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Huge trees fall in Cherry Tree Wood

By Diana Cormack

The Friends of Cherry Tree Wood are meeting urgently with Barnet Council after two large trees in the park uprooted themselves last month, one falling to the ground just after a mother walked by wheeling a pram and the other coming to rest across part of the children's playground.

The two mature hornbeams collapsed within the space of 12 hours, the first at around 11pm near the playground. The following morning, Wednesday 4 February, the second fell across the path which runs parallel to the Northern line, moments after Anna Suarez-Martinez had passed underneath with her child.

Anna, of Cherry Tree Road, N2, told The Archer: "I had just managed to get my baby to sleep in his pram when I heard a loud groan in the distance. I turned to see a huge tree falling to the ground, seemingly in slow motion. I could hardly believe it, particularly as it wasn't a windy day."

People are naturally anxious and asking questions about the monitoring of the trees which did not appear to have any obvious signs of damage or disease. The Friends of Cherry Tree Wood quickly issued an update explaining the possible causes. Although healthy, the roots were shallow and growing in

waterlogged clay soil with the saturated ground around unable to hold them firmly in place. As roots lose their grip, trees become easier to push over and prone to falling. This can happen even if there is no wind and especially if the tree has a broad crown.

Roger Chapman, Chair of the Friends group, said: "We have written to Barnet Council's Head of Trees and with the assistance of Councillor Alison Moore we are seeking an urgent meeting with council officers to discuss the issue.

"There is no need for alarm or widespread tree removal, but it does suggest extra checks after long wet spells are sensible, especially near paths and play areas. Areas that regularly flood or hold water should be monitored more closely. As wetter winters become more common, parks and woodlands across London will increasingly need to manage trees with this in mind.

"Cherry Tree Wood remains a



Close shave: One of the fallen hornbeams lies partly across the children's playground. Photo Mike Coles

valuable, living woodland. Thoughtful monitoring and gradual management will help keep it both safe and resilient in a changing climate."



Uprooted: The second hornbeam on the path alongside the Northern line. Photo Mike Coles

However, the young children from the nearby Monkey Puzzle Nursery who I met on their forest school walk on the

morning of the falls, had no doubt about who downed the trees. They assured me it was the Gruffalo!



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Copy deadlines - April: 13 March May: 10 April June: 15 May

BE PART OF IT Volunteers wanted

Compiled by Lynn Winton

The Together Project CIO is looking for a Group Welcomer to support its Songs & Smiles session at Spring Lane Care Home, 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, please email songs@thetogetherproject.org.uk

Volunteer stewards are wanted at **OmVed Gardens** in Highgate Village to welcome visitors, answer questions, signpost around the site and support Open Days and other events. A friendly, outdoor role with a chance to be part of a community and enjoy free access to some events. No experience needed – just enthusiasm and a love of people and nature. Contact enquiries@omvedgardens.com to register your interest or for more info.

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

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 020 8432 1422.

The North London Hospice shop in the High Road, East Finchley, would love to hear from people of all ages who are interested in helping out. The shop offers places for students aged 16 and above 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

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Barnet

220 High Road, N2

Change of use of part of the ground floor commercial (Class E) to one self-contained flat (Class C3). Ref. No: 26/0626/PNE

88 Hertford Road, N2,

Roof extension involving rear dormer window with juliet balcony and three front-facing roof lights. Ref. No: 26/0617/192

44 Lankaster Gardens, N2

Single-storey side infill extension. Ref. No: 26/0615/HSE

27 Huntington Road, N2

Roof extension with one rear dormer window over main roof,

one rear dormer over outrigger roof, three roof lights and seven solar panels, following demolition of existing water tank enclosure (amended). Ref. No: 26/0527/192

47 Sylvester Road, N2

Roof extension involving rear dormer window. Ref. No: 26/0477/192

76A Hertford Road, N2

Single-storey side and rear extension with four roof lights. Ref. No: 26/0432/FUL

Ground Floor Flat, 50 Leicester Road, N2

Single-storey rear extension

Appeal for baby products to tackle child poverty

Five students from the Archer Academy in East Finchley are taking action to support families affected by child poverty through a new community campaign called 'Little Needs, Big Impact (N2)'.

The student-led initiative is collecting essential baby items for Sebby's Corner, a local baby bank supporting families across Barnet and north London. In two-thirds of UK constituencies, at least one in four children are living in poverty, and basic essentials such as nappies and wipes are increasingly unaffordable for many families.

From 1–15 March, donation posters will appear along the High Road in East Finchley, with selected local shops acting as collection points. Residents are encouraged to look out for the yellow and blue campaign posters and donate items including nappies, biodegradable baby wipes, shampoos and toothpaste etc.

Alongside the collection, the group will also gather signatures for a petition calling for the removal of VAT on certain baby hygiene products. The students hope the campaign will provide immediate support to local families while raising awareness of hygiene poverty in Barnet and beyond.

"Small items can make a big difference," the group says. "If our community comes together, we can create real impact."


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wash & lotion



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shampoo & conditioner



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conditioner & deodorant



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A campaign by Year 11 students from The Archer Academy

In partnership with Sebby's Corner 

Together we're making a difference

Baby essentials: Look out for the Little Needs posters in shops along the High Road

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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

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following demolition of the existing rear extension including new courtyard. Ref. No: 26/0369/FUL
East Finchley Station Car Park, High Road, N2

Installation of four solar canopy wings. Ref. No: 26/0312/PNW.
Installation of eight electric vehicle charging bays including four electrical vehicle charging upstands, a substation and switch room. Ref. No: 26/0299/192

30 Summerlee Road, N2

Roof extension including rear dormer window with juliet balcony and two roof lights to front roof slope. Ref. No: 26/0308/192.
Single-storey rear extension with roof lights following demolition of existing timber extension. Increase depth of existing cellar to form new storage room. Single-storey outbuilding to rear garden with green roof. New front porch. Replacement of existing windows with new timber framed double-glazed windows. Ref. No: 26/0307/HSE

74 Summerlee Road, N2

Erection of a garden studio following demolition of the existing garage. Ref. No: 26/0288/192

223 Creighton Avenue, N2

Single-storey front porch extension. Ref. No: 26/0280/HSE

78 High Road, N2

Variation of condition 1 (Approved Plans) of planning permission reference 23/5021/FUL dated 19/02/24 for 'Conversion of the existing dwelling into two self-contained flats including a single-storey rear extension and mansard roof extension including front and rear dormers. Modifications to the rear access to maintain one car parking space and external amenity space, cycle storage and refuse and recycling facilities.' Variation to include alterations at ground floor level to provide rear access to the shop unit. Ref. No: 26/0244/S73

37 Old Farm Road, N2

Change of use of the property from

a single family dwelling (Class C3) to a House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) (Class C4) for up to four people. Ref. No: 26/0197/FUL

Haringey

13 Western Road, N2

Replacement of existing timber front elevation windows to double glazed timber vertical sliding sash windows and replacement of existing timber rear elevation windows (first and second floor only) to be replaced with new double glazed uPVC vertical sliding sash/casement windows. Ref: HGY/2026/0422

7 Twyford Avenue, N2

Removal of a single garage and the erection of a two-storey side extension; changes to rear fenestration. Ref: HGY/2026/0236

Flats 13 & 17 Westside, 68 Fortis Green, N2

Amalgamation of two self-contained flats into one five-bedroom flat (Class C3 Use). Ref: HGY/2026/0002



Salon owner faces next step in court battle

By Lynn Winton

As we reported in September, one of East Finchley's longest standing businesses took the unusual step of challenging their new landlord's substantial rent hike, and has at last received a 40-page arbitration award.

Alban Trugu, owner of the Retreat Hair and Beauty Salon on Fortis Green with his wife Eriona since 2005, said he felt forced to go to arbitration when their new landlords, local couple Darren and Sasha Gayer, requested a 54% rent increase.



Rent rise: The Retreat

Alban said "I believe that would have forced us out of business. I'm so relieved to tell you that the arbitrators rejected that demand. My rent has now risen by 16% which I can manage, so I am delighted to tell all my customers that I will be staying."

