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The Archer is a non-profit-making, non-political & non-religious newspaper, run entirely by volunteers

Festival appeal as event costs rise threefold

By Alys Wainwright

This year's East Finchley Festival will return to Cherry Tree Wood on Sunday 21 June and organisers are appealing to local businesses and organisations for sponsorship after the event was hit with a large increase in costs.

The not-for-profit community festival has always been free to attend and attracts thousands of visitors each year. However, after Barnet Council revised its rates, it faces a threefold increase in site hire fees, which is a substantial hike for the volunteer organisers to meet.

Unlike other large community festivals across London, East Finchley Festival is completely self-funded and doesn't receive any financial support from the local authority. Selling raffle tickets and vendor pitches helps but business sponsorship is crucial to fully cover running costs.

Besides park hire, the bill also includes the hire of staging, marquees, sound teams, security, toilets, bins and skips, licences and insurance, all of which runs into tens of thousands of pounds.

A spokesperson for East Finchley Festival CIC said: "We're proud to keep the festival free and accessible for everyone, but costs are rising year on year. "We're thrilled to have already secured sponsorship from UOE, The Learning Experience and eXp Personal Estate Agents Leigh Brown

and Amanda Walker, but we need more support to help ensure the festival can continue to thrive."

Local businesses and organisations interested in sponsoring the festival can find out more about the promotional benefits



Sing out: Coldfall Community Choir at last year's festival.

Photo Tetiana Shedko

they will receive in return at eastfinchleyfestival.org/ sponsorship

East Finchley Festival has taken place annually in Cherry Tree Wood for over 50 years, attracting huge crowds with its programme of live music, community and craft stalls, food, drink and family activities.

Applications for performers and stalls for this year's event will open this month. Visit the festival website at eastfinchley-festival.org for details.



Walking boots: Friends get ready to set off on the Big Fun Walk. Photo North London Hospice

Best feet forward for Big Fun Walk

The annual Big Fun Walk setting off from East Finchley in aid of North London Hospice

reaches its 30th anniversary this year and the charity is celebrating with discounted prices and

a special theme for walkers. For the full story, turn to Page 4.

Ask Joy

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 can help you tackle issues that matter to you. Every problem is answered personally by Joy and any that go into print

are fully anonymised so privacy is guaranteed.

Email Joy askjoyatthearcher@gmail.com and turn to P11 for this month's problem.



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Nursery refused extension on development site premises

By David Melsome

A group of almost 70 parents of children at the Monkey Puzzle Nursery in East Finchley say they are “incredibly disappointed” at Barnet Council’s decision not to allow the pre-school to stay at its current home to see out the summer term.



Moving out: Monkey Puzzle’s current home at Park House

The nursery had taken the decision to move out of Park House, opposite East Finchley tube station, to premises further up the High Road near Creighton Avenue to avoid the potential disturbance of construction work on the proposed Cherry Tree Quarter housing development.

This would have demolished Park House and given the nursery a new home on the site while 75 homes were built around it. As we reported in December, that work has now been put on hold while the developers reconsider their plans in the wake of a public consultation. However, by then the Monkey Puzzle’s move was locked in for the end of May.

A group of 68 parents petitioned Barnet Council to grant the nursery an unpaid extension to its lease on Park House so that pre-schoolers could stay where they were until September, to limit upheaval for all families involved. They were told last month that this request had been turned down.

Parent Ella Doltis said: “We are incredibly disappointed in the lack of support from the Council for our children. This means that a large number of children will be disrupted just

before they move to school. The site is likely to sit empty until it’s developed and Barnet Council may even have to pay for a Guardian to occupy the space. “The decision has been made by the council and now the nursery and parents are focusing on making the transition as smooth and positive as possible for the children. Ultimately us parents support the nursery as they need to make a decision for the business and the children.”

In response to their concerns, Barnet Council said it had offered Monkey Puzzle an effective rent freeze for a new lease term starting in March 2026 but ultimately the decision to relocate was taken by the

nursery’s owner Paula Murphy. “While we respect Ms Murphy’s right to make commercial decisions in the best interests of her business, Barnet Council was not informed of the intention to relocate until after lease terms for alternative premises had been legally completed,” the Council told parents.

Barnet Council said Places for Barnet, the developers of Cherry Tree Quarter, had decided to take time to re-consider the proposals for the site. Design work is still progressing, in consultation with the Local Planning Authority, and revised proposals were expected to be put forward in due course.

BE PART OF IT Volunteers wanted

Compiled by Lynn Winton

The Together Project is looking for a Group Welcomer to support its Songs & Smiles session at Spring Lane Care Home on Fortis Green, Muswell Hill. The group runs on Mondays at 11am, bringing young children and older residents together through music and play. The Welcomer helps greet families, support the session leader, and create a warm, friendly atmosphere. If you’re interested, email songs@thetogetherproject.org.uk

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, contact Lisa on lisa.robbs@ageukbarnet.org.uk or call 020 8432 1422.

The 224 North London Scouts group is looking for adults to help its Beavers (aged six to eight) and Cubs (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. Get in touch today to find out more. Email del@224northlondonscouts.org.uk

Finchley Foodbank is looking for a new kind of volunteer to help people with all things digital eg searching the internet, sending emails, booking appointments. You will signpost people to help with the cost of living, employment, housing etc. You will need to be available for foodbank sessions on Tuesdays and/or Saturdays 11.30am-2pm twice a month. To find out more about becoming a digital champion volunteer, email: finchleyfoodbank@gmail.com

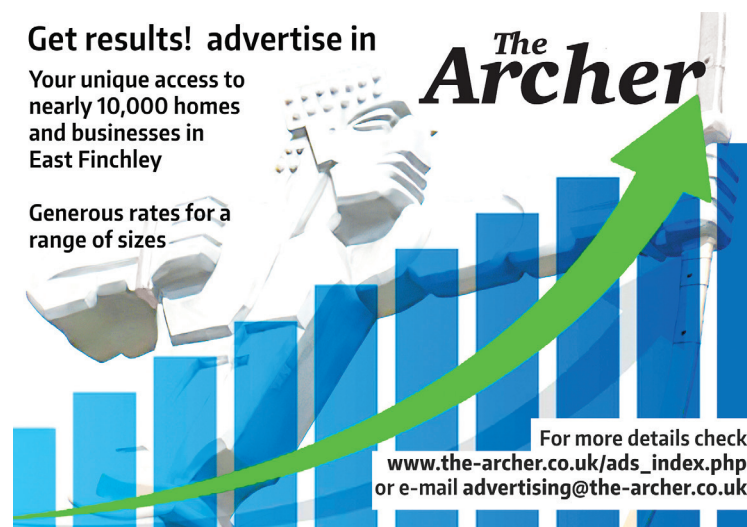
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PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Barnet

136 High Road, N2

Change of use of the property from a single family dwelling (Class C3) to a five-bed House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) (Class C4) Associated refuse/recycling and cycle storage. Ref. No: 25/5167/FUL

Land rear of 136 High Road, N2,

Erection of a detached two-storey dwellinghouse with associated amenity space, refuse and cycle storage. Ref. No: 26/0113/FUL

9 Brighton Road, N2

Roof extension involving rear dormer window and solar panels on the flat roof and two front-facing roof lights. Ref. No: 26/0072/HSE

Fairacres, 164 East End Road, N2

Submission of details of condition 18 (Arboricultural Method Statement) pursuant to planning permission 24/1113/FUL dated 22/01/2025. Ref. No: 26/0036/CON

1 Summerlee Gardens, N2

Single-storey side return extension. Roof extension involving hip to gable with rear dormer windows with three front-facing roof lights. Ref. No: 26/0028/HSE

32 Kitchen Road, N2

Single-storey rear extension with one flat roof light and alterations to the existing patio area. Ref. No: 26/0006/FUL

24 Cherry Tree Road, N2

Single-storey side/rear extension.

