashion. These vices can be dangerous. My own mental health challenges taught me that real wealth isn't external, it's internal.

So I coined the 'Stamina Stack', five scientifically grounded tools proven to build human mental stamina: visualisation, meditation, breathwork, nutrition and exercise. What is your 'English Channel'? Tough life obstacles, ambitious goals. Mental stamina is a common denominator ingredient. Invest.

Monday Club is 20 years young



Birthday bash: Maureen Clemetson celebrates 20 years of the Monday Club. Photo Mike Coles

By Diana Cormack
The Monday Club, East Finchley's social for young people, celebrated its 20th birthday on Friday 31 October. The wet weather that day contrasted with the foggy Hallowe'en night of 2005, when the youth club was launched by local mothers Maureen Clemetson and Maureen Antoinette.

As those first youngsters trickled into the High Road's Methodist Church Hall, no one could have imagined that some of their own children would be attending the club in 2025.

But they are! In the form of what Maureen Clemetson refers to as her 'third generation' they come to Tarling Road Community Hub for the Monday Club and its spin-off for under-12s, The Friday Club. The Hub was the venue for

'Maureen's 20th Birthday Bash' with members past and present invited to join in the celebrations. Along with the Sugarlane Sound System and a huge birthday cake there was plenty of food and drink, much of it served by Mehmet Cabat who has regularly helped with the club since it started.

Maureen told *The Archer*

that the Mayor of Barnet had popped in to offer his best wishes. A past recipient of a Barnet Civic Award for her work with the youth club, Maureen is strong in her condemnation of the lack of provision for young people today and feels that the government and local authorities need to do much more.

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Big wins for the best gardens in London



Trophy winners: Leopold Road Community Garden volunteers with Councillors Arjun Mittra, third from left, and Alison Moore, right. Photo Mike Coles



First place: Caroline and David Broome

By Gail Norcliffe

East Finchley gardens came out on top in the 2025 All London Championships Awards of the London Gardens Society. Judging took place over the summer, and winners were announced at a dazzling awards evening at the Guildhall in October.

The Leopold Road Community Garden was the outstanding winner of the London Community Gardens Award, beating gardens in North Kensington, Sidcup and Sutton thanks to its visual impact, cultivation and maintenance, sustainability and biodiversity. Judges praised its accessibility and year-round attractiveness, and special features like its bug hotel, book swap library and painted mural.

Residents Kathy Batten and Edwina Roberts initiated the project in 2022 and now, with

their supporting team of diggers, work throughout the year to maintain and tidy the area. Neighbours have embraced the quiet space in nature the garden offers and it has become a local focal point. One budding local poet summed it up as: "Tranquil place for thoughts or a call / Our community garden has it all."

Kathy and Edwina stress the crucial support they received from Barnet Council and councillors Alison Moore and Arjun Mittra, in getting the project off the ground and maintaining its success. Both councillors

joined the local gardeners at the awards ceremony and all were thrilled when Leopold Road came in first place.

Church Lane residents Caroline and David Broome also flew the flag for East Finchley as first-place winners in three categories. For the fifth time they won the Best Small Back Garden title, with their biodiversity features, from a toad house to natural wood pile, being especially welcome. Their other first places were for Window Boxes, Containers & Hanging Basket Displays and

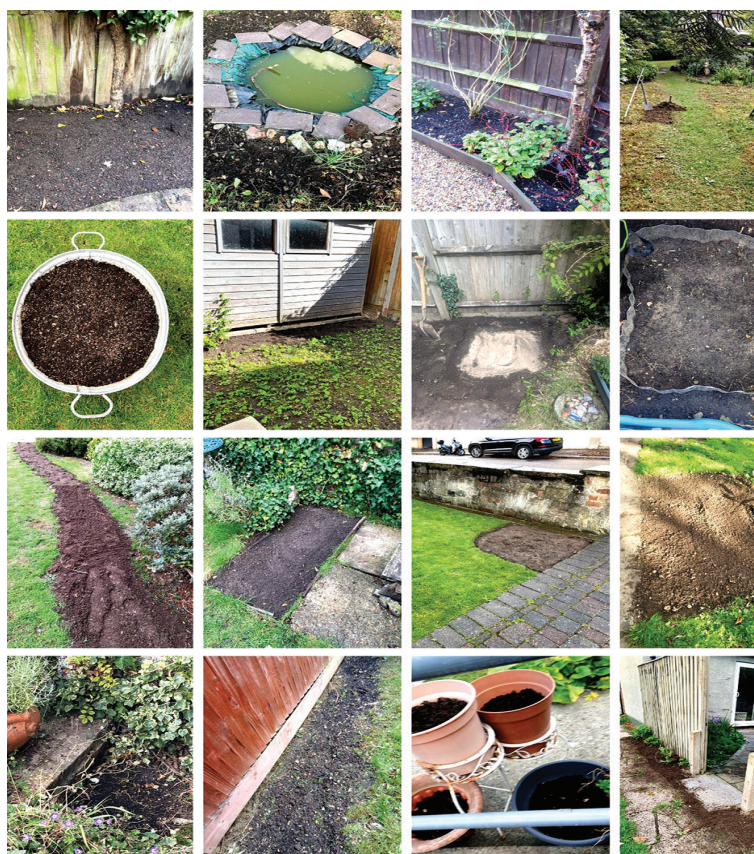
Patio Roof & Balcony Displays. Caroline and David's front garden won third in the Small Front Garden category.