However, due to arbitration rules, Alban will have to pay both parties' costs totalling around £20,000, a heavy price to pay for challenging the increase. He will be partly helped by donations to his GoFundMe page that he set up on the advice of his many loyal customers who wanted to help.

"There are not enough words to describe my gratitude to all the people who supported me through the worst time of my life," said Alban. "I couldn't have done it without the sound advice and financial help I have received. I have been on a rollercoaster of panic and despair, so fearful of not being able to support my family."



Fighting on: Alban Trugu

As well as working six long days a week in the salon, Alban is now embarking on a second fight. When his previous landlord Roger Brown, 86, decided to sell the freehold, Alban says he placed a formal offer for £300,000 but the freehold was sold to Darren and Sasha Gayer for a smaller sum.

Roger Brown, with whom Alban had an excellent relationship, has signed a letter of assignment which means Alban can now legally act on his behalf. A formal letter has been

sent to the appointed agent, Countrywide Commercial in Woodford Green, Essex, giving notice that legal proceedings are being considered in relation to the sale. Alban intends to represent himself unless the case reaches court, when he will have to appoint a barrister.

Jason Grant of Countrywide Commercial told The Archer: "We strongly reject these allegations. The sale of 5 Fortis Green was handled transparently and professionally, in line with our client's instructions and all regulatory requirements."

We have reached out to the Gayers for comment. Alban's fundraising page can be found at gofundme.co.uk by searching for 'Save The Retreat'. The current total of £14,000, donated by 179 people, has been absorbed by arbitration fees. It is still open for donations for the next phase of his campaign.

Alban said: "If I had accepted the rent hike, it would have set a new precedent and all my fellow traders could have had similar increases when it came to rent reviews. That's how it works. I appeal to local shops to contact me for advice. Some of us will even share the same landlords and not know. We must share knowledge and experiences."

Easter appeal

Young Barnet Foundation is appealing for donations of books and chocolate eggs to its Easter Campaign this month to bring joy and opportunity to children and young people.

Financial donations are also welcome and will be used to support local charities and community groups through the foundation's Space2Grow Children & Young People's Fund.

Find out more about the appeal and how to donate at www.youngbarnetfoundation.org.uk/eastercampaign



Art on the go: Muswell Hill Creatives artist Simon Gazzard paints live at Ally Pally. Photo Geoffrey Davies

Real-time painting at Ally Pally

By Geoffrey Davies

Local artists were well represented at the two-day Fresh Art Fair at Alexandra Palace last month. Muswell Hill Creatives, a group that includes artists from East Finchley, took a booth and reported a lot of interest and sales, especially in glass and vases.

On the opening night Muswell Hill landscape painter Simon Gazzard gave a real-time painting demonstration, and showed his works depicting the Parkland Walk and Alexandra Palace. "This is the first time we have appeared here," said

Rachael Booth-Clibborn, the group's founder. "Given the success I hope we will be back next year." As well as glass, work by their nine artists featured other media such as textiles, wood and paper prints.

Fresh Art Fair ran at Alexandra Palace from Friday 30 January to Sunday 1 March, giving visitors the chance to browse and buy original works by emerging

artists and established names. Artist demos, like the one by Simon Gazzard, were among the key attractions, alongside workshops in artistic techniques run by dozens of experts.

Event organisers have already said they will be back at the same venue in January 2027, with dates to be announced nearer the time.

New playground

A newly spruced up playground has been officially opened in Muswell Hill in the latest stage of a popular park's regeneration.

The expanded facility in Halliwick Recreation Ground, off Coppetts Road, N10, includes swings, somersault bars, picnic benches, a tower with monkey bars, and a sensory dome for climbing on.

The £275,000 playground will serve children aged from two to 14 and it was made possible after an extensive fundraising campaign by the Friends of Halliwick Rec.

It was funded with £150,000 from Barnet Council, £82,000 from the London Marathon Trust, £25,000 from the CSDS Foundation and £18,600 from The National Lottery Community Fund. Additional funding for the project came from Cadent Gas and Affinity Water.

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

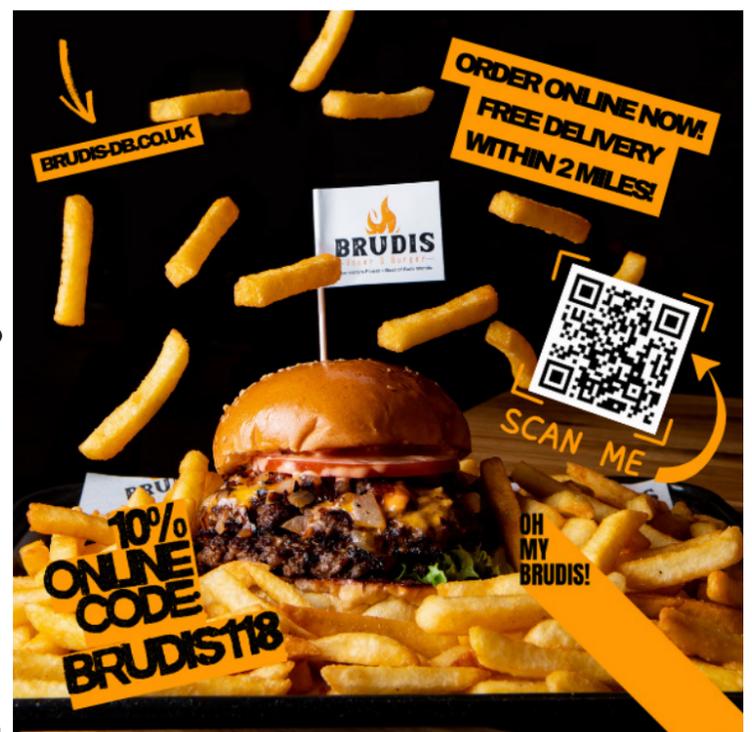
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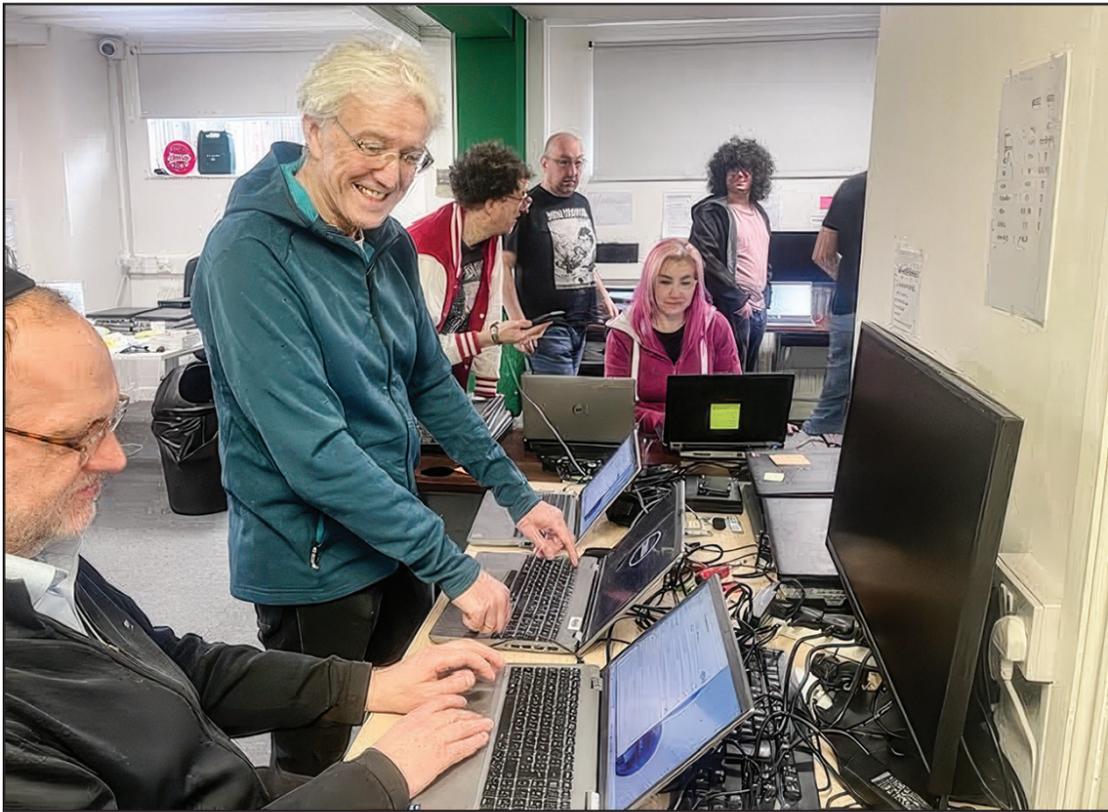
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Workshop: Tutors and jobseekers practise their device repair skills at the 2second Chance charity

Everyone gets a fair shot at work

By Lynn Winton

East Finchley residents Debs Good and Caroline Graham are part of a tiny team of seven running the groundbreaking Barnet charity 2second Chance, which is having significant success in getting young people and adults facing barriers to employment into the workplace.