Formation of rear basement level with two sky lights. New fencing and privacy screening. Ref. No: 25/5204/HSE

118A High Road, N2

Submission of details of condition 4 (Demolition, Construction Management and Logistics Plan) 8 (Cycle Parking/Storage) 9 (Enclosures) pursuant to planning appeal APP/N5090/W/25/3367137 dated 22/08/2025 planning ref 25/1546/FUL. Ref. No: 26/0129/CON

Mercian Lodge, Ephgrave Lodge and Witcomb Lodge, 68 Lankaster Gardens, N3

External wall remediation. Installation of vertical cavity barriers and

replacement of EPS insulation. Ref. No: 25/5122/192

Land at Central Avenue (adjacent to Willow House), The Grange Estate, High Road, N2

Non material amendment to planning permission 22/3539/FUL dated 12/07/2022 for ‘Development of the site to provide 8 affordable homes (Class C3) in a 3 storey building, together with associated public realm, landscaping and playspace improvements, and car and cycle parking (Subject to Unilateral Undertaking, dated: 21/12/22)’. Amendments include changes to the bin store location, updated play area provision and required

electric vehicle charging points. Ref. No: 25/5083/NMA

Haringey

36 Fortis Green Avenue, N2

Single-storey rear extension and internal alterations at ground, first and second-floor levels. Ref: IN/2026/0031

10 Ringwood Avenue, N2

Single-storey rear extension to a two-storey house. The work excludes any gas work subject to the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998 and electrical work notifiable under the Building Regulation 12(6A). Ref: RV/2025/3050



Family plea after shock diagnosis

By John Lawrence

Life turned upside down for former Archer Academy pupil Alex Warwick when he suddenly fell ill while talking to friends. It turned out to be a serious and dangerous brain tumour which typically carries a prognosis of 12-18 months, even with current treatments.



Inspiration to others: Alex, second right, with Archer Academy headteacher Lucy Harrison, third right, and fellow former pupils on his recent visit back to the school



Shock: Alex's life has been turned upside down by his diagnosis

The shock diagnosis came as the 23-year-old was studying medicine at the University of Liverpool.

Now his family and friends in East Finchley and around the country are urgently trying to raise the funds required to send him for cutting-edge treatment in Germany to give the best chance of beating his glioblastoma. It was in May last year when it became clear something was wrong. A friend whom Alex was speaking to over FaceTime noticed problems with his speech.

His condition declined rapidly and his housemates took him to the Royal Liverpool Hospital.

Initially thought to be a stroke, doctors discovered the very rare high-grade tumour and sent him for emergency surgery as his parents Indira and Ian drove up to be by his side. He has since responded well to NHS treatment but his medical team says that therapy to activate his body's own immune defences against the tumour has potentially promising results. The cost for multiple rounds of

treatment, travel to Germany and insurance has been set at £200,000. His family know this is a huge goal to achieve and say they will be grateful for any help they receive.

They say: "Alex is the best of all of us. He is the kindest, funniest son, brother, boyfriend, friend and grandson, who always has time for other people and brings endless joy to all of us. Despite receiving this diagnosis so young and at the beginning of his adult life, he has faced it with his

characteristic strength, humour and optimism. He is halfway through medical school and determined to return to continue his studies in September 2026."

Friends in East Finchley say Alex loved his time at the Archer Academy and is still very close to many of his classmates. He made time to return to the school in January to give advice to prospective medical students following in his footsteps. One of the original cohort of pupils who joined when the academy opened in 2013, Alex went on to be Deputy Head Boy and represented the school in cross country, athletics and contemporary dance at the

Barnet Music Festival. He also did work experience at East Finchley Smiles dentist as a receptionist.

If you can donate even a small amount to help Alex and his family reach their fundraising goal to send him for treatment, visit <https://www.justgiving.com/page/alex-warwick-2025> or use the QR code in this article.



Bus time changes

The 603 bus service from Muswell Hill to Swiss Cottage through East Finchley now has timings that campaigners say are better suited to students, teachers, school staff and commuters.

The previous 3.30pm departure from Muswell Hill now departs at 4pm and the previous 4.20pm departure from Swiss Cottage now departs at 5pm.

Campaign group 603Watch said: "These changes will allow many more students to use the school bus for their journey home, improving safety and accessibility, particularly during the shorter, darker winter days, when alternative journeys along this route can feel very onerous."

The decision to adjust the schedule, rather than introduce an additional bus, was made by Transport for London following

their own survey. Some parents have said they relied on the previous timings and 603Watch said it would continue its efforts to expand the service.



New times: The 603 bus

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Every step tells a story in Big Fun Walk's 30th year

By David Melsome

The annual Big Fun Walk in aid of North London Hospice reaches its 30th anniversary in May and the charity is celebrating with discounted tickets and a special theme.

It was 1996 when the first group of participants set out on the beautiful nine-mile route from Cherry Tree Wood in East Finchley to Westminster, passing through Highgate Wood, Hampstead Heath, Primrose Hill, Regents Park, Hyde Park and St James's Park along the way.

This year's walk takes place on Sunday 10 May and there are discounted ticket prices for anyone signing up by 15 February. The theme will be 'Every Step Holds a Story', to keep alive the memories and stories

of those people we have loved. Walkers are encouraged to dress up for the occasion if they wish. "From beloved fairytale heroes to timeless adventurers, let your outfit reflect the tales that



The Big Fun Walk is a massive fundraiser for North London Hospice. Photo North London Hospice

inspire you," say organisers.

Louise Cohen, senior events and community officer at North London Hospice, said: "Join us for the 30th anniversary of our Big Fun Walk on 10 May. Along the way you can expect stunning views, inspiring company, and a finish line filled with music, celebration and moments that will stay with you."

"When you collect your medal, you'll know you've done something that truly matters for yourself, for those whose stories you hold in your heart and for your community too." To find out more and sign up, visit <https://northlondon-hospice.org>



Before and after: Amara Yates holds the hair she donated to children who have lost their own

Amara gives away her proudest possession

By Lynn Winton

Amara Yates is only six years old but has already made a great start as a successful charity fundraiser. As well as donating her hair to make a wig for a child suffering hair loss due to cancer treatment, she has raised more than £1,400 for The Little Princess Trust.

The charity provides around 2,000 real-hair wigs free of charge every year to children who have lost their own hair due to cancer treatment and other conditions.

Amara's mother Farrah Jameel told The Archer: "It all began a couple of years ago, when Amara was still a toddler at Monkey Puzzle Nursery. She knew another little girl who was undergoing cancer treatment and she asked an innocent question about this little girl's hair. "We discussed it and I explained what had happened. Over time

we returned to that chat and she decided she would give her very long hair away, and the charity is one I was aware of through my work as a GP."

