

# News of the Mews

SPRING 2008



Kids enjoying a Fairy Crown workshop



## Fairy crowns to help kids go green

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**Barnsbury** children are in for a magical treat at BHA's first Green Fun Day scheduled for Saturday July 12th.

They will be invited to take part in a free Fairy Crown workshop in a giant tent which will be at the centre of the environmentally friendly event.

The youngsters will learn how to make a beautiful crown from willow, fresh hedgerow leaves and wildflowers. They'll also get to take

home a calendar depicting seasonal fairy parties as well as wildflower seeds to grow an everlasting supply of flowers for their crowns.

Other attractions include free organic food, a bike-powered smoothie maker, a bee-keeping and honey making display, face-painters, a bag painting workshop, low energy light bulb give-aways, solar and wind power displays and lots more.

The event is being organised with help from Islington Council's Climate Change Partnership

which is celebrating the first year of its efforts to encourage Islington businesses and organisations to cut their carbon footprint. BHA was the first housing association to sign up to the council's Climate Change Pledge, committing BHA to a 15% cut in carbon emissions by 2010.

"By making our annual fun day green, we will be reducing our carbon emissions as well as showing that caring for the environment is something everyone can take part in and enjoy," said BHA Chief Executive Geoff Lewis.

# Gutsy campaigner fights on

BY JAMIE ELLIOTT

If, like me, you're one of those people who complains about the state of the world, but rarely does anything about it, you should have a chat with BHA's newest resident VAL JONES. She's been campaigning for change for decades, and she hasn't let the onset of Motor Neurone Disease stop her in her tracks.

Val, who recently moved into BHA's newest wheelchair accessible flat, describes herself as an 'environmental and social justice direct activist'.

Has she ever been arrested, I want to know.

"Yes, in the run-up to Blair's war on Iraq. I was demonstrating outside a US military base north of London that was being used for strategic planning of the war," she says.

Val was there with her Samba band, 'The Rhythms of Resistance', drumming up support for the anti-war movement along with scores of other musicians and activists.

"About a hundred of us sat down in a mass act of disobedience and loads of people were arrested. I spent the night in a police cell but it wasn't much fun as they split us all up."

## In the run-up to Blair's war on Iraq. I was demonstrating outside a US military base north of London

Although Val has been involved in more campaigns than she can remember and has worked closely with Friends of the Earth and the Women's Environmental Network, she says it is the 'war on terror' and its consequences she feels most passionately about.

"It really is the idea of 'a war on terror' that has resulted in the war against Iraq and now it looks like Iran or Syria could be next. It's very worrying," she says.



Her campaigning activities have been severely curtailed by the onset of Motor Neurone disease, an incurable progressive illness which means she has to use a wheelchair and now has restricted movement in her hands and arms.

The illness hasn't made her bitter, she says, but it has had a devastating impact.

"I'm no longer an independent person. I don't have the physical control I had before and can't do the things I used to do."

Val especially misses being able to paint – she points to a bold abstract painting of hers which takes pride of place in her living room. Weakness in

her hands now makes holding a brush difficult.

She's not giving up though.

"I recently bought a sketch book and I'm going to start having a go again," she says.

Friends have been very supportive since her diagnosis in 2006, but the reactions of strangers has been more mixed.

"Most people have been incredibly good and want to help – you don't normally come across this side of complete strangers. But sometimes people assume that I'm deaf or they direct questions to my friends and not to me directly," she says.

Val has lost the power of speech and

uses a machine to communicate which either spells out words on a screen as she types or speaks them in an electronic voice.

"This machine can lead to misunderstandings – I prefer it if people ask me questions where I can just nod an answer."

Moving to Morland Mews has been a wrench. Her condition forced Val to leave the flat she loved in Tufnell Park, where she'd lived for 19 years. She still misses it, but is starting to get to know her new neighbours.

"People have introduced themselves or looked in the window and smiled and waved," she says.

Val was especially grateful for good neighbours a few weeks ago when she fell over in her flat and had no way of calling for help.

"It was a nasty moment. I struggled to the door and managed to get into a sitting position to open it and a neighbour found me lying there and got help."

Coping with her disability doesn't mean Val's activism days are over. She is part of a campaign to protect an area of natural beauty in the north west coast of Ireland – her mother was from there.

## "We get a lot of 'greenwash' from some of these big corporations"

"Shell want to extract gas from this part of County Mayo and are running roughshod over local communities who don't want a gas pipeline running under their fields or a massive gas refinery two kilometres from their main water source," she says.

Val is sceptical about the gestures some big companies are making towards the environment – think Marks & Spencer and banning plastic bags. Small concessions some make mask the greater damage they are doing elsewhere.

"We get a lot of 'greenwash' from some of these big corporations," she says.

With campaigners like Val on their case, companies like Shell may well need to watch their step.



