



# Enlightenment at the Jamatkhana

By Daphne Chamberlain

The North London Jamatkhana is the elegant white building set in a beautiful small garden in East End Road, opposite the former Bobath Centre. Why it is not immediately recognisable as an Islamic centre was explained last month at an open afternoon for older people.

We were told that there are many 'islams' (with a small i), as many as there are Muslims. The Shia Ismaili faith began in Arabia, but is now global. Believers follow the guidance of the Aga Khan, a direct descendant of the Prophet Muhammad, who said that in every era one of his descendants will be a guide or messenger. The message will be for all humanity, but must be interpreted locally.

One of the focuses of the present Aga Khan is architecture. He counselled against installing domes or minarets in the main Ismaili centre in Kensington, which can be visited on annual Open House weekends. Instead, it has a world-famous roof garden. It is an example of how Ismailis avoid imposing themselves on an environment. Their maxim in all things is to take from tradition, not replicate it. "Otherwise, we would be fixed in time."

We were shown slides to illustrate how Jamatkhana

built throughout the world since then all look different, but have each taken and reinterpreted traditional principles to adapt to their surroundings. In fact, the name itself is a blend of Arabic and Persian, meaning 'house of the community' or 'place of gathering'.

The visit was this year's Silver Sunday, when there is a particular welcome for seniors in the general community. It included a lively sing-song, gentle yoga, a tasty meal, delicious home-made cake, and a visit to the prayer-room. Very simple, decorated in geometric patterns, all white except for golden light and flowers at the central window, the prayer-room is beautiful and peaceful.

Popping in to say hello, Cllr Arjun Mittra emphasised the importance of getting to know local people, being able to greet them in the street, especially now that Islamophobic crime was rising so sharply. If you do meet your Ismaili neighbour, try "Good day" as "Ya Ali Madad".



Green gang: The No2Plastics team at the East Finchley Festival back in June.

## Can you help in the fight against plastic waste?

By Ruth Anders

Do you have what it takes to join the vibrant leadership team running the local No2Plastics group? One of our number is having to relinquish his duties. David Burgh has been a rock of administrative reliability, and is sad to be leaving the group.

We are also looking for an IT-savvy individual to manage our new website. If you have a little time plus excellent IT or administrative/organisational skills together with a passion for the campaign against single-use plastics in our area, please get in touch.

We'd welcome contact from anyone interested in joining the team by email at no2plastics@gmail.com or ann@xenicollection.com

### Campaign goes on

No2Plastics has achieved many local wins already and campaigning continues apace. Contact with local schools is ongoing, and we are busy recruiting new volunteers as Street Champions. Our Facebook and Instagram groups are publishing fascinating articles and initiating vigorous dialogue.

We are now developing discussions with the shops on

the High Road south of Fortis Green while at the same time refreshing some of the signs in the shop windows north of the junction where they have been on display for a while.

We have developed an embryo website which can go live as soon as we have found a website manager, and we had 20 requests to join our Facebook group on one a single day alone in early October.

### The last straw

Interestingly, one or two shops in the High Road displaying our signs are still issuing single-use bags and straws. How many people genuinely need a straw? Would they not respond better to a message making it clear that straws are no longer being issued?

The media generally is demonstrating a growing interest in stemming the tide of single-use plastics worldwide. An inspiring

article in *The Guardian* (4 October) about the Ocean Cleanup boom developed by the Dutch is just one example.

No2Plastics is playing its small part in this important work. You can find out more on our Facebook and Instagram pages No2PlasticsN2 and by emailing us at no2plastics@gmail.com. We do hope you will join us.

## Sporting best

Garden Suburb Infant School won an award for engaging its young pupils in sport at the 2019 Barnet Partnership for School Sport Awards, held at the artsdepot, North Finchley, in September.

Ariella, a pupil from Akiva School in East End Road, N3, was named female performer of the year.

## RICKY SAVAGE ...

"The voice of social irresponsibility"

### This is your life

Christmas is coming, Harrods have switched the lights on, carols are being dragged screaming and kicking out of cold storage and it's time for the latest rock 'n' roll autobiographies to hit the shelves. And this year ain't no different because we've got Debbie Harry and Elton John telling the half-truth as they remember it for people who probably weren't there.

The big problem with these books is that there is no point in writing your life story when you've released two singles and a download. There's not much point in doing it at the height of your fame. No, you've got to wait until you've run out of music, could do with the cash and your devoted once teenage fans can afford £25 for a nostalgia trip.

Once you've got the ghost writer, the advance and the time before your next farewell tour you have to decide what kind of autobiography it's going to be. Pete Townsend went the trauma route, telling you just how hard it is to be a genius, Keith Richards gave you the lost decade and Slash decided that the only thing to do was tell you just how demented and crazy Guns N' Roses were at their peak. So, what about this year's crop?

First up there's Debbie Harry's tale of being adopted, growing up, moving to New York, forming a band, becoming a smack addict, getting clean and hoping she'd not been forgotten. It's the perfect book for any man who plastered his teenage bedroom walls with Blondie posters and dreamed of a night of something weird with the woman of his dreams. And, in 1978 London was full of them. I know, I was there, helping sneak her out the back door of the Marquee and into a taxi before she got ripped apart by drooling boys.

But maybe the big one is Elton John's big book of tantrums, sex, drugs and flamboyance. No one can drop as many names as Elton because no one has been around as long and no one else has performed at both Versace's and Diana's funerals.

But do I care? Not really, I'd rather dig out the music than spend £25 on something to leave on the coffee table. Besides, if you really want to know what it was like, one book from the 1970s does tell it straight. So search charity shops or go on line and get Ian Hunter's *Diary of a Roll'n'Roll Star*. The rest is just marketing.

  
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