"Amara adores Rapunzel and loved her long hair. Letting it go felt big and emotional. But she also remembered the other little girl her age who lost her hair. After many conversations, stories, and hugs, Amara decided she could turn something she loved into something that might help another child feel brave again."

If you would like to help boost Amara's efforts, please use the QR code below to go straight to the donation page or go to justgiving.com and search for 'Amara Little Princess'.



From The Archer archives...

By Jane Marsh

**10 years ago:
February 2016**

Long-time East Finchley residents may well remember local milkman Keith Wallace, who retired at the end of 2015. Keith started his delivery round in our area during the bitter winter of 1984, serving the community for over 30 years. Loyal customers thanked Keith for his many years of service with a farewell party at the Clissold Arms in Fortis Green.

**15 years ago:
February 2011**

Also at the Clissold Arms, we reported that Kinks leader and songwriter Ray Davies and drummer Mick Avory made a return trip to the pub where Ray started out with his brother Dave, to celebrate the naming of the Kinks Room. Among items now on display are a signed copy of the group's first single, a cover of Little Richard's Long Tall Sally, a guitar and many photographs. The Davies family lived at 6 Denmark Terrace, across the road from the Clissold Arms

**25 years ago:
February 2001**

Local residents were becoming increasingly concerned about the growing number of housing developments planned for East Finchley. According to local MP, Rudi Vis, East Finchley was already the most densely populated ward in the whole of Barnet. Despite this, the three proposals we highlighted, the McCarthy and Stone retirement flats between Bedford and Hertford Roads, the block of flats behind Budgens and the one between Park and Leslie Roads were all passed and built in subsequent years.

Water place for a leak to appear

By Cobi Jacobs

Thames Water has faced ongoing national scrutiny over sewage discharges into public bodies of water across the country. Closer to home, however, residents say the company has caused problems of a different nature.

Over the past two or so years, locals report that a persistent leak outside the Fortis Green pumping station has left water streaming across the pavement, causing a build-up of leaves and debris.

While not as severe as the sewage problems seen elsewhere, the problem has posed a very real risk for those navigating the pavement. One parent told the paper that their child has fallen several times while trying to scooter through the slippery mix of water and leaves.

During the winter months, this leak becomes an even greater hazard, as the water freezes into a thin sheet of ice. Compounding the danger is the fact that the leak sits directly opposite two schools, Tetherdown Primary School and Treehouse School for Autism, meaning that children frequently encounter it.



Water hazard: The leak outside the Thames Water station in Woodside Avenue

Fortunately, as we went to press, the situation had seemingly improved. The pavement has largely dried, and blue barriers erected inside the pumping station grounds suggest recent repair work. To Thames Water's

credit, a warning cone had been placed at the site while the leak was active.

Even with the apparent fix, many residents may wish to remain cautious when in the vicinity of the affected spot... just in case the leak returns.

Pop-up café

Older residents in East Finchley have a new place to meet, chat and unwind thanks to a monthly pop-up drop-in café launched by Age UK Barnet. The next dates are Saturday 28 February and Saturday 28 March from 10.30am to 12 noon.

The relaxed and friendly sessions are open to anyone over 55 and offers free fresh pastries, coffee and tea, along with games, a warm welcome and plenty of good company. There's no need to book. People are encouraged to simply drop in, whether they come with a friend or on their own.

Organisers hope the café will become a regular social highlight for local older adults. "Our aim is to offer a place where people can turn up as they are, relax, chat, maybe play a game, and enjoy a treat or two," said Tamara from Age UK Barnet.

For more information, call Tamara on 020 8129 7619 or email activities@ageukbarnet.org.uk.



Kitchen waste collections to restart in March

By John Lawrence

Food waste collections are returning to all households in Barnet at the end of next month. Households in East Finchley can expect to receive a brown caddy for their kitchens along with a small brown waste bin for placing outside by the time collections start in the week of 30 March.

Food waste collections last began in 2013 but were discontinued in September 2018 after Barnet Council said the service was costing £300,000 a year. The present council has had a commitment to reinstate them to help make recycling easier.

Items that you will be able to put into your food waste caddy include: leftover meat, fish and vegetables, solid dairy products, eggs and eggshells, bread, pasta, cereals, tea bags and coffee grounds, and out-of-date food with packaging removed.

Items that you will not be able to include are: liquids such as milk, oil or fats, pet litter, nappies and sanitary products, garden waste and packaging of any kind. Users of the service will be asked to line their caddies with compostable bin liners. A one-off sample of these will be provided when the caddy is first delivered. The caddies and bins will be delivered to individual doorsteps. Residents living in flats are asked to collect their caddies from their communal area or bin stores, one per

household.

Once weekly collections resume, the food waste will be turned into clean energy to power homes and fertiliser to be distributed to local farmland.



Coming soon: Food waste bins will be delivered to all households

Craig Miller, executive director environment for Barnet Council, said: "By doing our bit, together we can reduce greenhouse gas emissions, keep bins cleaner and less full, and support Barnet's journey towards reaching Net Zero by 2042."

To find out more about the new food waste collection service, visit www.barnet.gov.uk/foodwaste

Advice for families of children with Down syndrome

A new website has been launched to bring together essential information and advice for families of children with Down syndrome living in Barnet.

The site is a key part of the Barnet Unified Document for Down Syndrome (BUDDS) pathway, which helps families navigate the local systems across health, education and social care. Find it at www.budds.org.uk

Dr Anna Petsas, co-author of BUDDS, said: "Co-produced with parents and professionals, BUDDS aims to ensure families feel informed, supported and connected at every stage of their journey, while offering principles that are relevant to all families of children with Down syndrome."

"Impressively, the new site has been designed by Barnet parent Michael Wallett who has a child with Down syndrome, ensuring lived experience is truly at the heart of how information is shared."

BUDDS is part of the Barnet Local Offer, which comes from the Barnet Education and Learning Service.



One-stop: BUDDS is a service for Down syndrome families



Window seat: Jennifer Rainsford in her new café in East End Road, N2. Photo Geoffrey Davies

Café boss: Work experience is crucial for young people

By Geoffrey Davies

In what might seem like life imitating art, a cast member from the hit TV comedy *Fleabag* is running a café in East Finchley. Actress Jennifer Rainsford opened the Finch community café in East End Road, N2, just days before Christmas.

"People have been very welcoming," says Jenny, who played Boo, best friend to café owner Fleabag, played by Phoebe Waller-Bridge. But more than running a café, Jenny is keen to see the venue become a social hub and also a place to offer barista training to young people.

"I did a Saturday job and I know how important it is to gain the experience of working," says Jenny. "And in a coffee shop people come in already knowing what they want, so it is not a hard sell."

Having set up the café as a Community Interest Company (CIC), Jenny has established connections with groups such as Inclusivity Barnet and Art Against Knives and she wants to see the premises, at the top end of Ossulton Way, become a learning centre. The venture is funded in part by personal loans but also had success through crowd funding. "We have designed a way to group about ten people at a time here after we close, to offer group teaching spaces for subjects that are not religious or political," she says.