Further N2 winners were third places for Janet Metcalfe for Large Back Garden and Stephen Kersley for Large Front Garden. Neighbouring Hampstead Garden Suburb's Kids' Gardening Club was third in Garden Display in a Public Place, and Hampstead Garden Suburb Horticultural Society won the Affiliated Societies Award.



Award: Janet Metcalfe

Grassroots challenge to create mini-meadows



Seed beds: Some of the dozens of sites around East Finchley sown to be pollinator-friendly.

By Matteo Lanzini
Over the last couple of months residents from East Finchley have taken part in the '60 Mini-Meadows in 60 Days' community project, by getting their hands dirty and sowing pockets of wildflowers in their gardens, balconies, allotments and shared green spaces.

This grassroots initiative has proved popular and a total of 70 mini-meadows were planted across the area. These will help restore local biodiversity, support bees, butterflies and insects, as well as boosting overall wellbeing in the process.

Finchley Pollinator Project, the group of volunteers behind this initiative, provided free wildflower seeds, friendly guidance, and encouragement, making it easy for everyone to take part. Lucky draws were used to keep the momentum and excitement levels going.

With the mini-meadows

now planted, the wait is on for their blooming next spring to please the eyes and feed the pollinators. Shiri Atsmon, of the group co-founders, shared her delight: "Together, we're showing that even small garden patches and pots can help rebuild nature locally, one mini-meadow at a time. Collective action is powerful and matters."

Young gardeners

Students at Christ's College Finchley in East End Road, N2, won a Young Gardeners Award for their hard work on keeping the school's grounds blooming. The prize was awarded as part of a competition open to all Barnet schools, sponsored by the Hendon Horticultural Society and Finchley Nurseries.

SAFER NEIGHBOURHOODS

LOCAL POLICE, LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

How to report a crime

- Call **999** in an emergency when there is a danger to life or a crime is in progress
- Call **101** for non-emergencies, if your property has been stolen or damaged, you wish to report drug dealing or a minor traffic accident, and for general police enquiries

• Report crime to your local Safer Neighbourhood Team by email:

eastfinchley.snt@met.police.uk
gardensuburb.snt@met.police.uk
fortisgreen.snt@met.police.uk

Find full details for the local SNTs at www.iloven2.co.uk/local-government-and-policing

• Stay anonymous and report information to Crimestoppers on **0800 555111**



Family launches new brand into olive oil market



Dressing up: Cameron Wells and Ellis Gilbert launch Olio

By Cobi Jacobs

A new family-run olive oil brand, rooted in Greek heritage, has launched in local stores and online. Founder Cameron Wells grew up in East Finchley and wanted to create a product that felt authentic and genuinely good for you.

The idea for *Oily* began when he noticed that few of his friends or family members could name the brand of olive oil they used. Despite it being a staple in most kitchens, many defaulted to supermarket own brands or blended oils without knowing their origins.

Oily sources its oil from the Kalamata region, using Koroneiki olives grown by local farmers whose families have cultivated the land for generations. Unlike many supermarket brands, which mix olives from various countries and harvests, Oily is a single-origin oil, meaning it has a richer flavour and

naturally higher polyphenol levels.

The business is a family effort, with Cameron working alongside his father, the managing director, and his cousin Ellis Gilbert, who leads the creative direction.

Their aim is not only to introduce better olive oil to Londoners but also to build a brand grounded in community values. In an effort to give back to the community, Oily is partnering with Finchley Foodbank, based at St Mary's Church Hall in the High Road, N2, by donating olive oil and raising funds to support their work.

That's convenient! New allotment loo on site

Plot-holders at the Fuel Land Allotments, off the High Road, N2, welcomed the Mayor of Barnet, Councillor Danny Rich, to cut the ribbon and officially open their new compostable 'eco' toilet, thanks to a grant of nearly £20,000 from the National Lottery Community Fund.



Spend a penny: Mayor of Barnet Danny Rich and Finchley Charities trustee Councillor Helen Gordon with the cheque that funded the new eco-toilet behind them

Clearing, planting and maintaining the plot continues to be a joint effort, supported by many volunteers including from finance company James Hambro & Partners, who were this year back for a second time helping out.

The Fuel Land site is run and managed by The Finchley Charities. With Brigid, the plot facilitator, the charity says it is particularly proud to be working with Oak Lodge School in East Finchley, whose pupils immerse themselves in a safe, inclusive environment while working on their cultivation skills.



Shelf sufficient: Emily Spilsbury and Claire Franks at the community grocery store.

Photo Anna Hindmarch

Affordable shop tackles the rising cost of living

By Anna Hindmarsh

Shoppers are able to save up to £20 on each food shop after a charity launched a 'Community Grocery' in North Finchley, helping to tackle the rising cost of living.

The initiative is led by The Message Trust in partnership with St Barnabas Church in the High Road, N12. Customers pay £5 for a year-long membership, giving them access to multiple food shops a week starting at £5 per visit, debt advice, cooking classes and coffee mornings. Assistant manager Emily Spilsbury said the affordable shop has given customers a "different mindset" when shopping. She said: "They walk in and they have that dignity of being able to choose the items they want to purchase, and the £5 they have might as well be £20 because you can buy so much."

