

Parking plea

Long-established businesses fear they might have to close unless Barnet Council can be persuaded to drop newly introduced parking charges in front of the parade of shops in Mays Lane.

Coopers of Barnet say trade is down 40 per cent in the two months since the withdrawal of free parking in the service road outside their premises.

Well over 1,500 residents and shoppers have signed a petition organised by Denise Bagge, proprietor of Mays Pets, to protest at the charges.

The Mays Lane shop owners say the council could easily introduce a scheme allowing free parking for 20 or 30 minutes, which would be more than enough time for most customers.

In calling for a re-think, the traders are adding their voice to mounting anger over parking restrictions and charges which have been imposed by the Underhill South CPZ.

Mays Pets shop assistant Sarah Burley said they have been amazed by the response and are appealing to the Chipping Barnet MP Dan Tomlinson to give his support.

"This is just a money-making exercise for Barnet Council.

"Instead of getting tough with Barnet Hospital and forcing the hospital to build a multi-storey car park, shops in Mays Lane are having to suffer just because there isn't enough parking space for hospital staff, patients and visitors."

Assistant Sarah Burley shows off the petition



Call to halt new CPZ

Opposition to Barnet Council's relentless expansion of its controlled parking zones seems to be reaching a tipping point in Underhill where residents, shopkeepers and school staff are combining forces to demand that newly imposed restrictions and parking charges should be lifted, writes Nick Jones.

Two residents' groups, Mays Lane parade of shops and staff and parents at Whitings Hill Primary School hope their call for a re-think will result in the council abandoning the Underhill South CPZ when a six-month consultation ends in June.

They claim the restrictions – which were opposed by 85 per cent of the residents – are unnecessary and have been introduced by the council simply as a way of boosting revenue from parking charges.

Over recent years, a ring of new controlled parking zones has been introduced to streets to the west and south of High Barnet town centre to cope with the constant pressure for parking spaces created by Barnet Hospital's staff, patients and visitors.

The new Underhill South CPZ takes in 16 roads to the north of Mays Lane and roads either side of Chesterfield Road.

But the Quinta Green Residents Association and Underhill Residents' Group say this latest expansion to create the Underhill South zone is a cynical move to increase the council's parking revenue through what has become a "circular tactic of displacement". "What has happened is that pressure for parking spaces is being displaced because of previous extensions to the Barnet Hospital CPZ.

"That displacement is now being used as a justification to introduce the new Underhill South CPZ. But that displacement cannot be used retrospectively to justify yet another extension of the CPZ.

"And we know what the next step will be. Parking is already being displaced further away from the Underhill South zone, and the council will inevitably say that will require yet another CPZ to be imposed on the roads south of Mays Lane where previously there has never been a parking problem."

Underhill South CPZ was introduced for an 18-month experimental period during the week before Christmas sparking a furious response.

Originally, the council proposed the zone should extend to 29 roads but after a groundswell of opposition this was cut back to 16 roads where a council survey had indicated "extremely high levels of parking stress". At a meeting with community leaders, Barnet Hospital said it was implementing a short-term plan to increase the hospital's on-site parking by making use of spare land.

Ideally, the hospital would like to build a multi-deck car park,



Supporters gathered outside the town hall at Hendon last July before a meeting of Barnet Council's planning committee

Barnet Football Club abandons planning appeal

A short list of locations for a new stadium for Barnet Football Club is being considered by supporters of the Bring Barnet Back campaign after discussions with councillors and planners, writes Nick Jones.

In view of what the campaign says is now a “very positive” dialogue, the club has decided not to appeal against the strategic planning committee’s refusal last July to approve an application for a new stadium on Barnet playing fields at Underhill.

Bring Back Barnet campaigners urged the club’s chairman Tony Kleanthous not to challenge the council as they feared it might jeopardise a fresh initiative.

“Constructive conversations” with councillors and planners have succeeded in producing a shared sense of goodwill over the push to secure a move from the club’s existing stadium at The Hive, Harrow, and a return to the town.

A total of 51 alternative sites for a stadium were identified and evaluated and the highest scoring four to five sites will be assessed in greater detail.

They are all in what is described as a “ring of suitable sites” – in an area within High Barnet, New Barnet and East Barnet.

As an indication their good faith in trying to find a site acceptable to the council, the campaigners say they will not publicly identify sites on their short list so as to prevent the long-standing controversy over Barnet FC’s return to the town becoming a political football at the council elections in May.

Bring Barnet Back had been thinking of whether to promote candidates – or a symbolic single candidate – in the May elections to demonstrate the strength of their support but decided against the move so as not to jeopardise the constructive relationship they have with councillors across the political parties.