"I'm really keen to hear from people who feel they could offer something to young people." Brought up in Watford and now living locally, Jenny has appeared in films such as *Prometheus* and *The Favourite* as well as stage productions at the National Theatre. She was inspired to set up her new venture after the death in May of her father Martin Rainsford. He had been a headmaster in Ickenham, north-west London, and was very involved with Partners in Education International, raising educational

standards in schools in several African countries and Brazil. The café already seems to be gaining traction with young mothers, by offering crayons and pens for small children. "It's warm and well decorated," said Keren Kingsley. "I've been in a few times already. It's the nicest café in town." But unlike the café in the TV series, cheese sandwiches don't cost anywhere near the £12.50 that *Fleabag* charged and the nearest thing to Boo's real-life guinea pig are toy fluffy ones brought in by young customers.

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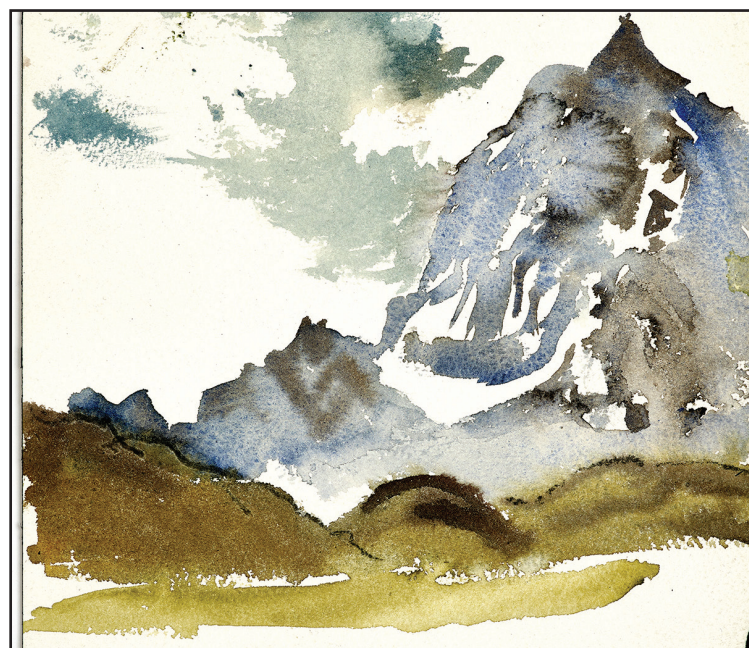
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In the footsteps of a vanished climber



Sketch book: Mark Power's drawings from his Tibetan trek including, right, one of the peaks in the Kama Valley, his personal favourite

By Gail Norcliffe

It was a chance discovery at the book exchange in East Finchley Tube station that led local architect Mark Power to join a trekking expedition in the footsteps of mountaineer George Mallory who vanished on Mount Everest.

Both Mark and Mallory are former pupils of Winchester College and Summerlee Avenue resident Mark grew up haunted by what had happened to the climber, to whom there is a memorial in the school's cloisters.

The story was rekindled for Mark by happening to pick up a copy of Wade Davis's *Into the Silence: Mallory, The Great War and the Conquest of Everest* at the Tube station. The book tells the story of how Mallory and his young companion Sandy Irvine mysteriously disappeared on the mountain in 1924.

It remains unknown whether the pair were the first ever to reach Earth's highest point, potentially 29 years ahead of Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay achieving the feat in 1953.

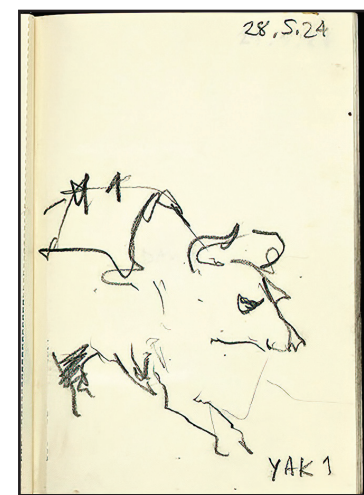
The discovery of the book prompted Mark into signing up for his school's expedition to follow some of Mallory's routes a century after he vanished. Mark felt he was unlikely to be accepted for his mountaineering abilities, so instead offered himself as a draughtsman and watercolourist to produce a unique record of

the trek. The expedition group of eight decided not to attempt Everest itself, but rather to trek through the Kharta and Kama Valleys of Tibet where Mallory had walked in 1921 with other Winchester College alumni in their first reconnaissance of the region.

Starting in Tibet in late May 2024, the culmination of the centenary was a commemorative breakfast held before the North Face of Chomolungma-Sagarmatha-Everest on 8 June 2024, exactly 100 years after Mallory's disappearance. Since his remarkable adventure, Mark

has been busy pulling together his expedition sketches and watercolours into an attractive and compelling book titled *Vanishing: A Tibetan Sketchbook*.

He introduced his book and the story behind it to an audience at the Phoenix Cinema last December, sharing some of his breathtaking sketches. The presentation was followed by a screening of the 1925 film, *The Epic of Everest*, with a newly edited soundtrack. Copies of Mark Power's book are available via the Box Office at the Phoenix or from Mark at mark-power@millspower.com



Mountain transport: One of the team's trusty yaks

Why do my New Year's resolutions never stick?

By Lucas Bouvier

By February, most New Year's resolutions have already been abandoned. Gym memberships go unused, journals remain blank, and familiar self-criticism creeps in. Why can't we ever stick to the changes we promise ourselves?

In 2026, with the swirl of big issues like rising living costs, climate change anxiety and world politics, it is not surprising that our attention is being directed to other places, making it harder to achieve these goals.

When so much of our mental capacity is spent staying informed and protected, there is often little left for self-improvement. This is okay. It's okay that your goals currently feel unattainable in the world we are living in. The first step forward is to drop the baggage of self-blame.

This does not mean avoiding responsibility for what we can control but rather recognising that we do not need to carry blame for circumstances beyond our control. It can help to remind yourself: "Even though I haven't achieved my New Year's resolution, I am still good enough. As self-blame softens, we can begin to notice what is already going well."



Be resolute: Lucas Bouvier

A regular gratitude practice is widely recognised as grounding. It can help to write down or think about three good things that happened today.

After a few days of grounding yourself in this way, small and realistic goals often feel more achievable. This might mean reading for five minutes a day or going for a 30-minute

walk once a week. Over time, confidence grows through consistency. Remember that change is a marathon, not a sprint.

For some people, repeated difficulty with change may have deeper roots. We can often trace this back to certain childhood experiences, which are then expressed later on in our lives as anxiety, low confidence, and depression.

If you feel like there is a deeper reason for not making the changes you would like to make, consider having a chat about it with a friend or reaching out for professional help.

Lucas Bouvier is a Cognitive Hypnotherapist specialised in working with anxiety, low confidence, and depression. He works in East Finchley and online. Contact him on 07884 369560 and lucas@lucas-bouvier.com or learn more at lucasbouvier.com.

Stay active when it's cold outside

By Sunnah Rose

When the weather turns cold, it can be very tempting to stay curled up indoors but staying active during colder months is important for our physical and mental well-being. One of the best ways to keep moving is by practising yoga at home. It requires little space, no equipment, and can easily be adapted for all fitness levels.

A simple full-body yoga routine can begin with gentle warm-up movements to loosen stiff muscles. You could start with a lying down spinal twist and some cat/cows – both of which warm up the spine and improve flexibility. If you practise in a slow and controlled way with connection to the breath, they help prepare the body for stronger poses and reduce the risk of injury.