Costs are kept low by bulk-buying stock and selling it for zero profit. They reduce food waste by collecting supermarket donations of food that would otherwise be sent to landfill, and also take private donations from residents. Manager Claire Franks said: "We have lots of lovely people wanting to donate" and "loads of volunteers coming in. We've got a waiting list [of volunteers] which is great." Community Grocery replaced a food bank that previously operated in the church. Having previously run the food bank, Emily said the Covid pandemic put a strain on

the service, and there was a need for an initiative like this in the area. Emily said: "We couldn't keep up with the demand; we were feeding close to 400 people in two hours every week, it just wasn't feasible for us." Now, she welcomes old customers from the food bank and new shoppers. She said that, despite there being initial fear, as food would no longer be free, all customers are able to afford it and benefit from the extra services included in the membership. The North Finchley grocery is one of 33 such initiatives run by The Message Trust across the UK.

Double donate

All donations to Citizens Advice Barnet from Tuesday 2 to Tuesday 9 December will be doubled as part of the Big Give Christmas Challenge, meaning donations to the charity's Christmas appeal will go twice as far.

Citizens Advice Barnet's Christmas appeal will help to fund training and support for advice volunteers, ensuring that Citizens Advice Barnet has a steady flow of skilled advisers. Donations are accepted all year round, but during the Big Give Christmas Challenge all donations are doubled, thanks to support from the UK's leading match funding charity, Big Give.

Last year, Citizens Advice Barnet helped more than 13,000 people with their problems and 80% of those seen by advisers found a way forward.

For more information about Citizens Advice Barnet's Big Give Christmas Challenge, or to make a donation, visit: <https://barnetcab.org.uk/christmas-2025>

Hearts of Oak

YULETIDE FAYRE

Friday 19th December
9:30 AM – 11:30 AM
OAK LODGE SCHOOL
Heath View, East Finchley, N2 0 QY

Join us for a festive morning at our Yuletide Fayre!

- Handmade Gifts** – Created by our talented students as part of their enterprise projects
- Refreshments** – Enjoy seasonal treats and drinks
- Support a Great Cause** – All proceeds go to the Hearts of Oak Charity

Come along, shop for unique gifts, and celebrate the holiday spirit with us! Your support helps make a difference.

Hearts of OAK



Ruben delivers The Archer to the Andes



High spot: Ruben Marden with The Archer at Machu Picchu

By David Melsome

The Archer newspaper reaches many parts, including Australia and Antarctica in the past, and now for the first time it has gone up the Andes, thanks to school student Ruben Marden, who travelled there on a Camps International volunteering trip to lend a hand in local communities.

dropping it in a river but said he ended up having a better experience because he could really focus on looking at what

was around him.

Which included whipping out his copy of *The Archer* for

some light reading at altitude. Ruben said: "We were driven from Cuzco all the way up to 3,900m. From there we trekked four hours uphill in the snow and rain to the beautiful Salkantay pass at 4,635m. After that it was four hours down the other side, straight to our first campsite. "On the final day, we had an early breakfast at 4am, and we began our ascent at 5am, consisting of 1,700 stairs. Our reward was a tour around Machu Picchu. Worth every step."

With a team of 25 other Year 10-12 students from schools around the UK, Ruben also worked in three local communities living below the poverty line in the Cusco region, plastering the walls at a community centre, constructing a school greenhouse from scratch and doing agricultural work to support sustainable farming. He said: "As a result of meeting these communities, I have been able to not only help them but also learn from them. I feel much more respect for people worse off than myself and I feel an obligation to help others in similar situations." Ruben said he wants to thank local businesses Amy's Hardware and CW Andrews Pharmacy for sponsoring him on his adventure.

Playtime on the waves



All aboard: Coldfall Primary children enjoy their new playground.

Photo Mike Coles

Coldfall Primary School in Muswell Hill has achieved the Outdoor Play and Learning (OPAL) Platinum Award which recognises the school's high-quality playtimes. Play has been transformed by the arrival of a full-sized speedboat in a sandpit and the addition of mud kitchens, den building, digging, giant Lego and dressing up.

The project is designed to let pupils be deeply engaged, creative, joyful and sociable. Audrey from year 5 said: "Before at playtimes we just got hit by balls all the time in the tummy. We used to have arguments and got bored. Now I love it."

Headteacher Ewan Marshall said the school had monitored improved behaviour and children had been taught to explore

challenging play opportunities while learning to consider potential risks, making modifications to keep play safe.

He said: "The OPAL Platinum Award is the highest accreditation and means that the school's playtimes are in the top 1% of over 2,000 OPAL schools internationally. This was a collective effort between staff, children and parents. A true community effort."

RICKY SAVAGE... THE VOICE OF IRRESPONSIBILITY

Austen Land

They say that it is blindingly obvious that a man with a good fortune must be desperate for a wife. From there you only need a BBC adaptation, and we are straight into the Austen industry. And this year is the big one as all lovers of romantic fiction celebrate the fact that she was born 250 years ago on 16 December 1775.

This is the chance to dress up as Darcy or Elizabeth Bennet and pretend that you are at the centre of some romantic Regency myth. And myth is the right word.

In Austen Land, everything is theme-park clean and pretty, with young ladies in flowing robes and men looking handsome in top hats. As always, the heroine gets the man, the money and the happy ending. In Austen Land, the satire and observations on the weird world of real life are hidden behind the gloss of the movies and TV. It is as real as Love Island.

Jane Austen was one of eight children of a country rector of 'moderate income'. She never married, was never rich, made very little from her books and lived a quiet life before dying at the age of 41. She didn't become Jane Austen, great novelist, until long after her death.

