



One of the cyclists to benefit from the free bike scheme.

Easier travel by bike

A Finchley-based drop-in service has linked up with Jewish youth movement Habonim Dror to provide repaired secondhand bikes to its clients. The drop-in is held monthly at a venue in East Finchley.

For many of New North London Synagogue Destitute Asylum Seeker Drop In's clients, bus fares are prohibitively expensive and some end up walking 15 miles or more across London to get to appointments, access services or visit friends or family. The donated bikes are supplied to give them freedom to travel.

Habonim members run a bike workshop and are repairing and restoring secondhand bikes before supplying them to the asylum seekers along

with lights and locks. A north London firm of cycling-mad immigration solicitors has donated funds to purchase equipment and East Finchley bike shop Bike And Run is selling them helmets at a substantial discount.

Organiser Diane Taylor said: "We hope that the bikes will provide a practical as well as an environmentally sustainable solution to the asylum seekers' transport problems."

Watch a three-minute film about the project at <http://vimeo.com/31754639>

Dominic's theatre troupe blooms

By Diana Cormack

At the end of November a show much praised by critics finished its national run at artsdepot, North Finchley. First performed at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in 2010, *Operation Greenfield* tells the tale of four unlikely teenagers in a Christian rock band and their attempts to win the local village talent competition. Forget *The X Factor* and concentrate on adolescent angst, teenage trials of faith and friendship with an amazing mixture of movement, music and mysticism, devised, written and performed by the Little Bulb Theatre group.

Dominic Conway, who grew up in Bedford Road, is a member of Little Bulb. He became involved in drama while at Martin School and Fortismere and also spent some time at the Finchley Youth Theatre. His first real acting experience as a child came after he stood in for a friend at an audition, gaining a part in a professional production of *Richard III* which also featured Eddie Marsan, currently reprising his role as Inspector Lestrade in Guy Ritchie's *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows*.

Music was important in Dominic's life too and he played guitar with his group at some of our East Finchley community festivals. A then-unknown Amy

Winehouse sang with them there and, in later years, Dominic was able to return the compliment by playing in her backing band. When he went to study drama and theatre studies at the University of Kent, Dominic was delighted to find some fellow students equally interested in music. The Little Bulb Theatre developed from this. Its five members are talented actors, musicians, singers and writers who have jointly created their offbeat award-winning shows.

Following 40 performances this year the group, which has Arts Council support, will set



Local actor Dominic. Photo by Diana Cormack

off on a rural tour in spring 2012. But before that 27-year-old Dominic is making a very special journey to Holland where he will study at the Gypsy Jazz Academy under the famous gypsy jazz guitarist Lollo Meier. Another string to his bow, so to speak!

Bishop Douglass entertains

By Pam Kent

Just before Christmas, over 140 elderly residents of East Finchley enjoyed a lively evening with the students and teachers at Bishop Douglass School.

Most of the residents came from sheltered housing complexes but there were also many individual local people who enjoyed an evening of festive entertainment.

Year 10 pupils had raised over £1,000 to fund the event and many were on hand to ensure that the evening went with a swing. Sixth-formers were in charge of the wine and soft drinks and the teaching staff manned the kitchen.

The choir was in good voice and everyone enjoyed joining in the carol singing. A three-course meal, served by the year 10 pupils, was followed by games of bingo and all went home happy after receiving a gift from Father Christmas.

Biting robber pleads guilty

By Janet Maitland

A 17-year-old boy pleaded guilty at Brent Magistrates Court to biting a 16-year-old boy and stealing his mobile phone. The incident started when the victim was talking to a friend at the Ossulton Way bus stop on East End Road at about 7pm on 18 October.

The attacker approached the boys and started to act aggressively. A bus arrived and the victim's friend jumped on it. The victim ran into Cristal Food at 121 East End Road, followed by the attacker, who grabbed him in a headlock, bit him in the face, threw him to the ground and stole his mobile phone.

When the police arrived they took swabs from the victim's cheek, hoping to trace some of the attacker's saliva. The victim

was later taken to Whittington Hospital where his wound was treated.

On 29 November, police called at a house in the N2 area where the defendant lives with his family. There they identified him from the CCTV images taken in Cristal Food. Laboratory analysis identified a DNA match between his saliva and the swab taken from the victim's cheek.

The defendant was already on bail for another alleged robbery, and although he was given bail on curfew conditions, he breached those and was again arrested. He subsequently pleaded guilty to robbery and was due to be sentenced at a hearing before Brent Magistrates on 5 January. The defendant cannot be named for legal reasons.

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