For strength and balance, try downward-facing dog, which stretches the legs, back, and shoulders while building upper-body strength. And doing some planks helps engage the core and also improve your posture overall. Remember all these poses can be modified to suit your needs, for example make them one-legged planks or do a downward dog against a chair. Holding each pose for five breaths helps to build focus

and endurance. Finish your routine with calming stretches such as seated forward fold and/or child's pose, which relax the muscles.



Stay supple with home exercises

Sunnah Rose runs yoga, pregnancy yoga and postnatal yoga sessions in East Finchley. For more information visit www.stretchingpeople.co.uk or email sunnahrose@gmail.com



Café ownership still in the balance

By Poppy Jacobs

Campaigners got the news they didn't want to hear in late December when the City of London Corporation confirmed that the independently run cafés in Queens Park, Golders Hill Park, Parliament Hill Lido and Parliament Hill Fields will be taken over by the chain Daisy Green.

However, no decision has yet been made on the café in Highgate Woods (The Archer, October 2025). Current operator Hoxton Beach has told us that it is hoping to stay on.

Since the Corporation's announcement, a petition has been launched calling on the City of London Corporation to reconsider its decision and to "prioritise the voices of the community who stand by these cafés and their operators". The petition has garnered more than 19,000 signatures.

The Corporation has defended its decision, saying: "Daisy Green is set to deliver high-quality food, welcoming community spaces, and significant investment, creating an even more enjoyable experience for visitors". The changes of management were planned to take place



Under review: Highgate Wood's café may change ownership.

Photo Mike Coles

almost immediately, with the current operators set to leave by 31 January and Daisy Green aiming to be fully operational by spring 2026.

Daisy Green is keen to reassure the community that its plans aim to preserve the spirit of the much-loved spaces. Co-founder Prue Freeman states: "We want these cafés to remain welcoming spaces where everyone feels included and connected to these very special spaces."

Brain works

Neuroscientist Professor Catherine Loveday is giving a talk hosted by Age UK Barnet revealing how brain chemicals influence how we think, feel and behave.

"From dopamine and serotonin to cortisol and oxytocin, I will separate fact from fiction and explain what these chemicals really do, and what they don't," says Catherine.

The talk takes place on Wednesday 25 February from 6.45pm-8pm at the Ann Owens Centre, Oak Lane, N2. It's open to everyone and it's free, but donations are welcome. To register, email teresa.gallagher@ageukbarnet.org.uk or phone Teresa on 07502 989 403.

The Archer on the move

The Archer's website is now easier to use on your mobile phone. Our online pages have been redesigned to make it quicker to find important information like contact details and deadlines, and simpler to read our latest edition or search and browse past editions of the newspaper in our archive stretching back to 1993.

So now you really can take The Archer with you wherever you go. Bookmark our website at www.the-archer.co.uk

Six of the best

Young readers are being invited to choose their favourite book from a shortlist of six for Biblio-Buzz 2026, the Alexandra Palace Children's Book Awards.

The longlist was chosen and curated by Muswell Hill Children's Bookshop and the 2026 shortlist by educationalists, school librarians, authors and volunteers.

Readers aged nine to 12 at participating schools will read the six shortlisted novels, take part in literary challenges and vote for their favourite book ahead of an award ceremony at Ally Pally in April.

Free concert at the church

Free Sunday evening concerts have returned at East Finchley Methodist Church on the High Road, N2, opposite Creighton Avenue.

The next is on **Sunday 8 February at 7.30pm** and features The Hummingbirds guitar and ukulele duo playing a wide-ranging programme of folk, pop, country and Americana. Free admission with a collection in aid of The Hornsey Food Bank. This venue is fully accessible.



Team spirit: The Archer Academy football team is on the lookout for players of all ages

Team opens transfer window

An East Finchley football team is looking for more players to join its squad for 10-a-side sessions on Wednesday evenings.

The team was originally formed by dads of Archer Academy pupils in 2013 but there is no need to be a dad or parent of a pupil to join. Players aged from their 20s to their 60s are currently on board and the squad is particularly keen to welcome more veteran players.

Player Richard Bradshaw said: "It's one game a week

amongst ourselves on a Wednesday from 8pm to 9pm at the Academy. We're not part of a league or anything like that. Bibs and balls are all provided. Players provide their own kit and need astroturf-ready boots. "The team has been a great community builder with the players forming great bonds on and off the pitch. We welcome

anybody who can play fairly, competitively and with respect. We don't want too many crunching mistimed tackles as we all have day jobs to get to."

Players can sign up to be in the squad for 10 games for a cost of £80 / £8 per game. There is also a list for casuals who pay £10 per game. Find the sign-up form at <http://tinyurl.com/archerfootball>

Anniversary year for choir



Festival favourites: The Archer Community Choir at East Finchley Festival

The Archer Community Choir, started under the auspices of the Archer Academy in East Finchley by one of the school's founders and former governor Sarah Cohen, is enjoying its tenth anniversary year.

Sarah's vision was to have a community choir for all who loved singing, where no auditions or musical knowledge were required. Members are enthusiastically led by Royal Academy of Music graduate Laurence Morgan, the choir's fifth director, who also plays in a band and teaches singing.

Sarah hosted a party late last year to celebrate the choir's anniversary, with guests including previous choir directors and members past and present. Laurence and his predecessors entertained guests as well as leading a rousing singalong of songs learned over the years.

Several founder members still sing with the choir, but its connection to the Archer Academy has loosened over time and it is now firmly based in the East Finchley community. However, it still performs regularly at Archer Academy events, plus the East Finchley Community Festival.

It was at last summer's Festival that newest members Len and Pauline Murrill heard the choir's "lovely singing" and saw that "everyone looked like they were having a good time". They subsequently came along to a free taster session and are now full members.



On song: The choir's leaders

The choir rehearses every Tuesday evening during term time at the Archer Academy, from 7.00-8.30pm. It is almost at full capacity but, if you are interested in joining the choir, contact Isabelle at archercommunitychoir1@gmail.com for more details.



Why bother going to the cinema?

Teenager Noah Swer-Fox makes a passionate plea for more young people to discover the joys of watching movies as part of a cinema audience.

Ever since the rise of streaming services, I'm sure many young people have asked themselves the question "Why bother going to the cinema?" After all, Netflix and Disney+ offer hundreds of movies and it can often seem easier to lie on your sofa, eating popcorn as noisily as you want to, rather than taking public transport or walking to a movie hall, only to then be glared at when your sweet wrappers rustle a little too loudly.

But surely the stress isn't any less when deciding what movie to pick on Amazon Prime. Sometimes having too much choice isn't always a good thing as it can lead to endless swiping and then most people will probably spend the next two hours only occasionally looking at the TV between large doses of texting people.

Watching a movie without distractions is always what creates a more compelling experience.

And the younger generation of East Finchley are lucky because we have the Phoenix Cinema on our doorsteps. I cannot think of a better place to relax and watch a movie with your friends. There's no getting around the fact that most

cinemas are expensive to go to and sell snacks and drinks at stupidly high prices. The Phoenix has found a way round this problem. For cinemagoers aged 15-21, it offers a free Neon Membership card that lets you watch a movie and buy popcorn for only £5.