To add to the mythmaking, her sister Cassandra destroyed most of her letters to ensure that nothing interesting or unsavoury remained to spoil the image of good, quiet Jane. All we have are her books. And they are novels, not social history. They are Regency England as we like to imagine it.

Jane, like her characters and her readers, was gentry, not a servant or farmhand or impoverished. This was a world where a genteel woman's only hope of a comfortable life was a good marriage. And all the way from *Sense and Sensibility* to *Persuasion* that's the plot. It's why they make such good movies and books to read on the train. They've all been serialised or filmed countless times and, since the BBC had Darcy emerging from swimming in a lake in 1995, Austen has been recrowned the queen of Regency romance.

The real world wasn't like the books. There were servants so that Austen's characters never had to cook or clean. There was no modern sanitation or hot and cold running water, medicine was stuck somewhere in the pre-anaesthetic, pre-antibiotic dark ages. This was a world of maternal and infant mortality, dirt and smells. Daily showers, warm houses and decent lighting were all at least 100 years off.

All the same, as they wheel out another round of reruns of *Emma* or *Pride and Prejudice*, turn the heating up, make a nice cup of tea and relax in Austen Land.

Fresh air in the Forest School



Classroom in the wood: The Forest School area at Martin Primary School

Children at Martin Primary School are getting out in the fresh air for outdoor sessions and orienteering activities within the school grounds to help develop new skills.

The Forest School programme, run by trained staff, gives pupils the chance to explore the natural environment in hands-on ways, building dens, lighting campfires safely and identifying plants and wildlife.

"Forest School gives our children the freedom to explore and take risks in a safe, supported environment," said Tristan Green, one of the leaders. "It's wonderful to see their confidence grow as they learn new outdoor skills and connect with nature."

In addition to Forest School, orienteering has also taken centre stage this term. Using maps, the children navigate their way around the large school field, working together to find solutions to a range of problems. The activities combine physical fitness with geography and critical thinking, helping children build spatial awareness and perseverance.

Teachers have noticed that time spent outdoors has a positive impact not only on pupils' physical health but also on their wellbeing and focus back in the classroom.

"The children return from outdoor sessions refreshed, happy and ready to learn," said headteacher Ziz Chater.



Catering Manager

Part time 20 hours per week (Mon - Fri)

Salary circa £30,000.00 per annum pro rata

Age UK Barnet is a charity aiming to promote independence and wellbeing amongst older residents in the London Borough of Barnet. We offer a lunch service to clients with early stages of dementia who attend our Day Clubs. Catering for up to 40 clients per day and we aim to offer a varied range of nutritious homecooked meals. We also run a popular Friday Lunch Club and offer a programme of cookery classes for older people.

We are seeking to recruit an experienced catering manager to oversee the catering function within our organisation across two sites. (East Finchley and Hendon) As our catering manager you will be responsible for ensuring our kitchens run smoothly and will be involved with all aspects of catering including menu planning, ordering, ensuring food hygiene compliance, and some cooking.

We offer 5 weeks paid holiday per year, an occupational pension scheme and staff discount schemes after completion of the probation period. For further details and an application form visit our website at <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/barnet/about-us/work-for-us/> or email jenny.coomey@ageukbarnet.org.uk or telephone 0208 432 1418

Closing Date: 5th January 2026



Known for her kindness: Majjo Ashraf, 1937 - 2025

By Raphael Abedi

Majjo Ashraf, founder of the long-standing Majjo's Foods on Fortis Green, N2, passed away in her home on the morning of Friday 14 November. Majjo was a keystone of an expansive yet close family, and she is survived by her many siblings, cousins, children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren and a multitude of friends.



Majjo Ashraf

Majjo moved to London from Pakistan in 1964 with her sons Imran and Shezad, later giving birth to her daughter Mariam in the UK. Living in various places around Finchley and Muswell Hill, she quickly became committed to sharing her love throughout the local community.

In aid of this, she opened East Finchley's popular Majjo's Foods in 1984, bringing fresh, home-cooked South Asian meals to her family and the neighbourhood from her always busy kitchen. She served everyone who came to her shop with her signature cheer, comple-

menting her samosas, thalis and lassi with her unforgettable joy.

The happiness she brought to all of those around her fuelled her daily hard work, and this drive continued throughout her life. Even after retiring from her management of Majjo's Foods, she would always use her time to help and care for those close to her, cooking meals daily for friends and family.

Despite giving such support to all of these people, Majjo held a fierce independence throughout. She could be found running errands and visiting friends almost daily, seemingly with no limit to her energy. Her frequency of hosting dinner parties was unparalleled, even putting the social lives of her teenage grandchildren to shame.

Majjo was a woman who greatly impacted all the lives she touched with such love, kindness and generosity. Her presence brought comfort, joy and strength to everyone who knew her, and she will be remembered as a truly lovely and remarkable woman.

She has given her surviving family and friends an example upon which to model themselves and provides inspiration to all that anything is achievable if you do so with love and hard work. She will be missed terribly.

Cllr John Marshall

Tributes have been paid to former Garden Suburb Ward councillor John Marhsall, who died on Monday 3 November. Mr Marshall represented the ward from 1998 to 2022 and held the position of Mayor of Barnet in 2008-2009.

He had previously been Member of the European Parliament for London North from 1979 to 1989 and represented Hendon South as a Member of Parliament from 1987 to 1997.

