



Winter wonderland at second High Road festival

By Diana Cormack

For the second year running, crowds thronged the High Road enjoying the Christmas Festival organised by East Finchley Community Trust and local volunteers. As well as the (separate) French Market, there were over 40 stalls offering an amazing range of things to buy or displaying a variety of activities and interests.



Co-host Pat Leacock gets the kids to join in with the carols. All photographs on this page by Mike Coles



Kids make their own decorations at the East Finchley Open tent.

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Surprise Santa

Two live reindeer corralled next to Budgens attracted admirers for the whole day. Over the road was a surprise Santa in the form of local MP Mike Freer, who made an engaging Father Christmas beside the festival tree outside Barracuda Café. Nearby, East Finchley Open's decoration-making stall proved as popular as ever, as did the entertainment on and around the stage, this year set to great advantage in Lincoln Road.

Things began with a dog show during which the hilarious commentary by joint Masters of Ceremony Chris Hampson and Pat Leacock set the scene for this day of festive fun. Story tellers, singers, musicians and dancers entertained throughout the day there and at other venues, with plenty of audience participation.

For the energetic there was a Santa Fun Run and Turbo Cycling. During the afternoon, the Phoenix had a special screening of Polar Express for youngsters and at East Finchley Methodist Church entertainment was on hand for babies and toddlers. At the Bobath Centre in East End Road, East Finchley Altogether Better provided a range of fun activities along with free health and wellbeing advice.

Children's charities

The festival took place on 7 December, suitably coinciding with Britain's first Small Business Saturday, with local businesses benefiting from the influx of visitors. Many traders contributed to the collection being made for three children's charities: Noah's Ark Children's Hospice, the Children's Air Ambulance and Hearts of Oak, and street collections were made on the day. At the time of writing over £500 had been raised for each charity.

Christmas songs and a snow machine provided an effective finale, with this brilliant day being brought to a close with a moving tribute to Nelson Mandela.

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The reindeer await Santa Claus.



The Air Cadets Wing Singers.



Break Dancing from Innovation Dance.



Santa Claus, aka Mike Freer MP, prepares himself to be introduced by East Finchley Community Trust chairman, Roger Chapman, left.