I went to speak to them at their office and workshops in Hendon, where their main focus is on delivering the accredited six-week training course Tech10, which trains jobseekers to repair and recondition all types of donated secondhand computers, tablets and phones.

They told me these items are then given to people who cannot afford them or sold via eBay with all profits ploughed back into the charity. The course also includes social skills such as punctuality, how to address work colleagues and how to attend a meeting, so that trainees come out 'work-ready'.

Caroline made this appeal: "Archer readers, we desperately need your old computers, devices and phones. You can drop them in to East Finchley Library, or you can contact us for collection. Please spread the word. And tell anyone you know who you think might benefit from our courses." Find the charity's website at www.2secondchance.co.uk.

Trainees are often referred to 2second Chance by organisations including Mencap, Finchley Food Bank, Barnet Homes, Oak Lodge School and Tarling Road Community Hub, but Debs and Caroline were keen to stress people can contact them directly as well. In their buzzy workshop filled with tutors and trainees I also spoke to co-founder Adam Goodman. Born with a deformed left hand and learning difficulties, he found it hard to fit into a world that didn't always understand difference.

While others described him as unique and special, his disabilities often made him feel isolated.

Adam's job applications were repeatedly turned down, and the employment process was exhausting and disheartening. Without meaningful work, his days lacked structure and purpose, and he often didn't leave his home.

Today in his early 40s Adam is an integral part of the charity. He has learned the skill of public speaking and visits schools and companies to inspire others and share knowledge of the work the charity is doing. He also teaches other vulnerable adults.

In addition to the computer refurbishment courses, Debs Good has used her professional creative skills to run another initiative under the 2second Chance umbrella, called Reframed, hosting ethical picture and photo frame workshops for people experiencing mental health challenges.

Debs said: "It's ethical because we have a huge choice of various donated frames that are repurposed for new orders, with a strong focus on circular economy principles and reuse. Again, all the money from orders goes directly back into the charity, helping to fund and sustain the courses. Anyone is free to visit, bring your old frames, have frames made, or take part in one of the workshops."



Framed: 2second Chance co-founder Debs Good

Nature thriving in Cherry Tree Wood

By Debbie Linton

A community Bioblitz event in Cherry Tree Wood recorded in a single day 47 plant species, 10 mammal and amphibian species, including tadpoles, and nine bird species.

The nature numbers were given at the annual general meeting of the Friends of Cherry Tree Wood, attended by 20 people in January, to look back on 2025 and ahead to coming months.

Other conservation updates included hedgehogs spotted, bulbs planted, hazel coppiced, new compost and flower beds established, brambles bashed and progress made on the orchard and forest gardens. Thanks were given to the many volunteers including the Gardening Group, Good Gym and Duke of Edinburgh Award helpers. The meeting discussed the Tree Preservation Orders won by the Friends for the five silver birches near the High Road entrance of the park, on land earmarked for development as the Cherry Tree Quarter housing project.

A new hawthorn tree fund appeal for the wood had also been started, raising nearly £800 with support from a local exhibition by East Finchley artist Denise Wyllie.

The Flooding and Drainage Group were thanked for making progress on solutions for the waterlogged field. A grant of £40,000 is being made available for a Sustainable Urban Drainage System to help capture and slow down excess water.

Coming up, the next litter pick is on Sunday 8 March from 2-3pm. Meet near the café.

The next BioBlitz event is on Sunday 12 April at 10.30am-12pm. Children and adults are welcome to come along and help identify plants, animals and insects in the wood. Meet near the children's playground.

For more information on the work of the Friends group, email friendsofcherrytree-wood@gmail.com

From The Archer archives...

By Jane Marsh

**10 years ago:
March 2016**

Barnet Council confirmed it had received a pre-application enquiry proposing the building of nine houses on the former Esso garage site opposite the Martin Primary School field on the High Road, N2. Esso confirmed that it expected to complete the sale of the site by the middle of 2016. However, a question mark arose over ownership of a strip of land behind the garage, accessed from the site. Problems arising from this situation may partly account for the fact that, ten years on, the site has yet to be developed.

**15 years ago:
March 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:
March 2001**

Not for the first time, the danger facing pedestrians crossing The Bishops Avenue at the East Finchley end was highlighted, following an accident at the junction in November 2000. After consultation with Barnet Council, local MP Rudi Vis confirmed that funding was not available then for any junction improvement scheme and, 25 years later, pedestrians still take their lives in their hands when crossing the wide avenue where it joins the High Road.

Orchestra brings three of the best

Finchley Symphony Orchestra and conductor Christopher Stark will be performing a varied trio of works at their next concert this month.

Opening with Faure's serene Pavane the programme then features Violin Concerto No.1 by the African-American Florence Price.

Completing the programme is Shostakovich's Ninth Symphony, an unusually playful piece for him.

The concert takes place at Trinity Church, Nether Street, N12, on Saturday 14 March, starting at 7.30pm.

Tickets are £18, £15 for those under 26 and over 60, £2 for those under 18 and you can save £1 per ticket by booking online at www.finchleysymphony.org



Gates to stay as underpass work goes on

By Matteo Lanzini

Following a longer than planned closure over the summer and autumn months, the pedestrian underpass beneath the Northern line between Trinity Road and Manor Park Road, N2, reopened at the end of last year.

The improvements at that stage were most visible on the two footpath approaches: their surface has been renewed, new access barriers and some seating concrete blocks installed, and a dropped kerb removed at the entrance to dissuade mopeds from driving through.

The underpass beneath the railway line itself might not look much different to the untrained eye. However a new drainage system and paving stones were laid to avoid flooding (it has been thoroughly tested over the last two months) and old graffiti removed. A new wall mural is expected to be painted by the commissioned artist in the spring.

Contacted by The Archer, James Masters, volunteer chair of Grange Big Local (GBL), which promoted and drove the project, explained that multiple legal and procedural challenges were encountered along the way due to having two separate public bodies in the shape of Barnet Council (LBB) and Transport for London (TfL) involved with different areas of the work. He said GBL have kept working with the various officials and have recently received reassurance that the remaining works, which include improved lighting and tree planting at both entrances, will be carried out. The underpass is now on Barnet Council's cleaning schedule and also the Public Rights of Way map, allowing

the enforcing of vehicle restrictions by the police.

The more impactful and complex intervention left will involve the widening of some sections of the footpath requiring fence realignment; this will then allow reflectors with poetry from local residents to be installed on the main corners. As a result of this, the metal gates at both entrances will remain in place until all works have been completed.

Monique Gardiner, Director of Communities at Inclusion



Open but gated: The upgraded Northern line underpass last month. Photo Matteo Lanzini

Barnet, which works with GBL and holds the project's Lottery Fund grant money, told our paper: "This underpass project unearthed complex issues and more than a few twists and turns, yet together with TfL and LBB, we achieved a strong outcome for residents. Our hope is that future resident-led projects capture and use this learning."

Tributes after man's death

Police are investigating following the death of a man in Prospect Ring, N2, on Friday 30 January. Officers were called to the Gracie House block of flats at around 4pm where they found an injured man. He was taken to hospital and later died.



At the time of going to press, a Met Police spokesperson said the investigation was ongoing

but gave no further details and did not release the dead man's name. On the weekend after the incident, floral tributes covered a motorcycle left parked outside the block, pictured left.