However, the campaign intends to establish a clear public record of which candidates “clearly articulate” their backing for the principle of the club’s return so that supporters can make “informed decisions”.

The application for a new stadium at Underhill was rejected by the strategic planning committee last July on the grounds that it failed to demonstrate “very special circumstances” for breaching the Green Belt.

Barnet FC’s planning consultants, WSP, and other consultants, advised that the club would have a “very

good opportunity” to appeal on the grounds that the government was now encouraging certain developments within what was deemed “Grey Belt” land.

But the campaign feared an appeal might take 12 to 18 months, with no guarantee of success and even less likelihood of the council agreeing to lease a site on Barnet playing fields.

Conversations over the last few months have indicated that councillors believed the campaign had not been “sufficiently explicit” about why returning to the town was essential for the club.

At stake was the long-term sustainability of the club, given its reliance on continued financial support from the chairman.

The current stadium at the Hive is an hour away from Barnet on public transport and a quarter of the club’s local fans no longer attend, creating an annual deficit for Barnet FC of over £1 million.

“Without a permanent asset – a stadium – in its home town, the club’s long-term future remains structurally insecure.

“We now believe there is a shared understanding with all councillors we have spoken to that this is not a matter of sentiment, but of sustainability.”



Planning & Environment:

Winter Report, by Robin Bishop



Victors at the Planning Committee: Gordon Massey, Simon Kaufman and Nick Saul

Victory in battle, but not yet the war

We can be proud of our success, in collaboration with BRA – jointly fronted ably at the Planning Committee by Simon Kaufman – in getting the **High Barnet Station car park** planning application (for 283 flats) refused by the Council by 8 votes to 1. In my 12 years in this role, I've never before received such a volume of messages thanking us for our efforts.

Four days earlier, the Council refused the **Great North Leisure Park**, Finchley, application (for 1,502 homes). The decisions represent recognition of local concerns about excessive development. Dan Tomlinson MP stayed neutral on High Barnet Station, but his Finchley & Golders Green colleague, Sarah Sackman MP, came out strongly against the Great North towers.

Our victory at High Barnet may be short-lived, however. The case has been 'called in' by the Mayor of London. We await his decision.

A planning application has been submitted to build a mansion on the least ecologically valuable part of **Christchurch Lane spinney**. We'd like to see the spinney conserved and diversified in line with Council policy. (See separate article on its wildlife by Marianne Nix on Page 5).

We've worked with prospective developer Christchurchgrove Ltd to improve aspects of their building and landscape design, and to their credit they've responded – but not by enough. The submitted documents raise many concerns. Most critically, the house is out of keeping with this part of the Monken Hadley Conservation Area; the designs are not to the high environmental standards the site and Barnet's Net Zero aspirations deserve; and there's no effective and enforceable long-term management plan. And except for an additional (but definitely

not 'affordable') home, there's no public benefit. Therefore, we have objected to the application.

Off the High Street, we didn't object to High Barnet Islamic Centre receiving permission for prayer at their existing community centre at **1 Bath Place**. Next door at **Lightfield, 164 High Street** (fka Brake Shear House), Shanly Homes lost their appeal against refusal of replacement of the affordable workspace (for which we fought several years ago) with 9 flats. We await the outcome of an appeal by Wilkinson Chemist against refusal of the modern replacement of their traditional shopfront at **190 High Street**.

In New Barnet, Berkeley Homes have submitted an application for 80 homes up to three storeys high, most with gardens, on the **Albert Road gasworks site**. We supported this welcome contrast with the high-density flats of its neighbouring Victoria Quarter.

Over in the Green Belt, good news has been refusal of an application for 900 homes on **fields between the M25 & Potters Bar**. Bad news has been the government's overriding of Hertsmere's refusal of 10 more **Sky Studios** between Borehamwood and the A1.

Below, Sky Studios North – 10 more between Borehamwood & A1 (Visualisation by UMC Architects)





It's time to badger council into halting plans to build house on wildlife haven

Badgers, bats, mistle thrush and other protected species are in danger of losing their habitat if plans to build a six-bedroom house in High Barnet are approved, writes Marianne Nix.

The picture of the badger was taken on New Year's Day in a small one-acre woodland on Christchurch Lane, in the Monken Hadley Conservation Area. The temporarily named 'Chipping Barnet Woodland' is sandwiched between Old Fold Manor Golf Course and Hadley Green. It is a tranquil pocket of peace on the edge of London.

