



"The starling tree" in the High Road.

## The starling tree

By Bugwoman.

Read her blog at [bugwomanlondon.com](http://bugwomanlondon.com)

When my friend mentioned that she called the London plane tree opposite Bedford Road in East Finchley 'the starling tree' I had to investigate. The tree is by far the tallest on this part of the High Road, and it is a permanent hub for the local starling population. There are always a few in residence, chortling and whistling and wheeling around in friendly mini-murmurations. But why, I wondered?

Well, the very height of the tree is likely to be a factor. From up here, the starlings must have a literal 'birds-eye view' of the goings on in all the back gardens along the county roads.

A second factor must be that magnificent unpollarded crown. There is plenty of room for everybody, and if a crow turns up (as one did when I was watching the tree) you can harass him from a safe distance.

Finally, there is the question of location. This plane tree is directly opposite a low-rise

housing estate that was built on the site of a massive bomb explosion in 1940 which demolished everything on either side of the road. Hence, the tree is not crowded by shops or houses, as other nearby trees are, and has plenty of light and room to expand.

The question in my mind is whether the tree actually predates the bomb - plane trees of a similar size in central London date back to Victorian times. If so, it has had a remarkably charmed life.

## Watch out for roofing scam

By Jan Lovell, Safer Neighbourhood Team

A group of men is operating in the Barnet area offering to do roof repairs for a reasonable price but then demanding large amounts of money after the work has been done. They have been seen in East Finchley, are using a white unmarked van and call themselves All Seasons Roofers or similar. They also claim to be from Dyno Rod or water-related companies.

They are reported to be quite pushy: some folk may feel intimidated by them, especially the elderly, so please remind any family, friends or neighbours not to have dealings with door-to-door callers. Fortunately, no one has been duped, but it was

a disturbing experience for at least three residents.

If you know of anyone who is particularly vulnerable and you feel that a visit may help, do contact me, PCSO Jan Lovell, at the Safer Neighbourhood Team on 020 7161 9014 or at East-

Finchley.snt@met.police.uk

### Holiday security

It may seem a little early in the year to think about how to secure your home while you're away on holiday, but it's always worth keeping in with your neighbours so you can watch out for each other's homes when you're away.

In February a burglary was prevented when a neighbour spotted some men in a garden. When they saw her looking it scared them off. When police attended they found a window had been forced open but no one had entered.

The resident is delighted and plans to get to know her neighbour better so they can both watch out for each other.

## Inspiring speaker

Computer games pioneer Demis Hassabis returned to his old school Christ's College Finchley to give an inspiring talk to year 11 students.

Demis is the co-founder and CEO of DeepMind, a neuroscience-inspired artificial intelligence company, acquired by Google in 2014. He is now vice president of engineering at Google DeepMind and leads Google's general AI efforts.

Demis, 39, is a former child chess prodigy, who finished his A-levels at Christ's College two years early before coding the multi-million selling simulation computer game Theme Park aged just 17.

Following graduation from Cambridge University with a



Way ahead: Demis Hassabis

double first in computer science he founded the pioneering videogames company Elixir Studios producing award-winning games for Microsoft and Universal.

## Community honours

Thirty five people and groups were recognised for their community work at the annual Civic Awards at Hendon Town Hall on Tuesday 12 April.

Six of the nominees were judged to have made an outstanding contribution to life in the borough and were presented with a framed vellum.

They were: Janie Knappett, recognised for her long service to Livingstone Primary School in New Barnet and for working with children with autism; Patrick Lyons, who helps the homeless and runs night shelters; Peter Packer, who was

honoured posthumously for his dedication over nearly 30 years to Finchley Memorial Hospital; Dr Christine Riley, recognised for her community work in the Totteridge area; Robert Wright, who has worked for many years as church warden at St John the Apostle in Whetstone; and Lalit M Nagpaul JP, a volunteer with Barnet Citizens Advice Bureaux who has also served 20 years as a magistrate.



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### All Saints' Church, Durham Road, East Finchley Church of England

Sunday masses at 8.00 a.m. and 10.00 a.m.

Weekday masses at 10.00 a.m.

(Coffee served after mass on Sunday and Thursday)

Prayer requests are gladly accepted.

The Parish has a *flourishing* social life.

Contact the Vicar, Fr Christopher Hardy,  
on 020 8883 9315.

All Saints' also has a strong musical tradition and an enthusiastic choir.

Experienced singers are always welcome.

Contact Geoffrey Hanson on 020 8444 9214.

<http://www.allsaints-eastfinchley.org.uk>

## What's happening on the Pasture?

With the warmer weather starting to wake up the soil, there is a busy programme of events planned this spring and summer for Long Lane Pasture, the wildlife haven opposite the fire station on Long Lane.

On Saturday 11 June from 10am to midday go along and see what flora and fauna you can find on Wild Flower and Pollinator Day. There will be booklets and advisors on hand to help you identify your discoveries.

Moth and Dragonfly Morning takes place on Saturday 16 July from 10am to midday. As part of the National Moth Count there will be a moth trap set overnight to identify those caught, after which they will be released. Previous counts have identified more than 100 species. Damsel and dragonflies should also be seen flying, and defending their territory, over the big pond.

Further ahead in August, blackberry picking begins on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> when you are welcome to take your own containers in return for making a donation at the entrance. Then Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> will be Butterfly Morning from 10am to midday.

Most of the events are family friendly so take children along as there are plenty of other things to enjoy learning about. For more information visit our website [www.longlanepasture.org](http://www.longlanepasture.org).