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Final chapter: Nalin Shah is giving away sets of children's books as he gets ready to close Galaxy Drug Store. Photo Mike Coles

Goodbye to Galaxy and Nalin

By John Lawrence

For many of his loyal customers and friends it is a day they hoped would never come... but Nalin Shah has taken the decision to close his Galaxy Drug Store in Church Lane, N2, after an amazing 47 years behind the counter.

Nalin and members of his family have opened his treasure trove of a shop six days a week since 1979 selling toiletries, kitchenware, electrical items, children's toys and catering for a lot of the disappearing small services like changing watch batteries.

His customers are his friends and he has time for all of them as they drop in to make a purchase or just have a chat. Which is why it's been difficult for Nalin to decide that now is the time to shut up shop.

"Some customers I've had since the day I opened," he said. "Or I might know their children who still keep in touch. I've enjoyed every day being here and that's always been because of the people. But I'm 77, and now is the time.

"The success of Galaxy would have been impossible without the blessings in work ethics my parents gave me and my siblings, and the support we received from previous owner Martin Beckworth and his parents, retail reps and suppliers and of course our customers and fellow traders."

When Nalin started up in 1979, Galaxy could have been a jewellery store as he had connections in the trade but it quickly changed into a baby products emporium and then the general store that has kept him in business for almost five decades.

"We were the first store in the UK to stock Pampers nappies in 1980," he said. "An American lady came in asking for them so I rang Proctor and Gamble who were just about to launch the brand in the UK and they sent some to me, making me

their first outlet in this country." Before Nalin goes, he wants to help young families again by offering a free set of Ladybird books featuring fairy tales and Beatrix Potter, to any mother who drops in on a first-come, first-served basis.

He expects to bring down the shutters for the final time later in March, 47 years to the month since he first opened. With his new-found spare time, he hopes to refurbish the premises, potentially to make it ready for another shop, and spend more time enjoying his garden.

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When Greenland gave up its military secret

The recently declared interest of the US in bringing Greenland under its control has occupied headlines everywhere. However, readers might be surprised to learn that, more than 70 years ago, the world's largest island was thrust into the news by an incident involving a British aircraft and the revelation of an American secret. Diana Cormack explains.



Frozen north: Members of the British North Greenland Expedition camp on the ice cap. Photo Major D.E.L. Homard

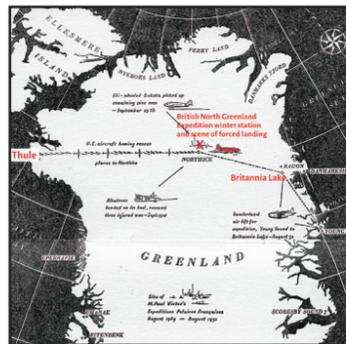
In 1952, my father Flight Sergeant Jack Boyd helped drop supplies from an RAF Hastings aircraft to the British North Greenland Expedition, a scientific mission 700 miles from the North Pole.

Some of these drops necessitated flying at very low levels. Unfortunately, on 16 September, while making this manoeuvre just 50ft off the ground, my father's Hastings hit a 'white out' that prevented the pilot from differentiating between the swirling snowstorm and the glaring icy surface below. The aircraft crashed on the Greenland ice sheet at an altitude of 8,000ft, careering over one and a half miles of treacherous terrain at 120 knots. The 11-man crew scrambled out into a temperature of 30 degrees below zero, lucky to be alive. Three had non-life-threatening injuries, one of whom was a US Air Force officer who had 'come along for the ride'.

Fortunately, the main body of their aircraft had remained intact and the fuselage became their living area. Essential supplies were air-dropped to them by the other Hastings while the world's media asked when and how they might be fully rescued. My dad took on the role of cook, going out early to collect snow which took ages to boil for the morning cuppa. He suffered from frostbite in his fingers for the rest of his life.

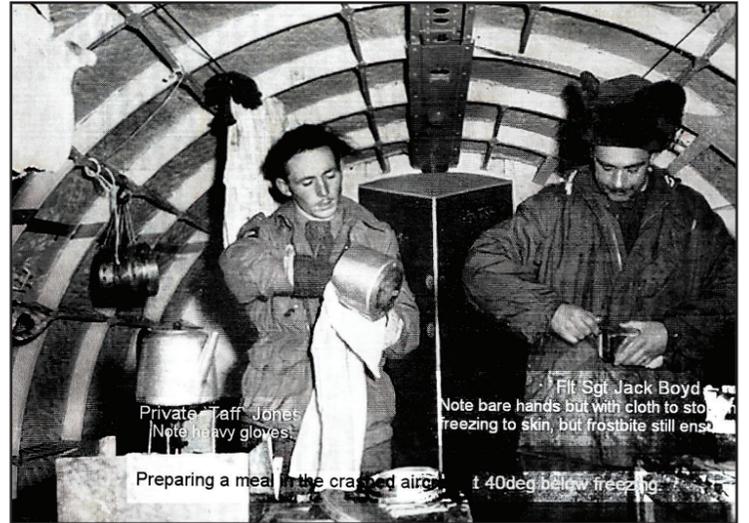
But another question was also being asked by the press: how did a British plane based in Yorkshire and carrying a heavy payload have the capacity to reach Greenland in the first place? Thus it came to light that the RAF had use of a top-secret air base built by the Americans in north-west Greenland at a place called Thule, 400 miles from the crash site. With the Cold War well under way, this was of huge strategic importance, lying as it did midway

between North America and Russia.



The red cross on the map marks the spot where the plane came down in the northern reaches of Greenland with the US base at Thule marked on the left

It was from Thule that the Americans carried out two amazing rescue missions. After seven days, the USAF Air Rescue Squadron brought in an amphibian plane to take the



Diana Cormack's father Flight Sergeant Jack Boyd, right, and Private Taff Jones prepare a meal inside the crashed aircraft. Jack has bare hands in temperatures of minus 40 degrees

three injured men off the ice cap. Two days later, a ski-wheeled Dakota aircraft took the nine others, including my dad. Both of these missions were made possible by Jet Assisted Take-Off being used for the first time at such a height and under such conditions.

as a space base.

Although other bases were built over the years, it appears to be the only one of these still in use, though there seems to be no apparent reason why American troops cannot occupy them again...



Jack Boyd in his crashed aircraft near the North Pole. RAF "Hastings" aircraft Serial No WD492

Two crew members stand close to the Hastings aircraft after its forced landing. Note the tents pitched next to the rear section

Eevie on the march for EEVRA

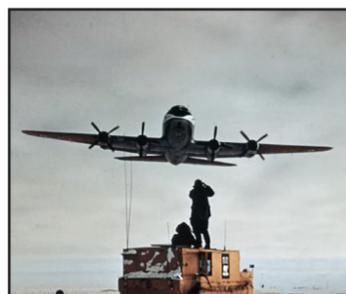
The recently formed East End Village Residents Association or EEVRA (The Archer, January 2026) is inviting people to join its non-political, resident volunteer organisation to strengthen the voice of the community.



Trunk call: EEVRA mascot Eevie hands over a raffle prize

Association mascot Eevie the Elephant has been busy introducing themselves around the area, including handing out prizes from a winter raffle that raised almost £1,600 towards the costs of protecting and improving the pocket park on Manor Park Road.

EEVRA is free to join and open to anyone living in EFC ward to the west of the Northern line and north of Elmshurst Crescent with plans to expand more widely as it becomes more established. Email hello@eevra.org.uk



Lifeline: An aircraft swoops low to drop supplies to the expedition members. Photo Major D.E.L. Homard

To this day, Wikipedia says that Thule Air Base was constructed in secret and the project was made public in September 1952. It does not say why or how! The Americans were not best pleased that their hidden base had been revealed. Building it had begun after a defence treaty agreement with Denmark in 1951, following on from one in 1941.

Thule was later given the Inuit name Pituffik and is now classed

Elemental music

Alyth Choral Society and soprano Emily Phillips will be performing works by Haydn, Bach, Rutter, Purcell and more at their 'Songs of the Elements: Earth' concert on Sunday 29 March at 7pm at NWRs Alyth, Alyth Gardens, NW11 7EN.