The planning application is for the 'demolition of an existing garage and erection of a two-storey house with six bedrooms, a swimming pool, and parking

for three cars. To date, more than 2,000 people have signed a petition objecting to the plans.

Even though a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, commissioned by the applicant, did not raise any serious environmental concerns, our research shows otherwise. On first reading, the PEA may sound reasonable - until one visits the site.

When I moved to High Barnet, next to the Woodland three years ago, I put a trail camera in my garden and was delighted to find hedgehogs scuttling about.

I discovered bats in my attic and much to my surprise, my camera video revealed a badger shrouded in mist.

And a badger image snapped by a volunteer last July has become the 'face' of

the campaign on posters widely displayed in High Barnet.

In July 2024, I emailed my opposition to Barnet Council biodiversity officers and others. I included the images I mentioned. I assumed the data would become part of the ecology base line of the area and available to future ecologists via the Council. My hope was that any developer would think twice about building on the land. It was clear to me that the Council's moral duty was to protect the Woodland.

But the local community was getting nowhere trying to convince the Council and our MP Dan Tomlinson of the travesty of selling the Woodland for development.

Last July, a group of us set up Save Chipping Barnet Woodland (SCBW) and one of the first steps was to find out what data ecologists might discover on the wildlife and habitat in the woodland.

With no budget, the campaign group approached GiGL (Greenspace Information Greater London) who provide data to ecologists.

But we were dismayed to discover there were few wildlife records of the site and its surroundings. My bat, hedgehog and badger were not mentioned.

We collected data of our own and sent it to Barnet Council and GiGL as citizen scientists. We used date and time-stamped trail cameras and captured images and video of badger, muntjac deer, woodmouse, foxes and more to prove what a thriving habitat the Woodland was.

If you would like to help our campaign, please visit our website: savechippingbarnetwoodland.org

Robin Marson, RIP, lynch-pin of our local community

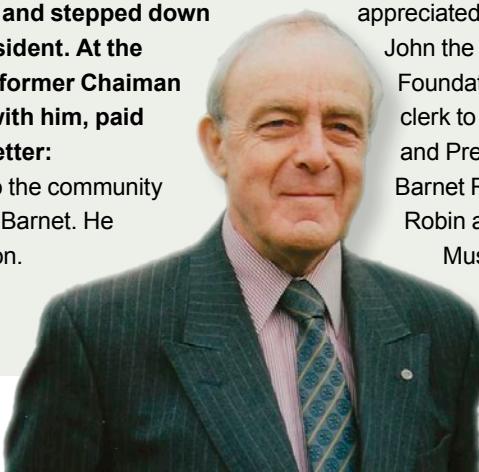
In 2020, Robin Marson moved with his wife, Jasmine, from Barnet to Hertfordshire and stepped down as a Barnet Society Vice President. At the time, our Vice President and former Chairman Jenny Remfry, who worked with him, paid him this tribute in our Newsletter:

"Robin was a great servant to the community and charitable organisations of Barnet. He joined the Barnet Society as Hon. Treasurer in 1995, a post he held for seven years, where

his experience and skills in administration were greatly appreciated. He was already a Church Warden of St

John the Baptist and clerk to the trustees of the Hyde Foundation. After retirement from business he became clerk to the trustees of Thomas Watson Cottage Homes and President, then Hon. Secretary, of Barnet & East Barnet Rotary Club."

Robin and Jasmine remained active members of Barnet Museum until Alzheimer's disease forced him to stop and ultimately to be taken into a care home, where he died on 30 December 2025.





Fancy a walk-on part in celebration of Barnet's inspirational women?

To mark International Women's Day on Sunday 8 March, local historian Dr Susan Skedd will be leading a guided walk to tell the stories of inspirational women from Barnet's past.

The tour – which will be repeated on Friday 13 March – will take in buildings and places associated with notable women who have lived and worked in Chipping Barnet and Monken Hadley.

Susan is updating the walk, which she first devised in 2022, and is keen to include more women whose achievements have been overlooked.

"It would be wonderful to hear from residents about the women they feel deserve to be better known, so that we can tell their stories as part of the walk. As a historian of women's history, I know how hard it can be to trace women's lives in the historical records and so I would be delighted if this walk prompts people to share some new names for us to celebrate here in Barnet," she said.

The founder of the modern hospice movement, Dame Cicely Saunders, the owner of the Barnet Press and co-founder of the Barnet Society, Miss Gwyneth

Cowing, and the landscape architect Dame Sylvia Crowe who worked for Cutbush Nurseries early in her career, are three of the women who will be featured on the walk. Susan will also include new research by a local resident who has uncovered the names of suffrage campaigners who lived locally and not well known.