At a time where young people are hungry for films outside of large franchises, it is important to look out for the movies that won't necessarily be massive blockbuster hits. The Phoenix does exactly this and prioritises smaller, indie films over pictures with a large budget. It also holds screenings of theatre productions and concerts from the West End and round the world (a National Theatre production of Hamlet



Unbeatable experience: Noah enjoying a film at the Phoenix Cinema. Photo Mike Coles

was shown this January). You are probably wondering by now why I am so in awe of the Phoenix. Well, my first ever

experience of going to the cinema was the Phoenix, meaning it will always have a special place in my heart. But there is a reason why, as a young person, I have kept going back there for the past decade. Yes, the Neon membership comes in handy, and yes, it is extremely convenient, but truth be told, there is nothing better than experiencing a movie with others. Every person in that cinema hall with me leads a completely different life and holds different opinions to one another. But, for two hours, we are bonded by the experience of cinema: the terrible adverts, the booming sound design and the art we are witnessing on the screen. We laugh together, feel scared together and maybe even cry together.

These are things simply impossible to achieve when sitting by yourself in your living room.

Our local cinema has kept attracting new audiences and young people for well over a century. To carry on its legacy and discover new films for themselves, I highly advise the young people of East Finchley to stop flicking through Netflix, get off the sofa and head to the Phoenix where I'm sure many new films will be watched and many new memories will be made.

Movie magic: What are your happiest cinema memories at the Phoenix or further afield? Write to news@the-archer.co.uk and we'll publish as many as we can.

A neighbourhood friend: Anna Bell, 1922 - 2026

Anna Bell was born in Germany in 1922, one of nine siblings. By the age of 16 she had lost both of her parents and she lost three brothers, all young men, in the Second World War. She remembered vividly those difficult war years.

In 1953 Annie decided to travel to the UK where she found employment as an au pair at a house in Hampstead. It was while working there that she met her future husband, Arthur, who was employed there as a landscape gardener.

They married in 1954 and enjoyed a very long happy marriage, with their daughter Annette being born in 1955. They lived in Church Lane, East Finchley, where Annie was really well known in the neighbourhood.

She was always a kind and very generous person who would often donate funds to charities. In her later years she would stand at her doorstep and give sweets and chocolates out to passing schoolchildren.

Annie had a long and happy life and lived to the age of 103. On her 100th birthday lots of relatives came over from



Long and happy life: Anna Bell

Germany and the US to celebrate her achievement.

At the age of 99, after decades living in East Finchley, Annie went to live with her son-in-law Tony in Broadstairs, Kent. She died peacefully at home there and will be sadly missed by all the family and friends.

Looking for volunteers?

Are you looking for volunteers to help in your community group or organisation?

Our **Be Part of It** column is published on page 2 every month and 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, marking your email 'Be Part of It'.

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

Gifted poet and sportsman: Richard Meier, 1970 – 2025

By Matteo Lanzini

On a cold January morning, family and friends gathered to pay tribute and celebrate the life of Richard Meier, who passed away prematurely the previous month after battling cancer.

Born in Surrey and a long-time resident of East Finchley's old village, Richard was a kind, thoughtful and talented man, with poetry and cricket among his many passions. He studied music, training as a pianist in his youth, and worked for most of his career in the mental health and relationship support charity sectors, before recently retraining as an English language teacher. Almost a decade ago he set-up a recreational football group for local schools' parents, which continues to this day, and in 2022 arranged a fundraising match in support of Ukraine's humanitarian needs.

A gifted poet, the first of his three published collections won the Picador Poetry Prize in 2011 and the following poem is an excerpt from his latest collection 'After the Miracle', published in October 2025:



Kind and talented: Richard Meier

Muscle Memory

A wide, blank beach in north-east Norfolk,
my young son learning frisbee-throws.
A backhand, arrowed from his checkered breast pocket.
A second like it, only one which reaches the other thrower slower,
stalls, to hover right above us, thinking.
A third flicked upwards, angled, from the side, to climb and climb then carve straight down.
A fourth that, late in flight, will arc in such a way it might provide a template for all future beauty.
And, on the boy's face, as he gets it and as the world falls open slightly to show its workings, oh the joy.

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.

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. The site also gives information on advertising in our pages and how you can contribute to the paper.



Hello: My first year living in East Finchley

By Karly Benson

Just over a year ago, I arrived in Muswell Hill with three suitcases, a backpack, and a short-term flat agreement. I had visited London before and knew that I preferred the north but underestimated what it would mean to really make this city my home.



Here to stay: Karly Benson

Compared to my earlier move to Berlin, I thought London would feel easier—familiar language, familiar culture, and the comfort of a direct flight home. Yet, as I quickly learned, navigating

a city of this size (and pace) is no small task. The adjustment took longer than I expected, and in many ways, I'm still adjusting.

My early days in Muswell Hill were spent tackling busy roundabouts and climbing steep hills. I wandered aimlessly, stumbling into charity shops, bakeries, and butchers who all greeted me with a familiar nod.

One evening, standing on Hillfield Park and looking out over the skyline, I exhaled for the first time in months. I felt I had carved out a little pocket of London where I could truly belong.

When it came time to move three months later, I was reluctant to leave the comfort of this part of town. So, I carried my three suitcases and backpack just 15 minutes down the road to East Finchley, where I live now.

Here, I've once again found pleasure in the independent shops that anchor the neighbourhood: Tony's Continental, Amy's Housewares and Cootes Pharmacy, to name a few. Even the local library (a place I never expected to spend much time) has welcomed me, supported me, and introduced me to The Archer.

To a long-time resident, these places may blend into the background of daily life. But for me, in a city that often feels overpopulated and overwhelming, these small shops, familiar faces and simple conversations have created a soft place for me to land. I never imagined I would find comfort and familiarity in a city as vast as London.

And yet, a year later, I'm grateful to have renewed my lease in this little pocket of the city that now feels like home.

Goodbye: A fond farewell to N2

By Iqbal Ahmed

I moved to East Finchley in 2007 from the south side of Hampstead Heath. I have lived in London for the past three decades and spent more than half of this period in East Finchley.



Moving away: Iqbal Ahmed and his son

It seemed like a friendly neighbourhood when I was house hunting before moving to the area. Shortly after moving here, I was leaving a local supermarket when I encountered a white-haired man with a friendly face. I nodded and he spontaneously shook my hand. A few weeks later, I learned that he was the MP for Finchley and Golders Green, Dr Rudi Vis. I greeted him when I saw him again walking down High Road.

Time has really flown while I have lived in this neighbourhood and nothing untoward has ever happened to me during these years. I felt safe cycling home from work at midnight.

I had lived a rootless life for many years in Hampstead. It was in East Finchley that I finally put down roots when my son was born. He went on to attend a local infant and primary school and the school run meant carrying him downhill on my bike.

My local newspaper, The Archer, has always been very supportive by featuring my work as an author a few times in its pages. I have fond memories of Daphne Chamberlain, who volunteered for the paper until she passed away a year ago.

I wrote my previous book during the Covid lockdowns and a neighbour very kindly let me use her spare room to work during the day because my son was attending online classes in our small home. I wrote my new book, The Snows of Kashmir, sitting in a local coffee shop.

East Finchley will stay with me forever, wherever I may live. It seems as if it was yesterday when I first cycled from Hampstead to explore this neighbourhood, although it was 20 years ago. I am moving away to be nearer to my son's secondary school. However, East Finchley will always have a special place in my heart.