Tickets priced £20, free to students and under-18s, are available from www.alythchoralsociety.com

Report a crime

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LOCAL POLICE, LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

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 or 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**

Be a friend of Market Place playground

The Friends of Market Place Playground is five years old and is looking for new committee members to ensure it remains an N2 community space to be proud of in the coming years.

Samantha Haycock, on behalf of the group, said: "We formed in January 2021 to save Market Place Playground from development and campaign for a new green space full of nature, play and community. Together we have achieved that, and more.

"If you are interested in play, arts, nature, improving the local community and making new friends, and have four to eight hours a month to spare, we would love to hear from you. We particularly encourage parents of under-fives and those with an interest in social media to get in touch."

For more details send an email introducing yourself to: friendsofmarketplace@gmail.com



Walk and talk: The current Friends committee members at the Market Place Playground. Image Jonas Stockfleth

An example of the Friends' activities is a new water bottle filling station being installed in the playground at the end of last month. They hope it will be a boon to families during the summer months, as well as helping to reduce plastic waste all year round.

20mph petition

A petition has been started asking Barnet Council to implement a 20mph zone on Fortis Green, N2, from the High Road up to the Haringey border and on the residential roads to the south of Fortis Green.

Organiser John Jo Hammill said Fortis Green and the roads to the south are now an isolated area of 30mph roads, surrounded by areas with a speed limit of 20mph. He said it creates confusion for drivers leaving or entering this 30mph pocket.

The petition states that drivers may think that the nature of Fortis Green as a long straight road and the present 30mph limit means that they can increase their speed safely but this is not the case as Fortis Green is primarily residential with many off-street driveways,

plus it provides the main access for the smaller residential roads to the south, some with limited visibility at junctions.

Collision data suggests six incidents causing injury on this section of Fortis Green during the last 10 years and another six similar incidents on the roads to the south during the same period. This petition runs until Friday 13 March and can be found at <https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/mgEPetitionDisplay.aspx?ID=392>

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Moments of happiness: Young Ukrainian children have fun with soft toys brought to them by Driving Aid to Ukraine

Call to keep the aid to Ukraine moving

By Lynn Winton

It is now four years since former NHS director Michael Byrne watched the shocking TV footage of Russian tanks rolling into Ukraine and made a promise that he would dedicate his considerable experience and energies into organising humanitarian aid transports until there was no more need of his efforts.

On that day the organisation Driving Aid to Ukraine was born. Fellow East Finchley residents read about his story in The Archer and flocked to his house with offers of goods and donations for hospitals, orphanages and the 13 million displaced people. Some also joined him to co-drive the seven-day return journey across Europe taking trucks to the Polish-Ukrainian border.

There is no sign of an end to Ukraine's nightmare and so Michael carries on the Herculean task he set himself, with ever larger articulated lorries, packed with tons of desperately needed diverse items requested by the aid organisations on the ground, which can range from generators, wheelchairs and crutches to baby food, medical kits, warm clothes and heavy duty tools. An astounding 33 trucks into his mission, Michael is busy fundraising for the fuel for lorry number 34. He said: "We have 14 tons of excellent quality donated goods ready to go, but as always we are limited by waiting for cash donations purely to cover fuel costs." "After the first year I decided to out-source the transports to other drivers as it's crucial I am here organising everything else. There is no problem with the sourcing of items, as we are trusted to deliver by major supply partners like the Goods for Good Charity, but how I'm going to raise the money to deliver them is constantly on

my mind." Locally, Michael has a loyal band of volunteers, led by retired teacher Nicola Cousins, who is the main contact in East Finchley for receiving donated goods. Internationally, it's a huge multi team effort. Recently a Ukrainian delegation requested a meeting with Michael and briefed him on

increasing weekly.

His determination and true grit has already kept thousands of people in Ukraine protected. He knows only too well that conditions are utterly dire and whilst the war rages on he will never forget his promise. Lists of goods needed can be found at www.drivingaidtoukraine.org



Volunteers, including charity founder Michael Byrne, pack up another lorry ready to travel

the task ahead of looking after 72,000 seriously injured servicemen and 2,000 orphaned children, with numbers where you will also find a link to a

donating page and contact numbers. Michael's direct no is 07791 912389. Michael and Nicola would also love to hear from other potential volunteers.



brera gardens

- garden design
- maintenance
- hard landscaping
- irrigation systems
- soft landscaping
- East Finchley based
- indoor plants

Mob. 07939 557 934

Tel. 020 8365 3615

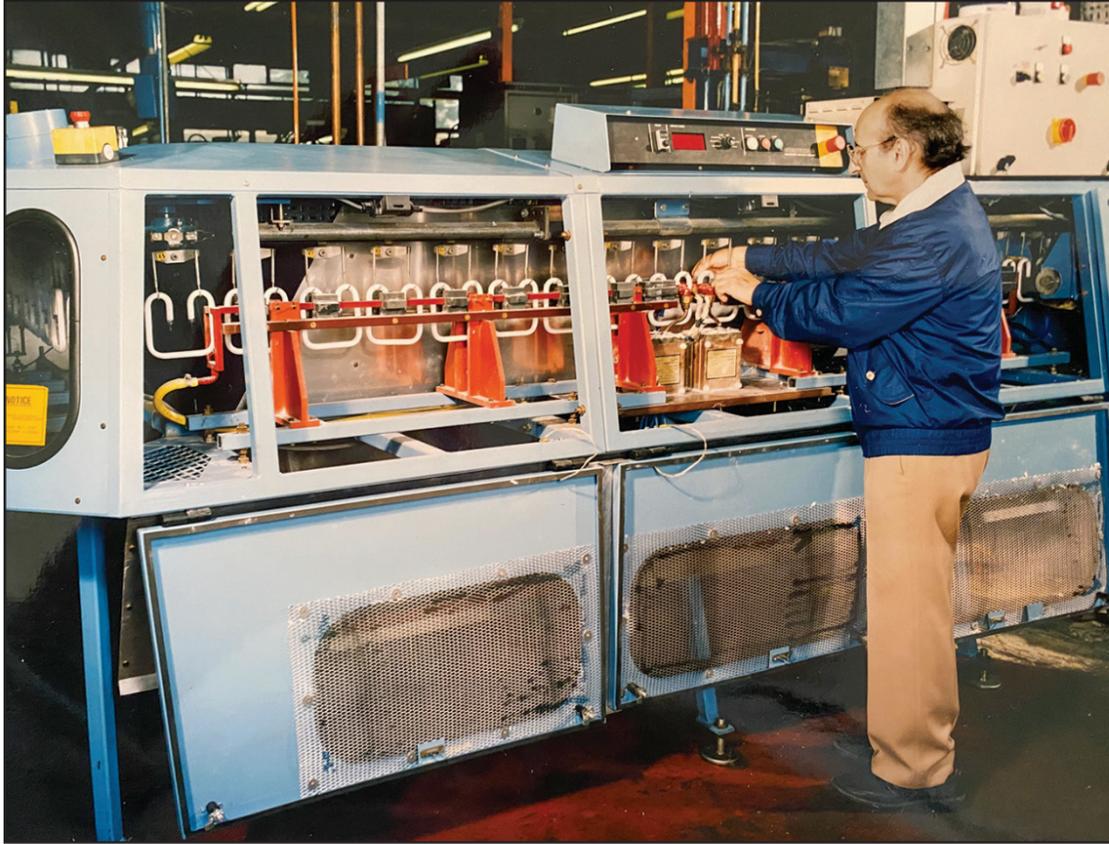
Email: breragardens1@btinternet.com



Inventor of a lighting revolution

By Geoffrey Davies

In what is surely the definition of a lightbulb moment, Basil Antonis woke up at 4am with the idea for a new form of fluorescent lighting that was rapidly recognised as a revolution in its field.



Tube line: Basil Antonis stands at a machine to test and manufacture his revolutionary 2D lightbulb

Basil shared his idea with a colleague at Thorn Lighting in Enfield and together they invented the 2D lightbulb, named from the shape of its lighting tubes.

Being flat and consuming less energy than traditional bulbs, it became a popular

choice for fitting in offices or homes where space was limited and is credited with reducing electricity costs for millions of people worldwide.