Susan was inspired to create this walk after discovering that the educationalist and bluestocking writer Hester Chapone (1727-1801) was buried in the churchyard of St Mary the Virgin in Monken Hadley.

During lock-down in March 2021, Katie Morris, Assistant Churchwarden at the church, helped Susan to locate Chapone's grave and to clear it of the moss, earth and grass that had obscured the inscription.

After laying a wreath on her grave, Susan was determined to raise awareness of Hester Chapone and to generate interest in women's history locally.

"As a committee member of the Barnet Society, I am very aware of

The walks begin from Tudor Hall (top) on Wood Street, taking in buildings and places associated with notable women, including Dame Cicely Saunders (above), founder of the modern hospice movement

the huge contribution made to Barnet by our co-founder Gwyneth Cowing and feel it very appropriate that we continue to champion her work alongside that of other brilliant Barnet women."

Susan, who regularly leads walks in London on behalf of English Heritage, looks forward to hearing from anyone with a story to share – please e-mail her at susanskedd@yahoo.co.uk

Starting outside Tudor Hall, Barnet College, the walk will take place twice: firstly at 11am on Sunday 8 March, which is International Women's Day, and secondly at 2pm on Friday 13 March. It lasts an hour and a half and is priced at £10 (adults) and £5 unwaged. All funds raised will help support the work of The Barnet Society.

To book a place on one of the walks, please e-mail: susanskedd@yahoo.co.uk or call 07866 274147.



The Black Horse's owners have been unable to find a new tenant, and has been shut since last September.

Campaigners have been publicising early pictures of the pub. (below)



Black Horse blues

An attempt is being made to safeguard the long-term future of a Barnet landmark, the Black Horse public house, which has been closed to the public since mid-September last year, writes Nick Jones.

Barnet Council is being asked to declare the building an asset of community value which would ensure the community had a chance to buy the property should there be an attempt to sell it for redevelopment.

Star Pubs, which said before Christmas that it hoped to find a new tenant

starting in the New Year, has admitted that the company, which is part of Heineken UK, is still no nearer to saying when the pub might re-open.

"The Black Horse is a much-loved pub, and we are committed to keeping it as such," said Star Pubs in a statement. "We remain keen to re-open it as soon as possible but are unable to provide timings at this stage.

"As soon as we have more information, we will be happy to share it."

The application for an asset of community value order has been

submitted in the name of the Barnet parish church of St John the Baptist on behalf of the community, says Olly Gough.

Olly, who is a Labour candidate for the May elections to Barnet Council, organised a petition to the save pub, which attracted over 3,800 signatures.

<https://www.change.org/p/save-the-black-horse-chipping-barnet-list-it-as-an-asset-of-community-value>

Barnet Council has until late March to make a decision and, if approved, Olly says the ACV order would give the community "a real say in the pub's future and help protect it as a proper local".

Olly has been publicising one of the early pictures of the Black Horse back in the days when a horse drinking trough and lamppost formed an effective mini roundabout at the Ravenscroft Park junction of Wood Street and Stapylton Road.

He says the strength of support for the petition reflects the news coverage which has been given to his campaign by the BBC, London Evening Standard, Barnet Post, Morning Advertiser and the Barnet Society.

Sebright safeguarded

Campaigners have welcomed the sale of the Sebright Arms to a pubs group that has pledged to safeguard its future.

The Sebright is one of three Barnet pubs which the Hertford family-owned brewers McMullen's have sold to Punch Pubs & Co. Two others included in the sale of a total of 30 pubs are the Kings Head in the High Street and the Queens Arms, next to the Everyman cinema.

McMullen's joint managing director Tom McMullen was confident Punch Pubs was committed to supporting the Sebright Arms and other pubs included in the sale.

"Punch Pubs have indicated a willingness to invest £4 million in the 30 pubs ... and to protect their long-term future."

These assurances have been welcomed by the Sebright Arms Community Group, which says Punch Pubs have "responded positively" in recognising "the Sebright's established place at the heart of the local community".

Ken Rowland, a member of the group, has been encouraged by the "proactive engagement" by Punch Pubs.

Because of previous uncertainty about its long-term future, the Sebright was registered with Barnet Council as an asset of community value, a safeguard which continues until 2027.

"The Sebright holds particular significance in Barnet," said



Sebright will host charity night honouring the late Graeme Hall in July

Mr Rowland. "It has long served as a creative and community driven hub, hosting open mic nights, quiz evenings, charity fund raising events and a range of residential-led activities.