Mayor of Barnet, Cllr Danny Rich, said: "John was a distinguished public servant whom I met on being elected. Although we came from different political parties, his courtesy and capacity to make a new councillor

feel at home was a reflection of his inherent decency and fine humanity."

Barnet Council Leader, Cllr Barry Rawlings, added: "John Marshall's life was one of service, dedication, and commitment to the people of Barnet. His work touched every level of public life, from Europe to Westminster to our local council and he leaves a legacy that will long be remembered."



Dr Veronica Hearn

Dr Veronica ('Von') Hearn, a long-time resident of Leopold Road, N2, passed away peacefully at Whittington Hospital on 28 October 2025, aged 86.

Born in Dundalk, Ireland, she settled in London after an early academic journey that took her across Europe and the United States, studying and working in Munich, Grenoble, and Ithaca, New York, and earning three degrees along the way. A highly regarded scientist in the field of medical mycology,

Hygiene scientist and arts champion: Dr Veronica Hearn

Von spent over three decades researching how the human immune system recognises fungal infections. Her work at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine and later with the Public Health Laboratory Service in Leeds contributed to tests still used in hospitals today.

But to her East Finchley neighbours, she was simply Von, a lively, cultured friend and neighbour with a sharp mind, a dry wit and a lifelong love of the arts. She was a long-standing member of the National Trust, reflecting her enduring interest in history, gardens, and the preservation of Britain's natural and cultural heritage. She was also an active member of The Georgian Group, the national charity for the preservation of Georgian architecture and heritage, and a passionate

music lover, a regular at Covent Garden and the Proms.

For many years she was a loyal supporter and regular attendee of the Phoenix Cinema, where she relished independent film, lively post-screening debates, and the familiar comfort of her local community.

A passionate traveller and great conversationalist, with a fondness for cats, she filled her home with books, film posters, art and memories from her many journeys. She was also a devoted aunt to her nieces, nephews and grand-nieces and nephews, all of whom remember her warmth and curiosity.

Predeceased by her partner Roy Salter, and by her sisters Mona and Marie and brother Jim, she leaves behind a legacy of kindness, intelligence and cultural engagement that made her a true East Finchley original.

Bill Westgate, 1960-2025

By Tristan Westgate

With a profound sense of loss, the Westgate family announces the unexpected passing of Bill Westgate on 29 September. Bill was a truly magnetic personality and the loss of his pull has left many untethered.

Born in Vancouver in 1960, the youngest of four, Bill's warm and sociable nature was evident from his earliest days. Graduating high school in 1978, he spent a year logging, a humbling experience that shaped him deeply.

Following graduation, Bill moved to Paris where he began his life-long love affair with European life and culture. He completed an MA at the Sorbonne before settling in the UK, his adopted home of 40 years, 25 of those in Church Vale, East Finchley.

His family meant everything to Bill, and Bill everything to his family. He and his wife Joanne had celebrated their 35-year wedding anniversary just two weeks before his passing. Together they raised three bright, successful children of whom Bill was immeasurably proud. He showed them a wonderful, generous life, with spectacular holidays around the world.

After 20 fruitful years working in finance, in 2005, Bill was ready for a new challenge and transitioned into teaching economics at Woodhouse College, North Finchley. Such an impact he had on his students that many stayed in contact, seeking his wise counsel until his final days. Always an intrepid traveller, Bill then took his love for

teaching to Dhaka, Bangladesh, for several years.

Eventually he and Joanne relocated to south Devon. His final years were some of his happiest. Never one for boredom, Bill filled his days with constant visits, long spirited phone calls, building their beautiful home, and spending time with his cherished Joanne.

Bill truly lived every one of his 65-years to the fullest. He leaves behind no regrets (except perhaps a bit more time to enjoy it all). He will be missed, he will be adored, and he will never leave us.



Bill Westgate

**St Mary's Catholic Church
279 High Road N2 8HG**



CHRISTMAS SERVICES

Christmas Eve

Children's Mass 6 pm
Mass for Midnight: 10 pm

Christmas Day

Dawn Mass 8:30 am
Christmas Day Mass at 11 am

Hollywood tale: The cast of *Seven Magnificent Egos*

Review: Seven Magnificent Egos

Ye Old Rose and Crown Theatre, Walthamstow

By Jessica Holt

As the title suggests this is a light-hearted exploration of what went on behind the scenes of the making of a great film, *The Magnificent Seven*. A Hollywood adaptation of the Japanese classic *The Seven Samurai*, it was made in 1960 and shows how the fate of seven cowboys plays out as they protect a Mexican village from bandits.

As the audience enters the theatre the actors mingle and crack jokes to ensure we understand this will be a good humoured, fun-loving play poking fun at the huge egos of the actors themselves.

Seven directors' chairs are placed in a line with the names of the star actors written on them: Yul Brunner, Steve McQueen, Charles Bronson to name just three. The scenes are short and sharply written giving an insight into the difficulties experienced by the demands and clashing egos of the actors but also the demands

of the Mexican government. I had the pleasure of meeting the musical director Nick Samuel, a Muswell Hill resident who explained the process of collaborating with the writer and director Lance S A Nielsen. He described him as "open-minded" and always eager to take on ideas. Nick is particularly pleased with the gun-fight scene which in the film has only sound effects, specifically gunshots. There is no music in the film for the gunfight, but Nick wrote some for the play and overlaid the original sound effects from

the film. Nick considers the play as a "classy and cheeky project"

I particularly enjoyed the performance by the only female actor Rose Kaur who plays several different roles with great dexterity and humour. A special mention for the show's programme, which is truly 'magnificent' and would work well in a West End theatre where I hope this play ends up.