His daughter Marianne remembered that, at dinner after a day's work, her father could seem very preoccupied and that it was

the early hours of the morning when the idea the idea for the lightbulb came to him. "But Basil, the long-time resident of Fortis Green Avenue who died in December, never really felt appreciated for his co-invention that was put into production in 1980.

Although he was recognised as the inventor on the patent, he felt he should have been given some financial recognition," says Marianne. "He was a very generous man, and he would have passed the money onto others."

He was a local resident for many years, having moved to Fortis Green Avenue with his wife and two daughters in 1960. Basil was politically active in the anti-apartheid movement in the UK, with several of his relatives in Johannesburg being imprisoned. He was involved with The Movement for a Democracy of Content, a revolutionary group that believed technology made human drudgery unnecessary.

Born in South Africa, Basil Antonis came to London in 1949 and studied physics and maths at London University before working for Thorn Lighting. The company's patent for the 2D lightbulb was granted in March 1980 and production began in the UK but moved to Hungary and later China.

Even at the age of 88 he was still politically active, being part of the Put it to the People campaign in 2019, calling for a second referendum on Brexit. "At work he was very much involved with his colleagues

and defending their rights," says Marianne. Retiring in 1993, he was for several years a consultant to what was then General Electric until 2000 when he devoted himself to caring for his wife, who died in 2019. When he left, colleagues presented him with a mounted 2D bulb, which Marianne admits nearly got thrown in a skip, during house clearance.

"I have never met anyone as modest and unmaterialistic as Basil," says Marianne's husband, the painter Anthony Parké-Antonis. Although a non-believer, Basil was buried at the Jewish Cemetery in Waltham Abbey, along with his corduroy flat cap.



Basil Antonis's daughter Marianne with the gift presented to her father on his retirement. Photo Geoffrey Davies

Drop in for a cuppa chai

An East Finchley business is throwing open its doors for a community event it's calling 'Chai, Chat and Curtains'.



Open door: Pristine is ready to welcome customers

Pristine, in the High Road, N2, is known for its dry-cleaning services but it also offers made-to-measure curtains and blinds, upholstery and wooden shutters, plus fabrics and linings. Owners Krishna and Hema Pattani say they are grateful for years of support from the

community in East Finchley and surrounding areas and the drop-in event is their way of saying thank you face to face.

Customers are welcome to pop in for a cup of chai and a relaxed chat on Saturday 28 and Sunday 29 March between 9am and 6pm.

Careers fair opens doors

Bishop Douglass School in Hamilton Road, N2, hosted its annual Future Pathways Evening last month, welcoming hundreds of students from across the borough to what has become one of the largest careers fairs in Barnet.



The Bishop Douglass careers fair

With more than 65 exhibitors, representing 20 universities and 45 different industries, the event provided students with an opportunity to explore a wide range of academic and professional pathways.

The evening reflects Bishop Douglass' commitment to ensuring that every student is equipped with the knowledge, confidence and ambition to pursue their chosen path. Headteacher Michelle Henderson said: "Future Pathways Evening is about opening doors. We believe every young person has unique gifts and talents and it is our responsibility to help them recognise and develop these."

For further information about the careers fair or the opportunities available at Bishop Douglass, email the school office at schooladmin@bishopdouglass.barnet.sch.uk or follow Bishop Douglass on Instagram @bdfinchley.

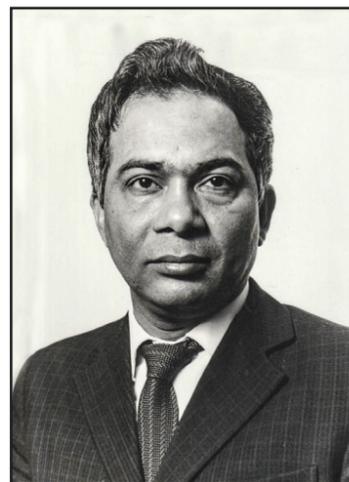
Dearest uncle: Gholam Muhith

Gholam Muhith passed away on 29 January peacefully in bed at his home in Leslie Road, N2. He was 91 and had lived in the same house since 1969.

Originally from Bangladesh, he was a curious, worldly, independent, very knowledgeable and well-informed person. He travelled throughout Europe, the US, Asia and South America and also obtained a pilot's licence at an early age.

In 2002 he mourned the loss of his partner and love of his life Irena Friedman, who also passed away in their home in Leslie Road. He had a younger brother who is currently living in Bangladesh, the father of his niece who was with him in his final hours.

His nephew currently lives in Virginia, USA, with his family including a four-month-old son. Gholam spoke to them via video call which gave him immense joy. While he didn't have any children, he was very caring and generous towards



Independent: Gholam Muhith his siblings and their children. He will be missed as their dearest uncle and not forgotten. An Islamic prayer, Janazah, was held on Wednesday 4 February at North Finchley Mosque and his resting place is in Mill Hill Cemetery.



Generations come together to enjoy songs and smiles

By Gail Norcliffe

When Patsy Bailey was looking online for a weekly activity for her baby granddaughter Arabella her eye was drawn to Songs and Smiles, a music group in Muswell Hill that brings together the generations.



Span the ages: Old and young enjoy each other's company at the Spring Lane Care home in Muswell Hill. Photos courtesy The Together Project

Taking place at Spring Lane Care Home in Fortis Green, it welcomes families to weekly sessions, bringing young children and older residents together to share songs, laughter and moments to brighten everyone's day. Aimed at children aged 0-4 and their parents or carers, these intergenerational music groups were created by UK charity The Together Project.

manager at Spring Lane, said: "The combination of music, babies and shared smiles creates genuine moments of happiness



Years together: A care home resident and a young guest

resident who remembers the words to a song they haven't heard in years." Care home residents light up, reach out and engage with little ones, bringing comfort and a renewed sense of belonging. Robert, activities for our residents, supporting wellbeing, emotional connection and a strong sense of community."

Patsy feels that her granddaughter is gaining much from her participation in Songs and Smiles. "Having been a little reserved to begin with, Arabella now happily interacts with the residents and proudly shows them that she has learned to walk. Attending the sessions has increased my granddaughter's confidence in a very different environment."

For further information contact: songs@thetogetherproject.org.uk



Group fun: The lounge at Spring Lane is the setting for the Songs and Smiles sessions

Five-year milestone for High Road café

By Ali Dezyanian

East Finchley café and patisserie La Gourmandise did not have the easiest start, opening on the High Road in February 2021 just as the pandemic restrictions were affecting all our lives. Which makes it all the more cause for celebration that the business was able to celebrate its fifth anniversary last month.

"Reaching five years feels significant," said owner Riad Archour. "We opened at a very uncertain time, so to still be here is something we really appreciate." Opening during the pandemic brought immediate difficulties. "There were constant changes to regulations, and very little footfall," he said. "It was stressful, but it meant we had to adapt quickly."

The café team marked the anniversary during February with a small celebration for customers. "We wanted to acknowledge the people who supported us, especially in the early days," Riad said. "Without the local community, we wouldn't still be here."

Riad, who has worked in hospitality for more than 30 years, said La Gourmandise was set up as a neighbourhood café rather than a destination venue. "Hospitality is about people," he said. "The aim was always to create a space that locals could use regularly, not just somewhere for passing trade." The French name La Gourmandise was chosen to represent a refined, passionate love for good food, eating for pleasure rather than just sustenance.



Five years of flavour: The team at La Gourmandise. Photo: Mike Coles

The café is known locally for its pastries and coffee, with an emphasis on restrained sweetness.

"We use less sugar in our baking," Riad said. "The idea is to let the flavours speak for themselves rather than relying on sweetness. Over the last year, we have been working to improve our breakfast offering, opening for business as early as 7am."

Like many independent businesses, La Gourmandise has been affected by rising costs. "Ingredients, energy, and rent have all increased,"

Riad said. "It's an ongoing challenge trying to absorb those costs while remaining affordable."

Despite these pressures, local support has continued. "People in East Finchley really do make an effort to support independent businesses," Riad said. "That support has made a real difference and also I cannot emphasise enough how grateful I am to my staff. Their loyalty, commitment and consistent high standards have hugely contributed to our success. Here's to another successful and exciting five years."