"Its role extends well beyond that of a traditional pub, providing a welcoming space where friendships are formed and local talent is supported."

Mr Rowland said Punch Pubs' reassurances were especially significant as the Sebright prepares to host its largest charity event to date on July 11, a celebration of the life and legacy of Graeme Hall, a much-loved regular and key figure in the Barnet music scene.



Brought to book

After yet another move. Barnet's popular free book shop is up and running once again in The Spires

Lead volunteer Jackie O'Brien, above, says it is brilliant being able to offer free books again after having had to close over Christmas and the New Year.

"This is our fourth move within the centre, but our regulars soon get to know where we are, and we know they love coming in and browsing through our stock."

The shop is sharing the unit with another charity, ADDISS, which provides information and counselling on the attention deficit disorder ADHD.

Because of space restrictions, the shop can accept only limited donations at the moment of just a few books.

"Until we get sorted and secure some storage space, we can only accept a carrier bag of books at a time – and not the trolley load that we sometimes get given."

The shop's new location is next to the Barnet Museum display, close to the Coffee Bean café.

The bookshop had to close in mid-December when a new tenant - a cake shop - took over the former vacant EE telephone shop.

Global Education Trust, which operates free book shops across the country, takes advantage of the generosity of landlords and is full of praise for the flexibility shown by The Spires management in allowing the use of empty retail premises on a temporary basis.

Few takers for commercial rental units

Barnet Council is facing another challenge to its policy of encouraging developers to provide space for workrooms and offices in new housing developments close to the town centre.

So far, the council's attempt to ensure that affordable space for employment is either being kept or made available is failing to attract tenants as indicated by the number of "To Let" signs.

The latest challenge revolves around a fresh application to change the use of Highlands House in Bath Place, just off the High Street to provide seven self-contained one-bedroom flats.

Other recent applications to convert unlet commercial space for residential use have been rejected by the council despite complaints from developers that there is no demand for purpose-built employment space.

Another vacant commercial space which has been on the market for some considerable time is on the ground floor of new flats in Moxon Street which were built after the demolition of a car repair business and a former Salvation Army Hall.

Because of the difficulty in attracting interest from potential employers, the council has taken the unprecedented step of intervening to see if a tenant might be found for vacant community space on the ground floor of a new block of flats in Salisbury Road.

Highlands House has been vacant since being used for offices and graphic printing by sign makers RHM Event Graphics who have moved to alternative premises at Borehamwood.

The application to convert the building for residential use reflects what is said to be the continuing lack of demand for commercial space close to the town centre.

Just a few yards away from Highlands House is an empty site which was earmarked for affordable workspace when approval was given to Shanly Homes to provide 40 homes in flats and houses on the new Lightfield estate, just off the High Street.

Lightfield was built on the site of Brake Shear House, which once housed 20 businesses in small factories and workshops with a combined employment floorspace of 4,000 square metres.

When granting permission for the demolition of Brake Shear House and its replacement with the Lightfield housing development, the council stipulated that the site should retain 754 square metres of employment space. Since the completion of the new estate, the developers say there has been no interest in developing the available commercial floor space.

This prompted a fresh application to build a four-storey block, which would have comprised eight flats with a ground floor offering 210 square metres of employment space.

However, after this application was refused, the developers took their case to a planning inquiry, only to find that the inspector backed the council.

In his report, the inspector said there was no evidence the employment space had been advertised at a genuinely competitive price; the developers had not demonstrated satisfactorily that there was no demand; and building additional flats would mean a "significant decrease in the employment potential of the site".

Battle of Barnet search goes on

Plans are being finalised for a fresh attempt to determine the site of the 1471 Battle of Barnet, which has remained unidentified despite previous searches and an extensive archaeological excavation.

A team of metal detectors has already been enlisted, and an experienced drone pilot will carry out aerial investigations to look out for signs of ancient soil disturbance.

Barnet school pupils will be encouraged to take part in a project that the organisers hope will reveal more about the location – and potential burial grounds – after what was one of the most significant battles of the Wars of the Roses.

Preparations for the investigation are being co-ordinated by Brian Carroll, who is author of *The Search for the Battlefield*, and fellow researcher Barry Swain.

They hope to announce more details about the areas they intend to search in the lead-up to the 555th anniversary of the battle on Tuesday 14 April.

After the failure over a decade or more

to locate the site, Brian and Barry have spent countless hours examining the many historical accounts of the battle and have developed new theories about the route taken by the Yorkist army as it left London and headed for Barnet to meet the Lancastrians.

Schools to be approached to see if their pupils would like to take an interest and perhaps participate in the project are in New Barnet close to where the Yorkists might have passed and then returned to London after their victory.