RICKY SAVAGE... THE VOICE OF IRRESPONSIBILITY

Wet and Dry

Well it's over. Dry January is gone for another year and now's the time to have proper gin with your tonic. But not if you want to time travel back to 1920s America, because you'd have been in the middle of that great social experiment, Prohibition. You know, no booze and the chance for disorganised criminals to engage in organised crime.

The American temperance movement had a long history going back to 17th-century puritans in New England who wanted to ban booze, but it really kicked off after 1890 and, by 1917, the Prohibitionists had a majority in Congress. Time for the 18th Amendment, which aimed to stop drinking in its tracks – in 1920, America went dry.

This shut bars, breweries and distilleries, and destroyed the fledgling wine industry. No Jack Daniel's for the duration. You could make your own wine and beer for personal consumption, and 'medical alcohol' and communion wine was allowed, but that was it.

This called for innovation and America had that by the bottle. You could buy grape juice which came with guidance about how to turn it into wine, a kind of home brew guide as all you needed to do was leave it for a couple of weeks and you'd got basic plonk. But the bootleggers went one better, using industrial alcohol with added flavourings. The government tried to stop them by bunging in increasingly dangerous additives until they killed about 10,000 drinkers by adding methanol.

Smuggling took place throughout the era, mostly from Canada and the West Indies. America asked Britain to stop it, we refused and Churchill described Prohibition as an abomination. Besides, it didn't bother the rich; they stockpiled and President Woodrow Wilson set the trend by taking his drinks cabinet with him when he left office.

If you couldn't get a beer in a bar, there was always the local speak-easy. As African Americans moved north for work, they took jazz with them, played in the speak-easies for people drowning their sorrows in weird cocktails. Meanwhile, the government lost tax revenue, and Prohibition created unemployment and helped crime get embedded in society. No Prohibition, no Al Capone, no St Valentine's Day Massacre.

By 1930, Prohibition had lost its appeal and Franklin Roosevelt promised to repeal it if elected. He kept his promise in 1933 with the 21st amendment, the only time one constitutional amendment had been repealed by another. As he said as he signed into the end of dry America, "Seems like a good day for a beer."

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Sherlock adventure arrives at Artsdepot

A new production based on Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's most famous creation is coming to the Artsdepot in North Finchley as part of a major UK tour. Created by the acclaimed team at Blackeyed Theatre, *Sherlock Holmes: The Hunt for Moriarty* has two performances on Saturday 14 February.

Featuring powerful performances, a thrilling soundscape and innovative design, the production interweaves a selection of Sherlock Holmes short stories into a single tale, offering both Holmes fans and those new to the canon a new spy adventure that remains true to Conan Doyle's work. The short stories used in the play are *The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington Plans*, *A Scandal in Bohemia*, *The Adventure of the Second Stain* and *The Final Problem*.

Writer and Director Nick Lane said: "It's been fun capturing the pace, the spirit and the character of Doyle's original adventures, and our hope is that, like the stories themselves, *The Hunt for Moriarty* will keep



Tabletop detectives: The cast of *Sherlock*, coming to the Artsdepot

audiences gripped - and guessing - along with the great detective himself, right to the last". Recommended for ages 11 and

older, tickets for the show cost from £20 and are available at www.artsdepot.co.uk or from the Artsdepot box office on 020 8369 5454.

Stories behind the paintings on screen

By Ruth Anders

Art lovers enjoyed a rare treat at the Phoenix Cinema on 11 November when co-director Phil Grabsky presented his film on the artist Caravaggio. While Phil's name may not be well known to the cinema-going public, his work is familiar through his company *Exhibition On Screen*, of which he is executive producer. Like his many films on artists and composers over the last two decades, his recent film on Vermeer was enthusiastically received.

Phil told *The Archer*: "I'm not interested in the artist so much as the art. Everyone thinks of Caravaggio as a street brawler and troublemaker, but his art transcends all that. Caravaggio, one of the world's greatest artists, never painted in the hope of selling. He was a deeply spiritual man, not only driven by patronage and economics."

Throughout the docudrama we learned about Caravaggio's methods and the paintings themselves, including the famous *Conversion on the Way to Damascus* and *Judith Beheading Holofernes*. The explanations about the artist's approach to composition and perspective and his use of light were fascinating, alongside his frequent self-portraits within the paintings.

Phoenix patrons can look forward to two more such offerings in 2026. In March comes Phil's film on the current Turner & Constable exhibition at Tate Britain (running until mid-April) and his revitalised film on Frida Kahlo in May.

Exhibition on Screen's first film on Kahlo was produced at the end of the pandemic but will be reissued with additional material possible because of Phil's access to the exhibition in Houston, USA, *Frida: The Making of an Icon*. That exhibition will open in January, and Phil's aim is always to show the films at the same time as viewers can enjoy the exhibitions (though we may not all make it to Texas!) Meanwhile



Controversial: Caravaggio's *Cupid*



Painting master: Phil Grabsky

you can see Caravaggio's most controversial masterpiece *Victorious Cupid* at the Wallace Collection in central London until 12 April. This painting, with all its drama, provocation and symbolism, has never been seen before in public in the UK and is not to be missed. For more information on Phil Grabsky's films, see exhibitiononscreen.com

What's on at the Phoenix in February

By Zalan Pall, general manager

A Gothic love tale, a clash of sporting titans, Brazilian drama, kids films, classics, live theatre, opera and many more await you at the Phoenix in February.

On the eve of the 2002 FIFA World Cup, the Irish captain Roy Keane forfeits his place in the squad at the team's preparation base following a heated disagreement with the Irish manager Mick McCarthy. Telling the story of this infamous off-pitch moment, *Saipan* runs from Friday 6 February.

In *Wuthering Heights*, from Friday 13 February, tragedy strikes when Heathcliff falls in love with Catherine Earnshaw, a woman from a wealthy family in 18th-century England. This version by Saltburn director Emerald Fennell is based on Emily Bronte's novel and stars Margot Robbie and Jacob Elordi.

Brazil, 1977. Marcelo, a technology expert in his early 40s, is on the run. Hoping to reunite with his son, he travels to Recife during Carnival but soon realises that the city is not the safe haven he was expecting. A thematically rich and visually arresting political thriller, *The Secret Agent* (from Friday 20 February) blends grindhouse stylization with biting social commentary to weave a vividly dangerous yet darkly human tale. Family options during half term include *Zootopia 2* and *Kangaroo*. For the lovers of screen arts, we will have the Royal Ballet and Opera's *Wolf*



Works on Monday 9 February and National Theatre Live's *The Audience* on Thursday 26 February. Composed of intimate and fragmented moments of animals and careers in a community of zoos and animal rescue centres across Argentina, *Collective Monologue* on Saturday 28 February explores the beings that continue to inhabit these institutions. The screening will be followed by a director Q&A.

We carry on showing classic films and this month we're screening *When Harry Met Sally* (Saturday 14 February) and, as part of the New Orleans Season, *Panic in the Streets* (Sunday 8 February), *Easy Rider* (Sunday 22 February) and *Interview with the Vampire* (Sunday 1 March). For tickets and full details of show time visit www.phoenixcinema.co.uk or come in and talk to our box office team.



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MERMAID**
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Letters

Partridge settles in

Dear Editor

A partridge has taken up residence in a garden in Fordington Road much to everyone's surprise. He doesn't live there permanently but in the summer and on milder nights he will sleep on a balcony at the back of the house and curl up like a cat against the door or window.