What's on at the Phoenix in December

By Zalan Pall, general manager

An Everest documentary, a Palme d'Or winner, acclaimed dramas, a French classic, ballet, opera and Christmas releases, plus more await you at the Phoenix in December.

In the Palme d'Or winner *It Was Just an Accident*, from Friday 5 December, what begins as a minor accident sets in motion a series of escalating consequences.

Brisk, insightful, and gently crafted, *Prime Minister*, also from Friday 5 December, offers a persuasive and inspiring portrait of Jacinda Ardern.

The Epic of Everest, on Saturday 6 December, by John Noel is a matinee screening to accompany a talk by Mark Power about his newly published book *Vanishing: A Tibetan Sketchbook*.

Scarlett Johansson's directorial debut is a resonant story that bridges generational gaps. *Eleanor the Great*, on Sunday 14 December, is the kind of film that will make you laugh, cry, and hug everyone you love.

In *Marty Supreme*, coming in late December, Marty Mauser (played by Timothée Chalamet) is a young man with a dream no one respects, who goes to hell and back in pursuit of greatness.

Defly exploring the uneasy tension between artistic expression and personal connection, *Sentimental Value*, also in late December, is a bracingly mature work from writer-director



Joachim Trier that's marvelously acted across the board.

For the lovers of screen arts, we will have the Royal Ballet and Opera's *The Nutcracker* on Wednesday 10 December, Met Opera's *Andrea Chenier* on Saturday 13 December and the Berlin Philharmoniker's *New Year's Eve Concert* on Wednesday 31 December.

And we carry on with our French Classic Season this month with Jean Vigo's 1934 *L'Atalante*, acclaimed by some critics as one of the greatest films of all time, on Sunday 14 December. Finally, our Christmas season this year will include *It's a Wonderful Life*, *The Muppet Christmas Carol* and a *Polar Express Pyjama Party*. Find out full details and book at www.phoenixcinema.co.uk or pop into our foyer to talk to our box office staff.

Love in later life



Intriguing: *The Two Strangers* Q&A session at the Phoenix Cinema

By Diana Cormack
Screened at the Phoenix in early November, the title and theme of *Two Strangers Trying Not to Kill Each Other* intrigued me. This documentary featured an older married couple realising that, as they approach the end of life, changes and preparations needed to be made. Being both of a certain age my husband and I and, by the looks of things, many of the large audience, were also at that stage and perhaps hoping to pick up some hints?

The couple in question, who met in middle age, had entirely different backgrounds. Joel Meyerowitz is a world-famous photographer and author hailing

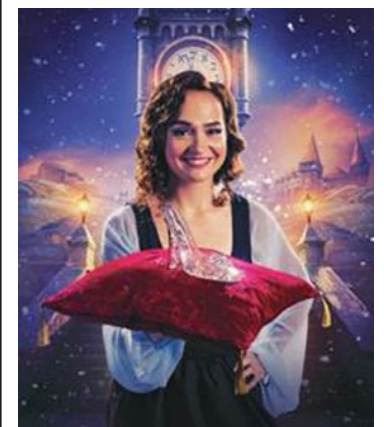
from the Bronx. Maggie Barrett is a British artist and writer, talented but less achieving.

Their lives change drastically when she badly breaks her leg in a fall and is diagnosed with osteoporosis, necessitating Joel taking care of her. Gradually and not without challenges, they take stock of their 30-year marriage, with the love they share helping them to move forward together.

In the following Q & A session, the young film makers Jacob Perlmutter and Manon Ouimet said they had spent a year living with Joel and Maggie observing love in later life. Both couples participated enthusiastically in the discussion and were very much in agreement that this had been a unique experience.

The evening was organised both for the general public and for their members by Circle Square, a networking group for the over-50s. Founded in 2018, the club provides members with a range of activities "to help you make the most of mid-life and beyond". Readers are invited to attend a taster event. To view these visit www.sharecirclesquare.com/events or email info@sharecirclesquare.com

Soccer Cinderella



Panto first: Talia Pick as Cinderella

East Finchley Women's Football Club player Talia Pick is taking time out from her soccer career to start in the title role of *Cinderella and the Matzo Ball*. Being slightly accident prone, she has put her football training on hold to prepare for the role and all her team mates are hoping to go along and support her pantoland debut.

The traditional Jewish pantomime is a seasonal mix of music, theatre, comedy and entertainment and runs at the JW3 Centre, Finchley Road, NW3, from Sunday 7 December to Sunday 4 January.

COMING SOON AT ARTSDEPOT

THE YOUNG'UNS AT CHRISTMAS
Sat 6 Dec

THE TIGER WHO CAME TO TEA
Wed 3 Dec - Sun 4 Jan

THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS
Mon 8 - Wed 31 Dec

CHUCKL. COMEDY CLUB WITH ANGELOS EPITHEMIU
Fri 12 Dec

...and lots more!
See the full line up at artsdepot.co.uk

Box Office: 020 8369 5454
artsdepot.co.uk
artsdepot, North Finchley, N12 0GA



Letters

Burden on nursery
Dear Editor,

We write to you as a group of concerned parents from Monkey Puzzle nursery East Finchley. Following the latest plans for the nursery site, Monkey Puzzle has worked hard to secure a new location to protect their business and our children's early year education (*The Archer*, November 2025).