They include the Jewish Community Secondary School, Livingstone Primary School and Cromer Road Primary School.

Metal detecting and drone surveys with ground penetrating radar might be possible on land around the schools.

“What we are hoping to do is look at areas around Barnet which have not been thoroughly probed in the past,” said Brian.

“We think previous searches, such as the most recent archaeological excavation around Kitts End Lane, were probably misplaced.



Brian Carroll and Barry Swain at the Hadley Highstone memorial for the battle

“If, as seems likely, the Lancastrians – who had arrived first – were well entrenched on the high plateau around Monken Hadley then, if we are right, the Yorkists approaching from London might well have approached from the ground below King George’s Fields.”

Brian and Barry are the founder members of the Barnet Tourist Board, which they established to help promote Barnet – and its connections to the Wars of the Roses.

“If we could establish the actual site of the battle then Barnet would change overnight, attracting tourists... from all over the world,” said Barry.“

‘Royals’ in classic parade

Four entries from Barnet Classic Car Club had a prime spot in London’s New Year’s Day parade – gaining praise in the live television coverage on Sky News for adding some royal glamour to the event.

A look-alike King and Queen in the front of Derrick Haggerty’s 1955 Ford Popular were a surprise attraction.

Sky’s commentary team joined in the fun, complimenting the club for parading a wonderful collection of classic and vintage cars:

“We didn’t know the King was going to be here...and the Queen as well...no one told us. But we much appreciate your presence your majesties.”

Derek’s Ford Popular has been in his family since it was purchased in 1973 as a non-runner for £50 – and after £5 and a couple of new king pins it was back on the road.

This was the 40th anniversary of London’s New Year’s Day Parade and despite the freezing weather it was watched by crowds of well over 700,000.

More than 8,000 performers took part in the spectacular procession from Piccadilly to Whitehall treating revellers to marching bands, acrobats and eye-catching floats.

Dancers twirled away in their daffodil costumes and a cavalcade of open-top Mokes made their way through the



West End Barnet Classic Car Club, representing the Borough of Barnet, was invited to participate by the Mayor of Barnet, Councillor Danny Rich. Councillor Tony Vourou co-ordinated the club’s entry to the parade.

The club’s four entries – which had 34th place in the parade – were a 1974 Rover P6 owned and driven by club member Peter Snow; Derrick’s 1955 Ford Popular; a 1952 Morris Minor Convertible owned and driven by club member Paul Reed; and a 1939 Morris Commercial driven by club member Howard Pryor.

Originally built as a utility fire engine, the Morris Commercial was converted in 1947 to an ambulance and was kindly loaned by the Whitewebbs Museum of Transport in Enfield.

And then there were three...

Barnet town centre is to lose one of its four remaining banks – and customers fear another might be going as well.

NatWest is to close its branch at 120 High Street on Monday May 11 this year, one of 32 closures to take effect by 2027.

The closure notice on NatWest's front door says the branch will be closing at 12 noon on May 11.

Customers are advised that the nearest NatWest branch will be at 786 High Road, North Finchley, and that cash withdrawals and deposits into bank accounts can be made at Barnet Post Office.

NatWest closed its Borehamwood branch in 2022 followed by Potters Bar the following year.

Barnet's Santander branch – which was recently refurbished – was feared to be at possible risk because the Borehamwood and Finchley branches both closed last year. However, it is to remain open.

Halifax closed its Barnet branch in 2024, and alterations are being made to the ground floor of the building which is to become a Lemoge health and beauty clinic.

An application has been made to convert the upper floors of the former Halifax building into four self-contained flats.

The loss of Halifax and now NatWest follows in the wake of other closures – HSBC closed in 2021 and the building is now a Gail's Bakery, and the former TSB branch has become a Costa coffee shop.

Barclays is one of Barnet's long-standing banks with its branch on the corner of Salisbury Road and the High Street.



Charlotte Antoniou (left) and Janine Young at the hub's wet-weather shelter

Green Wellbeing Hub puts down roots

Despite the wettest of winters and having to struggle through mud, volunteers completed the planting of a community orchard in former farmland off Mays Lane, Barnet, which has become the home of The Green Wellbeing Hub.

A five-acre site within the Dollis Valley Green Belt was made available to the charity by Barnet Council as a base for outdoor activities to support young people with social, emotional and mental health needs.

Students from secondary schools and alternative education across the borough are among those who take part in activities at the hub and the planting of the orchard was a project which brought together youngsters and families.