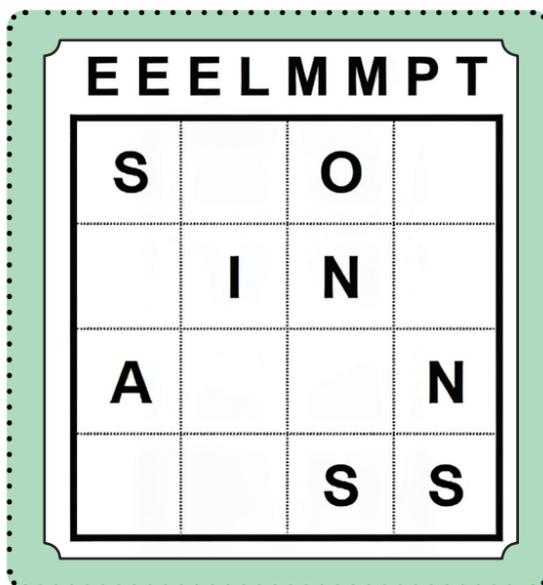
Griddable keeps growing... and a new puzzle for Archer readers

Readers may remember Griddable, the daily online word game created by local residents Stuart Miller and Matt Robinson, which we featured in The Archer last September. Since then, the game has gone from strength to strength, quietly building

In fact the game is now being played regularly in over 20 countries including the US, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and India, alongside several more unexpected destinations like Japan and Indonesia.

Griddable is played on a simple 4x4 grid at griddable.co.uk. Players place letters over 16 rounds to try and make words both left-to-right and top-to-bottom, scoring one point for each letter in each word that they make. As with many good puzzles, it's easy to grasp but hard to master.

Thousands of games are now being played each week and an enthusiastic community of players sharing their scores on social media has developed. The site also has a new feature which enables players to create custom leaderboards and an East Finchley group has been



'perfect' solution. And so the idea for Re:Griddable was born. From this month, this new puzzle will be appearing regularly in The Archer for readers to try. We hope you enjoy it. Matt and Stu would also love any feedback on this or the online Griddable game. You can email them at teamgriddable@griddable.co.uk.

Re:Griddable No1
Place the letters provided to create eight four-letter words — four left-to-right and four top-to-bottom. There may be more than one solution to each Re-Griddable but there is definitely at least one, which comes from a maximum scoring game of Griddable. If you get stuck you may find the official Griddable word-checker helpful at griddable.co.uk/word-checker.

established which anyone can join with the group code (BUJRM4). The most prized achievement in Griddable is a perfect score of 32, made up of eight four-letter words in a single grid. It was those perfect grids that sparked a new idea. By partially removing some of the letters it was possible to create a new puzzle where the challenge is to find the original

Turn to page 11 for this month's solution



Sacred music amid serene beauty of Highgate church

Voxcetera Chamber Choir returns to Highgate this month for a concert featuring Dvořák's popular, moving, grief-inspired Stabat Mater, accompanied by chamber orchestra. His most often performed sacred work, it is a setting of the medieval Latin prayer to the bereaved mother of Christ and was likely inspired by the deaths of three of his own children.



Magnificent: Voxcetera will perform at St Michael's Church in Highgate

The concert will open with Vigil Mass, a playful short setting of the mass by young composer William Petter, who died aged just 34 in 2016.

It takes place at St Michael's Church, South Grove, N6, on Saturday 21 March from 7.30pm. A bar will be open from 7pm. Tickets are available from www.voxcetera.co.uk/performances.

There is wheelchair access to the ground floor of the church where most of the concert seating is situated. Essential companions may attend for free. To arrange this or if you have any special requirements email: enquiry@voxcetera.co.uk

Charity comedy night at Ally Pally

An East Finchley family is running a fundraising campaign in support of the dedicated gastroenterology ward, Squirrel Ward, at Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children, where a loved one is being treated.



Laugh out loud: Comedians Al Murray and Jen Brister are on the line-up for the charity event

Their latest event is a charity comedy night called North London Laughs, being hosted by Avalon at Alexandra Palace Theatre on Thursday 14 May. The line-up features UK comedy stars Al Murray, Jen Brister, Phil Ellis, Hayley Ellis, Huge Davies, Bilal Zafar and Eytan Bayme.

Money raised will help to transform the playrooms on the ward for children and teenagers with serious digestive and gastrointestinal conditions. Children can spend many months and sometimes years

on this ward and unfortunately the play spaces have become increasingly dated.

Dr Ed Gaynor, consultant gastroenterologist at Great Ormond Street Hospital, said: "Our families tell us that when children are feeling unwell, having a dedicated space to play really can make a big difference."

Find out more about the comedy night and book tickets by going to www.alexandrapalace.com and searching 'North London Laughs'

Antonín Dvořák's masterpiece live

North London Chorus, the Meridian Sinfonia and four soloists are performing Antonín Dvořák's Stabat Mater in a concert at St James Church, Muswell Hill, this month.

The Czech composer, perhaps best known for his Symphony

from the New World and his beloved Cello Concerto, completed the epic choral work in 1877 and it is generally considered to be one of the works that led to his international breakthrough.

The concert takes place on Saturday 21 March at 7.30pm. Tickets are available at www.northlondonchorus.org/tickets

Music and literature at the Proms

Booking opens soon for the Proms at St Jude's Music & Literary Festival, which is returning for its 34th year, offering another week of arts and culture events in Hampstead Garden Suburb.

The festival opens with LitFest weekend on Saturday 27 and Sunday 28 June at The Henrietta Barnett School, where leading authors will discuss their latest books. This year's line-up includes Sir Anthony Seldon, Gyles Brandreth, Tracy Borman, Diana Henry and Booker Prize winner Sir Alan Hollinghurst.

The music programme at neighbouring St-Jude-on-the-Hill features Wolf Hall in Concert with composer Debbie Wiseman and actor Anton Lesser, The Purcell School Orchestra, Fidelio Trio, The Van Morrison Alumni Band, superstar violist Timothy Ridout, the Choir of The Queen's College Oxford, and a special jazz evening celebrating the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of American Independence.

Proms at St Jude's continues to raise vital funds for its long-standing charities, Toynbee Hall and North London Hospice, donating £65,000 last year alone. Public booking opens on Monday 6 April at www.promsatstjudes.org.uk.



TV music: Wolf Hall in Concert

What's on at the Phoenix in March

By Zalan Pall, general manager

An historical crime movie, Oscar films, marriage drama, live ballet, opera, theatre and much more await you at the Phoenix in March

Birmingham, 1940. Amidst the chaos of WWII, Tommy Shelby is driven back from a self-imposed exile to face his most destructive reckoning yet. With the future of the family and the country at stake, Tommy must face his own demons, and choose whether to confront his legacy, or burn it to the ground. By order of the Peaky Blinders (Sunday 1 March).

Oscar season is back!!! Our favourite time of year, naturally, and not only because it picks us up from the weather here and drops us in Los Angeles. We're scheduling screenings of the nominated pictures, leading up to the big day (Monday 16 March - set your watches) when we're screening the Best Picture winner.

In Midwinter Break (Friday 20 March), finely calibrated performances from Lesley Manville and Ciarán Hinds anchor this adaptation of Glasgow-based Bernard MacLaverty's novel of the same name, which follows retirees Stella and Gerry on a trip to



Amsterdam at a crunch point in their marriage. Their city break has the potential to become something much more life-changing as the pair reflect on the past, their problems in the present, and consider their future together.

For the lovers of screen arts, we will have RBO Live: Giselle (Tuesday 3 March), Othello (Wednesday 4 and Sunday 8 March), Exhibition on Screen: Turner & Constable (Tuesday 10 March) and Met Opera: Tristan and Isolde (Saturday 21 March).

For more information and to book tickets, visit www.phoenixcinema.co.uk or pop in to see our box office staff in our foyer.

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1984
Sat 7 Mar

OPERA UP CLOSE
GIANNI SCHICCHI
(OR WHERE THERE'S A WILL)
Thu 19 Mar

LEWIS MAJOR TRIPTYCH
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artsdepot, North Finchley, N12 0GA



Letters

Pavement no-go zone

Dear Editor,

On a busy morning in January, I saw this truck parked on the pavement to unload building materials and completely obstructing pedestrian access on the pavement in this part of the High Road, opposite the Tube station.