Pam Bartlett (centre) with Geoff Bedingfield and Janet Barnes

## Pam goes back to her roots

**IN APRIL, BHA welcomed the first residents to its latest development, Claringbull Court, a former school in Holloway, converted to stunning effect. For one of those residents the move was something of a homecoming, and one with a bitter sweet twist.**

Pam Bartlett, an existing BHA tenant who has moved to Claringbull Court from Morland Mews, first lived in Holloway three decades ago. She, her husband Alfie and their three children moved away from the area in 1975, relocating to BHA's Morland Mews to escape a cramped sub-standard home.

"Our first Holloway house had only two bedrooms, no bathroom and no running hot water. I used to bath the kids once a week by boiling a kettle and then emptying the tin bath into the garden. It was pretty hard," she said.

"The Morland Mews house seemed like a palace compared to where we'd been before – we even had a washing machine."

Pam and Alfie decided to give up their three bedroom Morland Mews home earlier this year, after reading an article in News of the Mews invit-

ing tenants to downsize to a new flat in Claringbull Court to free up larger homes for families in housing need.

"Our kids are all grown up now and we didn't use our third bedroom – it's right a young family who needs the space like we did all those years ago gets a house to live in," she said.

Moreover, when Pam first visited the converted school, it was love at first sight.

"As soon as I saw the outside of the building I thought it was beautiful and I said to BHA's Felicity, 'I'm having one of those, I don't care what they look like inside.'"

Pam wasn't disappointed when she looked around the new flats, and has no regrets about moving.

"The new place feels really big and I was finding the garden in the old house a bit of a struggle now I'm older."

And although Pam hasn't lived in Holloway for 33 years, her connection to the area is as strong as ever.

"I still know more people round here than I did in Barnsbury, so I'm glad to be going back."

Claringbull Court was officially opened on April 17th by Janet Barnes, daughter of Jack Claringbull, the former BHA chairman after whom the development was named, and Geoff Bedingfield, a former pupil at the converted Sacred Heart School.

# Archie's going nowhere fast

In the second of our 'me and my pets' series, JAMIE ELLIOTT meets Archie, a British Bulldog who's no whippet when it comes to fitness, but is loved by his owners, the Bartram family, all the more for it.

When Debbie and Tommy Bartram brought home a ten week old puppy as a Christmas present for their three boys, the youngsters were over the moon.

"They couldn't get enough of Archie and were fighting over who could take him for a walk," says Debbie.

But the honeymoon didn't last long.

"After about six weeks they all lost interest and after that none of them would take him out," she says.

Luckily for Archie – a very British name for a very British dog – dad Tommy was more than willing to step into the breach.

"Tommy had always wanted a British

Bulldog, and out of all of us now, it's Tommy Archie likes the most, probably because he walks him most and spends most time with him," says Debbie.

Now five, Archie isn't the most athletic of hounds, despite a twice daily walk in Barnsbury park.

"They are quite a slothy breed, a bit slow and a bit lazy, so you can exercise them as much or as little as you want," says Debbie.

Debbie tends not to let Archie off the lead much, because he's no A grade student when it comes to obedience – not with her anyway.

"Archie's a lot like the kids, he doesn't do anything he's told when he's with me but does tend to do what

Tommy tells him," she says.

If Archie isn't too fussed about exercise, he is very particular about his sleeping arrangements.

"The first night he was here, he cried and refused to sleep downstairs, so we let him sleep on the bottom part of our bed. After that he wouldn't sleep anywhere else, so he's in with us every night."

British Bulldogs tend to have breathing problems because their very flat faces can make their airways obstructed.

For Debbie this means a double whammy when it comes to lost sleep.

"Archie and Tommy are both heavy snorers," she says. "So I've got Tommy snoring away on one side and Archie on the other, and it does keep me awake."

But Debbie seems as besotted with Archie as the rest

of the family, so it doesn't look like he's going to be evicted from his cosy night-time spot anytime soon.

Who says it's a dog's life.

## AERIAL ANSWERS

BHA wants to find out how well the recently installed communal TV aerial is working. Any interference, receiving all the channels you expect? Call into the BHA office and let BHA know.



Archie with Teddy Bartram

## Shopping vouchers for website testers

BHA is offering a £10 Argos voucher and free refreshments to any BHA tenant who takes part in a one hour website testing workshop.

You don't need to know anything about websites, just look at the new design for the BHA site and tell us what you think of it.

The workshop is at 6.30pm on Weds 21st May at BHA's Holloway Office. Drop in to the Morland Mews office to book your place and get directions.

## BLOCK AND WINDOW CLEANING:

Block cleaning: ○

Window cleaning: ○

	MAY			
MO	5	12	19	26
TU	6	13	20	27
WE	7	14	21	28
TH	1	8	15	22
FR	2	9	16	23
SA	3	10	17	24
SU	4	11	18	25

	JUNE			
MO	30	2	9	16
TU		3	10	17
WE		4	11	18
TH		5	12	19
FR		6	13	20
SA		7	14	21
SU	1	8	15	22

	JULY			
MO	7	14	21	28
TU	1	8	15	22
WE	2	9	16	23
TH	3	10	17	24
FR	4	11	18	25
SA	5	12	19	26
SU	6	13	20	27