Charlotte Antoniou, hub co-ordinator, said apple, mulberry, quince, greengage and fig were among the fruit trees that had been planted after the land had been cleared of blackthorn and undergrowth.

Since moving on to the site in the summer of 2024, Charlotte and fellow co-ordinator Janine Young, have seen through the installation of facilities such as a wet-weather shelter, composting toilet and other features including a log campfire circle for events in the summer.

“The Green Wellbeing Hub is so fortunate to have use of the site which is made up of emerging woodland and tree covered glades,” said Janine who has been working on the project with Charlotte for the last five years.

Support and funding to help establish the hub has been provided by a range of groups including the charity Wild About Our Woods, Young Barnet Foundation and Big Lottery.

Oak trees are well established on much of the site and where areas have been cleared of blackthorn and undergrowth, there have been new plantings of wild cherry, rowan and birch. Many of the saplings were donated by the Woodland Trust.

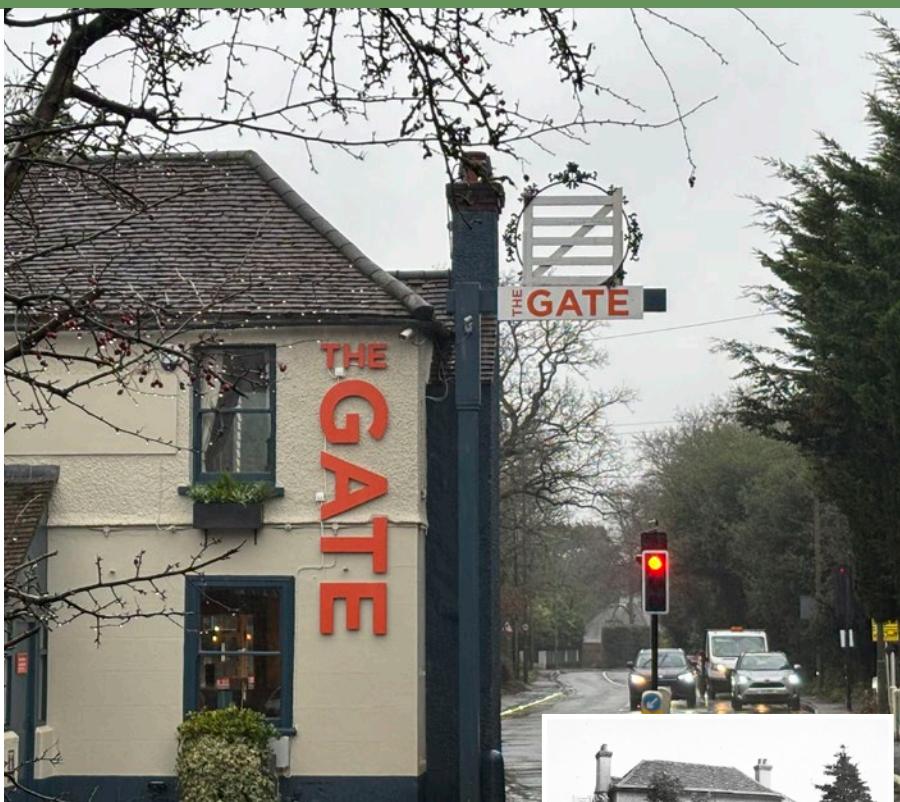
Recent excavations include digging out a pond which it is hoped will add biodiversity to the hub and attract frogs, newts and perhaps dragon flies.

“We are developing what we hope will be a unique nature-based programme using tried and test outdoor therapeutic interventions to support the positive mental health of young people and adults,” said Janine.

“Activities connected with nature and outdoor skills such as cooking and bushcraft help young people build resilience and deal with the challenges they face.”

The hub is close to the Dollis Valley Green Walk – which forms part of the London Loop – and the site can be accessed from either Underhill or Hendon Wood Lane providing an excellent route for summer walks, avoiding traffic on Mays Lane.

For more information, email: thegreenwellbeinghub@gmail.com



Gate is slam shut on historic sign

New signs outside The Gate public house at Arkley have resulted in the disappearance of a much-loved historical pub motto which used to adorn a miniature five-bar gate that has been the inn's trademark for probably a couple of centuries.

Motorists stuck at the traffic lights at the junction of Barnet Road and Hendon Wood Lane – or passengers on the 107 bus – are said to have learned the words off by heart: **THIS GATE HANGS HIGH, AND HINDERS NONE, REFRESH AND PAY AND TRAVEL ON**

The Gate public house is included in Barnet Council's local heritage list as being a landmark of significant architectural interest and the loss of the motto – which was painted on both sides of the miniature gate – has disappointed both residents and passers-by.

