



East Finchley's first Christmas Festival was a cracker!

By Diana Cormack

"I thought this sort of festival only happened in movies!" is just one of many favourable comments made during the first East Finchley Christmas Festival on Saturday 8 December. Sunny weather added to the pleasure of the people packing the pavements along the High Road, where a variety of stallholders were selling their wares. Some were so successful that they sold out and had to replenish their stock. Local shops and businesses also benefited from the event, which aimed to encourage Christmas shopping here.

There were plenty of activities for all ages. Story-telling for the under-fives in East Finchley Library was enormously popular, as was making decorations for the Christmas tree outside Barracuda, where Father Christmas (fresh from the Santa Fun Run) greeted his many fans. The Turbo Bike Time Trial tested many a would-be Bradley Wiggins while some of the more sedate members of the community tried the Tea Dance. The Phoenix was full for a special screening of *Arthur Christmas*, with plenty of time afterwards for children to be shown over a fire engine by the local fire brigade.

Performing and parading

Prizes for the fancy dress competition were awarded on the festival stage at Viceroy

Parade after the entrants had been piped along the pavement by 393 (Finchley) ATC marching band. Street performers, singers and musicians entertained throughout the day, including local choirs (with an impressive performance by Martin schoolchildren and North London Chorus), East Finchley brass band, rock bands and some super singing by Mari Wilson, a long-time resident of Crouch End. The festival's finale was *The Cabaret of Pottiness* in Finchley Youth Theatre.

It is hard to believe that this brilliant event was organised in only a few weeks by the East Finchley Community Trust and a group of local volunteers. As well as bringing enjoyment to many, it raised £1500 for charity.

Fabulous

Chris Hampson, one of the organisers, said: "What a fabulous day. The library was full of children listening to storytelling in the morning, The Phoenix was full for *Arthur Christmas*, the stage was busy and the performers were all fantastic.

"Father Christmas arrived to a flurry of snow in the grotto next to the Christmas tree at Barracuda, East Finchley Open couldn't help children make decorations quickly enough, the local shops were busy and so were the street stalls.

"You could hear residents saying "This is why we love East Finchley," and visitors saying "What a great place this is!". The organisers would like to thank everyone for their support. Let's all work hard to make next year bigger and better."



Above: The festive scene outside Barracuda cafe.



Sound of the Suburb were one of the bands playing on the music stage. Photo by John Lawrence.



Brass band music entertained the crowds on the High Road. Photo by John Lawrence.

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