However this move will be hugely disruptive to the families of those 120 children, aged six months to four years. As such, we are publicly asking:

Barnet Council, please allow the nursery to stay at its current site until September 2026. Monkey Puzzle cannot pay rent for two sites from March, and the disruption, especially for 2026 school starters, will be severe. Can you commit to waive the rent for our children's wellbeing? If not, do you have a confirmed tenant for the Park Road site before September 2026?

Places for Barnet [Cherry Tree Quarter site developers], you must appreciate the financial burden this move places on Monkey Puzzle. With nursery fees already high, any further increase could price families (likely mothers) out of work for good. What funds will you commit to support this move, which is a direct result of your poor planning and appalling communication?

Sadly, the site could sit empty for months or years whilst planning stalls. Yes, housing is desperately needed in the UK (reminder: none of the Cherry Tree Quarter homes will be affordable), however Labour policy also promises childcare that helps children thrive. Barnet Council's actions have directly gone against this. The council has failed to competently respond to parents concerns. Coming to *The Archer* feels like our last resort.

Ella Doltis,
And 32 Monkey Puzzle
parents as co-signatories
Editor's note: The Archer has asked Barnet Council and Places for Barnet for their responses

Tesco parking
Dear Editor,

The news of another Tesco Express (*The Archer*, November 2025) is a concern. This will further corporatise the character of East Finchley High Road and introduce unwanted pressure on our independent stores.

However the absence of parking or loading areas outside the site opposite the tube station is especially problematic.

So, will Tesco's articulated trucks park illegally on the zig-zag markings by the pedestrian crossing? Or block the road by taking over the parking bay from the traffic island to Dan and de Carlo's? Neither is feasible, so where and how would deliveries be made?

My concern is that Barnet Council will fail to make this a condition of the premises licence in the same way that they failed

at Tesco's branch at 208-10 High Road. Here, dangerous and illegal parking is condoned several times a day. Trucks park with impunity from penalty charges and as a consequence shopper's cars and vans follow suit.

At the existing branch the trucks park on a double yellow line and block the cycle lane. This forces southbound traffic into the northbound lane with that traffic pushed into the other cycle lane, whilst traffic exiting Hertford Road or pedestrians crossing the High Road have no clear view.

This must be addressed before any permissions are granted.

Andy Stone,
Address supplied.

Phoenix window
Dear Editor,

In the archive section of your September edition, you rightly praised the extensive restoration project at the Phoenix Cinema 15 years ago, which included the first-floor café and balcony. At the same time, the then Manager, Paul Homer, was delighted that Ruth Kersley made the Phoenix stained glass window, donated in memory of my late husband, Ralph Crisp, a local campaigner who sadly died during the window's fabrication. The beautiful window was widely admired but where is it now? The popular café has also sadly gone, along with the balcony. I contacted the artist who told me the previous executive director Rob Kenny assured her last December that he wanted to re-instate the Phoenix window in a light-box, identifying the wall in the foyer at the start of the staircase, saying it would be installed in March 2025.

Since then, my understanding is that the artist, despite sending many emails to the new executive director Kathryn Smith since May 2025, has received no replies or acknowledgments. You reported that the recent sale of the land to the rear of the cinema would ensure its long-term future but this does not appear to include re-instatement of the Phoenix window, much missed and admired by many.

Sue Crisp,
Brackenbury Road, N2.
Editor's note: The Archer approached Kathryn Smith at the Phoenix for a response. She told us: "Currently the window is in storage whilst we're still looking at additional works to take place at the cinema. We want to keep it safe whilst we align our plans."

Overflowing bin
Dear Editor,

Is it just me or do other people have problems with Barnet's green bin collection? I paid £100 for the bin to be collected every fortnight and not once have they managed it. Endless form filling, sending in

complaints and practically pleading with staff over the phone to send someone to empty my green bin has not improved things. It's now been six weeks since my bin was emptied and it's overflowing. Surely it just can't be me... can it?

Denise O'Reilly,
Juliana Close, N2

Online decline
Dear Editor,

The East Finchley Medical Centre apparently along with every other practice in the country is now stopping phone communication and offering only online services. For those who are too old or who do not use or are unable to use online services, too bad! Yet another step in our declining country. Time for us to wake up and push back on behalf of those who are unable to protect themselves.

Antony Perry,
Address supplied.
Editor's note: East Finchley Medical Centre, in Baronsmere Road, N2, sent a message to patients saying a full triage system was being introduced from 3 November via eConsult, an online consultation form. All requests for appointments and medical advice should be made via eConsult. Anyone unable to use the online service would be helped by phone.

Eat locally
Dear Editor,

We recently celebrated my 41st birthday at the wonderful Silvi restaurant on the High Road. Paulo, the owner and chef, always makes us feel so welcome with our little boy (and in this case, extended family). We have visited many times over the last 12 months and it's a little slice of Italy in East Finchley.

Hospitality is an extremely challenging industry right now with huge costs put onto restaurants over the past 12 months which means small, family-run restaurants like Silvi need East Finchleyans to show support and spread the word. Pay a visit, you'll have a great time and leave knowing you've supported a lovely local business.

Timothy Love,
Sedgemere Avenue, N2.



Send your letters to:
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.

Ask Joy: How can I get rid of my guilt?

Here at *The Archer*, we have introduced an advice column to give help and support. Joy is a trained counsellor and an East Finchley resident, and she'll be tackling issues that matter now.