When asked by the Barnet Society, The Gate's management said they had no intention of replacing the missing words – the suggestion seemed to be that after a new coat of white paint the mini gate now stands out more clearly and suits the modern, stylish lettering on the side of the wall.

The installation of a small five-bar gate as a sign for the pub dates back to when it was known as The Bell.

It was opened in the mid seventeenth century and was mentioned in a War Office survey of 1756 as being kept by John Williams. A drawing of 1807 shows the inn as a thatched cottage with a porch and a gate alongside, close to the wall.

The gate's purpose was to keep cattle and horses within the common which then stretched to the town of Barnet two miles distant.

Legend has it that when the gate was removed a replica was added to the inn sign.

At the time, the pub was often described as the Bell at the Gate or the Bell and Gate and a picture (dated 1898-1903) from the Barnet Museum photographic collection shows a replica gate above a sign depicting a bell.

The first words of the historical pub motto do differ – instead of "This gate hangs high" it sometimes says, "This gate hangs well."

Replica gates with the motto are often displayed on inns on turnpike toll roads, meaning the gate is well maintained, does not block the traffic and requires a small payment for refreshments before travellers can continue on their journey.

In other cases – as at Arkley – the gate appears above inns on rural roads where a gate was used to keep animals in the owner's land or within a common.

M&S
FOODHALL

M&S on the radar

High Barnet and New Barnet are two of ten districts within the London Borough of Barnet which are on a wish list of potential sites for a new Marks and Spencer food hall.

M&S plans to double its number of stores across the country and has named 197 possible locations within Greater London.

The ten within the Borough of Barnet are Brent Cross Town, Cricklewood, East Finchley, Edgware, Finchley, Golders Green, Hendon, High Barnet, Mill Hill East and New Barnet.

Currently, an M&S food hall at Whetstone is closed while the premises are being upgraded to offer more products and to include a new bakery and coffee counter.

Until it re-opens in the spring, customers are being advised to use M&S food stores in Friern Barnet and Southgate.

In announcing its expansion programme, M&S has identified a wish list of 500 locations across the country and the company's aim over the coming years is to almost double its existing 330 stores to 420 dedicated food shops and 180 mixed stores.

Within the M25, the company says it is targeting sites which benefit from strong public transport links and a steady footfall throughout the week and are capable of delivering an M&S food hall with a trading space of between 6,000 and 18,000 square feet.

Large sites are needed so that the food halls can stock the full range of M&S food, offer wider aisles for bigger shopping trolleys.

Geoff's punching above his weight

A childhood dream about Punch and Judy led on to a lifetime's interest in glove puppets by puppeteer Geoff Barrett, writes Nick Jones.

He can look back on 50 years' entertaining countless generations of local children.

Geoff has always made his own puppets and his Punch and Judy booth has been a regular sight at fêtes, festivals and school events around High Barnet, East Barnet, Potters Bar and farther afield.

Recent ill-health has forced Geoff, who is 77, to take it

easy but he gave a performance at last year's summer party for the residents of Byng Road.

Perhaps the greatest change since Geoff started in the mid-1970s has been a softening in the traditional slapstick violence between Punch and his wife Judy and their baby.

Punch and Judy shows have their roots in the 17th century Italian *commedia dell'arte* and the British tradition has always been considered naughtier, bawdier and funnier than



their continental cousins, but the puppeteers recognise that times have changed.

"Gone are the days when Punch can beat his wife to death or throw the baby out of the window," says Geoff.

"Slapstick is a quick and easy way for Punch to get rid of characters. A quick swipe, and they are gone, but we recognise that violence against women and the mistreatment of children is no longer a cause for amusement, whereas in the past it used to be."

Geoff is a member of the Punch and Judy Fellowship, and puppeteers awarded themselves the title of professor as a way of upstaging other showmen such as the scientists of the 18th and 19th centuries who did magic shows and liked to call themselves doctors.

Geoff started making puppets carved from wood and staged his first show at Goldbeaters School in Burnt Oak around 1975.

The headmaster told him it went down well with the children and from then on Geoff was hooked.

Over the years he has made various kinds of puppet heads. He found traditional wooden heads were too heavy; he tried papier mache and fibre glass but settled on latex which he finds the lightest and most flexible and allowed him to model in his preferred material in clay from which he could make a mould to cast the latex.



Geoff Barrett, above, with two of his home-made star puppets and below in the traditional booth

Join the Barnet Society and help carry on its work

Annual subscriptions for new joiners are £10 for an individual or £15 for a family.

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