As a result, parents and children walking to the nearby Monkey Puzzle Nursery were forced to walk for several metres in the road while traffic was passing. I personally had to walk on the street with my two-year-old, which felt unsafe given the volume of passing cars.

When the issue was raised with the builders responsible, they appeared unconcerned and did not take any action. Pavements should be kept clear and safe for children and families. I am concerned about pedestrian safety at this location and whether incidents like this



Blocked: The delivery lorry on the pavement opposite the tube station

are being properly monitored or enforced. I learned afterwards that I should have called the council immediately and will do so next time. I understand that it may be difficult for them to load/unload at that location, but they certainly should not block the pavement during rush hour next to a nursery.

Name and Address supplied

Stolperstein in London

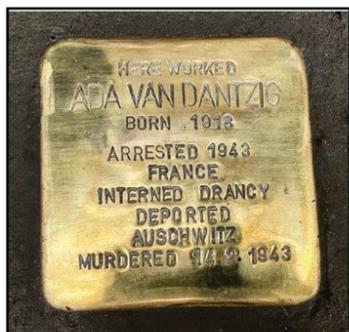
Dear Editor,

Your article about the Stolperstein ('Simple tributes to lives cut short', The Archer, January 2026) was a bizarre coincidence since I had just discovered the only one laid in the UK in Golden Square, Soho, where Ada von Dantzig worked.

According to the Wiener Holocaust Library, Ms van Dantzig, who was Dutch, came to London to learn the craft of painting conservation in the studio of the pre-eminent conservator Helmut Ruhemann.

When Ms van Dantzig learned her family in the Netherlands were at risk, she returned home to aid their escape. However, the escape plan failed and the whole family, apart from one brother, was deported to Auschwitz.

Ms van Dantzig and her parents were killed at the concentration camp on 14 February 1943, two weeks after her sister had been killed. Her brother was killed there two months later.



Golden square: The stolperstein in central London

Nicolas Fenton, Address Supplied

Read the speed

Dear Editor,



Which is it? The confusing speed signs

This is in Vivian Way, N2, leading into Deansway. Is it 30 or 20 miles per hour? Same road but different speed.

Mandana Merali, Address Supplied

Phone frustration

Dear Editor,

The inefficiency of big companies is very frustrating. The latest example is Openreach, who are in the process of converting our telephone landlines to digital.

I was sent an email with a date and time. The date was acceptable but the time was not, so I tried to let them know. A phone number was supplied which was not in operation. I then went online where the only two options given were to either confirm or cancel the appointment.

Emails do not reach them, so I went to their 'Contact' page where a different phone number was given costing a basic £6! This is monstrous for the telephone company to charge so much for their own customers to speak to them. I declined.

Privatisation of basic services is resulting in terrible service and unnecessary expense.

Leak lag

Dear Editor,

Thanks for the recent article on the longstanding leak on Woodside Avenue outside the pumping station ('Water place for a leak to appear', The Archer, February 2026). I first reported this to Thames Water in early 2024. Their roads leak team did visit quite quickly but said they thought it was coming from the pumping station and would need to be handled by a different team.

I'm a governor at St James Primary School which is just to the east of the site so raised it repeatedly. No action was taken until I started a formal complaint in October last year. This seemed to prompt the pumping station team into doing something, which has led to what I hope is a permanent fix.

I've queried why it took almost two years to fix a leak which was plainly visible to anyone using the pavement, and so should have been visible to their pumping station team, who I think should have addressed it far earlier, or if it was very complicated, taken action within the pumping station grounds to divert the leaking water.

Thames Water's approach is that now they have fixed the leak there is no need to review the performance of their pumping station team and examine if other similar issues are present. They have closed my complaint.

I'm minded to take this forward to the Consumer Council for Water and would be happy to include any further information from your readers. All the best and keep up the good work!

John Jo Hammill, Address supplied

The people who do the work tend to be efficient and helpful, but all the owners want is to take our money.

Valerie Jablon, Gurney Drive, 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.

Re:Griddable solution

SLOT, PINE, AMEN, MESS, SPAM, LIME, ONES, TENS.

Alternative solution: STOP, LINE, AMEN, MESS, SLAM, TIME, ONES, PENS

Ask Joy: My boyfriend has a bathroom secret

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.



Email Joy at askjoyatthearcher@gmail.com.

Dear Joy,

Thank you for your lovely and helpful column. Here is my problem I would love your advice on. My boyfriend won't let me see how he brushes his teeth. I am not sure why, as it seems like a small thing to me and he always sees me brushing my teeth. I'm starting to wonder if he's hiding something from me.

I've been patient, waiting until he was ready to share it with me. But nothing happens. I just don't understand why he wouldn't want to show and share this with me, when we are already sharing our bodies and minds. I have tried talking to him about it, but we haven't got closer to me seeing the toothbrushing act.

Am I overthinking this and should I just relax and wait? What would you advise? T

Dear T,

You have said that you already share your 'bodies and minds', so it's interesting that toothbrushing has taken on such significance. Not everyone wants to share their time in the bathroom and perhaps your partner feels this way. You may be happy with him seeing whatever you're doing, and that's fine. But he has made it clear he prefers bathroom time to be solitary.

Perhaps he wants to completely switch off and not interact with anyone at the end of a busy or demanding day. I can hear that for you, though, it has taken on a different meaning: your partner doesn't want to share everything with you and that feels uncomfortable.

You've asked me if you're overthinking this and if, after some reflection, this really is

about your desire to see him brushing his teeth, then my answer is yes. It may, though, be more about a perceived lack of intimacy within your relationship.

This doesn't come from mutual toothbrushing or even from having sex (it's possible to do both without being truly intimate with someone). Intimacy is more about sharing your emotional selves as well as your physical selves, about talking and being present, about allowing yourselves to be vulnerable. If you feel you have already achieved this level of intimacy in your relationship, maybe let the toothbrushing thing go and look for other ways to stay connected.

Useful resources:

• www.psychologytoday.com/gb and type in 'What's Your Intimacy IQ?'



Review: Jack and the Beanstalk Fortismere School, Muswell Hill

By Jessica Holt

Fortismere School's drama department has given us a jolly interpretation of the much-loved fairytale Jack and the Beanstalk. Produced and directed by head of drama Lauren Overs, the pantomime format is an inspired choice, offering many opportunities for audience participation, jokes, puppetry, musical numbers and for teacher Ewan Scott to shine as the Dame.

Lauren told me how important it was to the ethos of the department to be inclusive and to give as many students as possible the opportunity to participate.

She followed the three-cast model with each character played by a different student across the three nights. The plot unfolded via several short

self-contained scenes linked together by a fairy known as Mother Nature and an MC sitting at the piano with the band who supplied the excellent



All singing, all dancing: The energetic cast members of the Fortismere School pantomime were a huge hit with the audience



Going up: The Beanions emerge from the beanstalk to sing one of their songs

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musical accompaniment to the songs.

The show opened with Good Morning, Muswell Hill, a humorous song performed by the full cast gently poking fun at the local community and delighting the audience. The musical numbers contributed enormously to creating a buoyant and energetic mood throughout as well as commenting on the action on stage.

An excellent example of this was the well-choreographed movement and superbly articulated rap song My Shot performed by the trio known as the Giants Sidekicks, which was enthusiastically received by the audience. The panto's script was written jointly by teachers and students with a clear focus on what Lauren calls "the unique Fortismere vibe". The jokes certainly highlighted the locality's ambience!

The set design was beautiful and intricate and was lit with changing colours throughout establishing the scene's place and mood effectively.. The panels either side of the stage were covered in stalks and leaves with the body of the

beanstalk occupying centre stage and providing much laughter from the audience as the beans known as the Beanions emerged at different places on the beanstalk singing their song Dancing Beans. The costumes were an integral part of the colour and vibrancy of the production as well as adding another element of humour. I lost count of how many costumes the Dame wore.

Tribute should be paid to the backstage, front-of-house and technical crews who ensured the smooth execution of the production. And one of the most successful elements of this production was the inclusion of teachers, including headteacher Zoe Judge. Students and staff blended well together on stage. Sometimes it was difficult to tell them apart!

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