



Photo by Tony Roberts

## Hungry for Hungary?

By Diana Cormack

**By the time you read this The Old Europeans will be no more. At the end of June, after fifteen years in business at 106 High Road, John and Elizabeth Kertai are closing their Hungarian restaurant and moving to Bridgewater. However, they are not retiring, but are planning to open another restaurant down in Somerset serving continental style dishes.**

John left Budapest for London after the Hungarian revolution in 1956. He came to the High Road property after one of his sons had been using it as an outlet for his bakery business. With few Hungarian restaurants around, the ambience, décor and, of course, the food, often accompanied by authentic live music, soon

earned The Old Europeans a London-wide reputation, with listings in many a gourmet guide. Unlike some restaurants, the dessert menu was always as strong as the main course, with authentic and delicious Hungarian specialities. The proof of the pudding was in the eating, for eighty per cent of the clientele were

regular customers.

John told *THE ARCHER*, "We'll be sorry to leave East Finchley; it's a friendly place."

He has been a long-term friend to *THE ARCHER*, for he was one of our original advertisers.

*At the time of writing there are plans for a Thai restaurant to open on the premises.*

## Just for the Record

By Diana Cormack

**Passers-by may have been puzzled when the sign above The Bargain Centre at 212 High Road was changed to The Green Party. Rumour has it that when the original sign collapsed, Noel Lynch, who ran a bric-a-brac business in the front part of the premises, just happened to have another one handy! Since taking up his seat as Green Party member on the GLA Noel has given up his shop, so there is due to be yet another sign above it and this time it will say "Alan's Records."**

### Backroom boy

Though he is giving the place a new look Alan Dobrin is no newcomer, for he has been selling records from the back room there for the last nine years. During this time he has built up a wide reputation, having custom-

ers from all over the world, including famous names like Jarvis Cocker, Corner Shop and Bitty Mc Lean. Whatever you like, you should be able to find something amongst Alan's collection of 10,000 records and 3,000 CDs, which date from the 50s to

the present day.

### Words and music

The space he vacated has now been filled with second hand books, the range of which is difficult to describe, though *from literature to witchcraft* has been suggested. These are the responsibility of Gerry Ingram, who has contributed pieces to *THE ARCHER* over the years. Gerry is careful about the books he chooses but you'll have to go and browse to see if his choice is to your taste.

### Alive and kicking

Alan, who originally came to East Finchley for only six weeks, told *THE ARCHER*, "We're here to keep vinyl alive and kicking."

But Alan is also helping to keep the High Road alive by bringing in people to visit his shop.

*The shop is open from Tuesday to Sunday, from 12.00 noon to 6.30pm.*

## How East Finchley Welcomed Ethnic Cuisine

By John Dearing

**If you lived or worked in East Finchley in the 1950s or 1960s you could have eaten out at the Black Bess, Ron's, the Manhattan or the Empire cafés, or fish restaurants, the Enterprise or the Venus (which later became Peter's and is now the Poseidon). These establishments would have served largely traditional English dishes.**

### Eastern and western promise

In 1970, a foretaste of the future came from the Chinese community with the opening of the China Garden restaurant (now the Mandarin) at 152 High Road. East Finchley's first taste of food from the Indian sub-continent came in 1975 when the Shilalipi Indian restaurant opened on the site of what is now Gertie Brownes free house. At about the same time, the Kentucky Fried Chicken chain (who also, arguably, serve ethnic food) opened on the corner of Huntingdon Road and the High Road.

Many readers will no doubt remember with affection the Nicola Stage Tavern, open from 1976 to 1988, which would have been the first introduction to Greek cuisine (and Greek music and dance) for many people.

Surprisingly, given the presence of an Italian community in London from the turn of the last century, it would seem that the first Ital-

ian restaurant in East Finchley (except, perhaps, for the earlier Ferdenzi Cesari café), the Trattoria Casalinga, opened as late as 1975. Later it became the Villa Borgese, moving from 82 High Road to 114 (now Bar XL) in 1988.

### Increasing competition

Competition for the Asian pioneers came in 1981 with the Quality Tandoori, and 1989 with Shanghai Shanghai.

More recently East Finchley has been able to dine at The Old Europeans Hungarian restaurant and the newly opened Mezes Bar (2003).

Mention should also be made of our first ethnic shop. This was the Mahavir Sweet Mart, started in 1972 by the Sheth family, originally from Kenya, which is still going strong. They specialise in Indian sweets and savouries.

Most of the information for this article came from the Post Office and BT directories, so all dates are approximate. The help of the Barnet Archive is gratefully acknowledged.

## Too Sexy for my Pub?

**A karaoke night held on Whit Saturday at The Five Bells public house on East End Road raised £120 for the charity Lupus UK. This is in addition to the £50 raised there at Easter by both adults and children taking part in such events as table football, egg and spoon and sack races.**

Organiser Sippy Azizollah would like to thank Eddie Goodman for his support and encouragement as well as all those who attended and gave their time and money, with a special mention for pub manager Pat O'Shaughnessy. On a bet of £50 before he would perform, nearly £64 was collected to persuade him to sing "I'm too sexy for my shirt." This was over half the amount actually raised, proving perhaps that Pat is too sexy by half!

## OBITUARY

**The Archer is saddened to report the death of NORAH WHITE, who died suddenly on Sunday 22 June after a short illness.**

Norah had lived in East Finchley for 58 years. She was an active lady, always willing to help others, especially the elderly. Norah greatly enjoyed her scrabble, bingo and soap operas. She will be sadly missed by all her friends and family.

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