No problem is too big or too small to be shared. Every email will be answered by Joy and we will anonymise those that go into print, so confidentiality is assured. Joy trained as a counsellor in the 1990s and worked in education for 20 years with young people and parents. She has many years' experience of listening and problem-solving. It's always good to talk, so don't hesitate to reach out.

Email Joy at askjoyatthearcher@gmail.com.

Dear Joy,

I'm a mum to a wonderful toddler who's truly the light of my life. She was born prematurely, and the past two years have been completely consumed by caring for her and making sure she thrived. Thankfully, she didn't really have any issues and is doing brilliantly, and I'm only just starting to feel like I'm getting my own life back.

But here's the dilemma: whenever I take time for myself, whether it's focusing on my career, picking up old side hustles, hobbies I loved, seeing friends, or even just having a quiet moment, I'm overcome with guilt. I worry that I'm neglecting my role as a mum, even though I know she's happy and well cared for. How do I let go of this guilt and embrace this new chapter without feeling like I'm failing at motherhood? **RK**

Dear RK,

Understandably you put your life on hold when your daughter was born. It must have been a frightening time. But she is thriving now and you're looking for balance. Being a mum is hard work. It's demanding of time, emotion and headspace. Trying to do this job perfectly is unrealistic and isn't healthy for either of you. If you're busy being the perfect mum, does that mean

she has to be the perfect child?

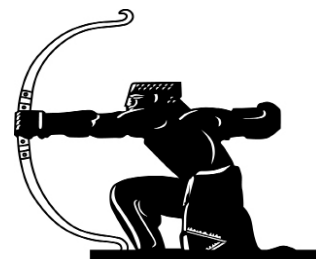
Try to let go of perfection; maybe good enough IS enough. Instead of expecting to be the best mum, accept that sometimes you won't be. That doesn't mean you're failing, it means you're being human. Show your daughter that it's OK to make mistakes and also how to get past them.

You want to send her out into the world as a strong, independent and fully rounded human being. Perhaps the best way to do this is to lead by example. See your friends, invest in your job, work on hobbies and side hustles, carve out some quiet time for yourself. This isn't you being selfish, it's you showing your child how to find fulfilment in life whilst being a good-enough mum, and you really are.

Where to look for help or advice:

www.bliss.org.uk - type 'parents' into the search bar and it will take you to what is on offer from Bliss (for babies born premature or sick)

www.tommys.org - offering help and support including premature births; type 'premature' into the search bar and you will see a whole page of resources for parents



Could we brand our bridge?



You've arrived! Could our railway bridge be a massive welcome sign like Camden Lock's? East Finchley image by Mike Coles. Camden photo Roger Davies, creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/deed.en

*What if the Northern line bridge (in fact three separate bridges) carrying tube tracks across the High Road, N2, was a colourful landmark announcing your arrival in East Finchley? Camden Lock has branded its own bridge successfully. Why can't we do the same, asks **Peter Hale**.*

Like me, you may have stood on many occasions under the bridges at East Finchley station waiting for a bus. Not a pleasant experience. Conditions are gloomy, poorly lit at night, pigeons alive and dead, scruffy advertising hoardings and often with water running down the wall and across the pavement during rainy weather.

Approaching the bridges along the High Road you may be thinking it would be nice if they were repainted, removing the rust and redecorated with an interesting colour scheme announcing East Finchley.

Well, about ten years ago some members of the East Finchley Open Artists group had an idea for just such a project, to use their creativity to

propose a design for the bridges. In 2016 we had an initial discussion with Transport for London (TfL) and met with an engineer on site. He told us there were no plans for repainting in the foreseeable future, consequently the artists did not go ahead with the idea.

Constantly aware of the state of the bridges I decided this year to contact TfL again and

initially had a good response, being put in contact with the manager for the Northern line responsible for bridges. I was hoping that by now they would be planning to carry out maintenance work on the structures. Indeed, TfL requested photographs and a brief description of my concerns and defects that I had previously mentioned to them.

Unfortunately, so far, their response has been: "There currently aren't any planned maintenance works for any of the HB23 bridges this or next year. Any maintenance carried out will be in line with our standards and painting works will be like for like with the existing finishes."

So, this sounds rather negative, but we are not giving up. I hope through further discussion and a request to meet with TfL on site might lead to progress being made. *How do you think the face of the East Finchley tube station bridges should be painted? Send your ideas to us: news@the-archer.co.uk*

Tree collections

North London Hospice is appealing for volunteers to help with their doorstep collection service for Christmas trees in January. Collections are arranged in return for a voluntary donation, with all proceeds going to support the hospice's work in end-of-life and palliative care



The charity is looking for volunteers who can spare a few hours between Wednesday 7 and Friday 9 January to collect from the kerbside or to staff the recycling sites. Drivers and vans are especially welcome.

To volunteer, email christmastreecollection@northlondonhospice.co.uk or call 020 8446 2288. Residents can book a tree collection any time until midnight on Sunday 4 January at <https://just-helping.org.uk>

Christmas honey sale

Beekeeper Lucie Chaumeton is hosting her Miel de Lucie's Christmas sale on Sunday 14 December from 11am to 3pm indoors at 18 Beech Drive, N2. Available for sale will be set and clear honey from East Finchley, Muswell Hill or Mill Hill, beeswax food wraps, beeswax salves, furniture polish, runners balm and pure beeswax candles. Cash, cards and bank transfers are accepted and profits will be donated once again to Finchley Foodbank.

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