On colder nights or in the winter Mr Partridge disappears from the garden so we presume he has somewhere warmer and safe to rest. Every morning he comes back again for breakfast which is provided daily. We believe he is a red-legged partridge and they usually have a partner for life. However, this partridge is always alone amongst the pigeons.

Prem Stassopoulos,
Address supplied



Garden guest: The Fordington Road partridge

Access all areas

Dear Editor

Mischa Laurén makes an important point about wheelchair access to shops and cafés in the High Road (Letters, The Archer, January 2025). But credit where

it's due to the team at Casa Pepe who go out of their way to welcome wheelchair users, others with support needs and their carers. The result is a gloriously inclusive environment where everyone can feel at

home. The food's great, too. I reckon they should get a grant from the council for community cohesion.

David Brindle,
Durham Road, N2

Doctors dilemma

Dear Editor

It's good to know that some GP practices are allowing patients to bypass the government edict to communicate with your doctor digitally or not at all (Letters, The Archer, November 2025).

It's extraordinary that older people, those who need NHS services the most, are the least likely to own a smartphone. Even owning an up-to-date computer and scanner isn't good enough as only a smartphone will get you through the fiendishly complicated process of proving who you are to even get access to the system.

In the past, it used to be really simple. If you weren't well, you'd just turn up at the surgery, take a seat in the waiting room and wait your turn.

Rani Dickson
Address Supplied

Bridge Banksy?

Dear Editor

How about a reproduction of the Archer statue from the station in 2D in different colours on the bridge? Or you could run a competition in the paper requesting designs with a strong

Brighten up the bridge

Dear Editor

I read the article by Peter Hale in the December edition of The Archer regarding the bridge in East Finchley. I'm glad this has been raised as the bridge is in desperate need of a facelift. If Camden can have a branded bridge, why can't East Finchley?

A similar idea would give a boost to the decor of the bridge

as it is flaky and gloomy and some bright colours would liven it up. Plenty of local artists in the area would gladly offer to provide ideas and help in the renovation. Anyway, just wanted to throw my support behind the idea.

Simon Wood,
Address Supplied



Welcome sign: How East Finchley's bridge could look.
Image Mike Coles

hint that maybe Banksy would pre-empt the whole process.

Roland Wilding,
Retired Trade Mark and Design Attorney

Short and sweet

Dear Editor

The Northern line bridge branding is a brilliant idea for East Finchley.

Anthony Rabin,
Address supplied

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: Am I being too vanilla in the bedroom?

Joy is a trained counsellor and she can help you tackle issues that matter to you. 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.



Design by @archnote

Email Joy at askjoyatthearcher@gmail.com.

Dear Joy,

I'm 32 and have been with my boyfriend for three years. We moved in together just over a year ago. We get on great and have fun together, and I thought we had a great sex life, but when he came home from a night out recently he said that he was bored with things in bed and wants us to spice things up.

His idea is to have a threesome and he's putting me under a lot of pressure to say yes. The thought of watching him having sex with someone else freaks me out and I don't want to have sex with another man or woman.

I'm so not into this but I'm worried that if I do say no he'll find someone a little less vanilla to act out his fantasies with. He says I'm being narrow minded. Is he right? DD

Dear DD,

In answer to your question, no he's not right. It's not that I think having a threesome is wrong, but pushing you to do something you're not comfortable with definitely is.

Experimentation should always be consensual and all concerned need to be happy with the direction of travel before the journey begins.

And there are lots of ways to spice things up without introducing a third person into the mix. Perhaps you can do a little research and make some suggestions that you would be happy to try. This may also help you understand your own sexual limits, which really is key.

Being able to talk about this honestly with him might be difficult, but it is so important if you want to have a satisfying sexual

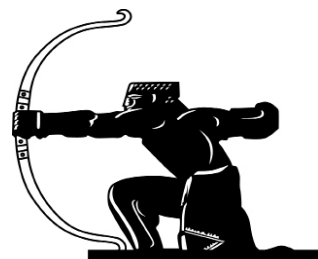
relationship with him. If the pressure for a threesome continues though, maybe it's time to have a rethink. No one should be made to feel like they're too vanilla because they're not into doing something that makes them uncomfortable.

There are few rules when it comes to consensual adult sex but being accepting of each other's limits is fundamental to a safe, happy and satisfying sex life and, ultimately, a fulfilling relationship. You deserve nothing less.

Useful resources:

• www.brook.org.uk: Type in 'consent and sex' which brings up a page of useful advice for a long-term relationship

• www.psychologytoday.com/gb - Type in the words 'spice up sex'



A cache of clocks where time stands still

By Margaret Crockett

Number Four sits slightly back from the road and is easy to miss among the workman-like businesses and traders on the parade that cluster that stretch of Fortis Green, N2. The bow window is packed with clocks and pepper mills.



Back in time: John Kendall sitting in his Number Four workshop in Fortis Green and, right, repairing a clock at his workbench. All photos Lauren Baskent

Step inside and you find the shop is cluttered, full of restored wooden furniture, more pepper mills and, of course, clocks. There is no sign of a computer or even a cash register. Time seems to stand still.

John Kendall was busy at his workbench when I knocked on the door. He has a calm friendly manner and clears a beautiful spindle-backed chair for me to sit on, whilst he perches on his stool.

A childhood fascination with clocks saw him take his parents' alarm clock apart but he was unable to put it back together again. "They were pretty annoyed," he admits ruefully. John explains that for him clocks have a presence. "Clocks just interested me. They are quite fascinating because time is an interesting concept. In one sense, it's governed by the fact that we rotate around the sun. In some ways, the concept of time is quite man-made."

Later he picked up some clock-repairing skills from his uncle, although he is a largely self-taught horologist. He was mending clocks in the evenings alongside working at the Ormond Road Craft Centre and when that closed he took up clock repairing full time. He has been at Number Four for 25 years now.

The oldest clock he has ever worked on was a German miniature tavern clock from the

1720s. Tavern clocks have a round dial, quite simplistic movements and require winding every seven days. His most interesting was a Jewish clock with an unusual escapement mechanism.

Not surprisingly John's customers come from far and wide. They include private individuals, institutions, colleges and private members' clubs, mostly with basic everyday clocks. The market for longcase (grandfather) clocks has diminished, probably because of the space they take up.

Originally John trained as a cabinet maker, although he never made a clock housing. His face lights up when he talks of woodturning and he shows me examples of his 'pepper pots'. There are pepper grinders not only in the shop window but also in pride of place on the central display table. They attract customers from around the world, largely via word of mouth, since John does not have an internet presence for Number Four.

Whilst some have the traditional waisted mill shape, there are other unusual ones such as a Bauhaus-inspired design and one created from a banksia seed from Australia. It is becoming difficult to source the hard wood required to carve the thread for the screw mechanism so John finds it at antique auctions or, more recently, from the waste

wood of a clarinet maker. John has taught others horologist skills. It takes time to learn and requires a certain amount of equipment and tools. He surveys the shop, saying:

"There is mess and clutter". But John has a constant backlog of work. Time marches on and whilst digital clocks have their place,

aren't we all a little bit fascinated with the clockwork mechanism? We are lucky to have such a skilled craftsman in our neighbourhood.



Pride of place: Pepper grinders mix with clocks in the window display



Everything at hand: Tools and spare parts crowd the drawers of John's workbench

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