



Final destination: The cyclists reach Amsterdam after less than four days on the road, with the local sheep, below, failing to slow them down for long.

On two wheels, across four countries in four days

By David Melsome

In 2021, at the height of the pandemic, a group of friends from Muswell Hill took to their bikes and raised more than £30,000 to save their local nursery. Spurred on by their success, four of the group, plus one newbie who had only just learnt to ride a bike, went one step further in 2022 and cycled 500km from London to Paris to raise £15,000 for a cervical cancer charity.

Now the local mums have achieved another milestone in the saddle by cycling across four countries in three and a half days, starting in Muswell Hill, riding to Dover, then from Calais in France to Bruges in Belgium, and finishing in Amsterdam in the Netherlands.

This time Helen Style, Lea Helman, Melissa Rockman, Vered Lobel, Naomi Chanim and Sharon Rubin rode in aid of mental health charities Mind and YoungMinds.

Helen said: "One in four adults and one in six children will experience a mental health problem throughout their lives. This means that every family is likely to be impacted. Most people do not find the help they need to help battle these



silent but often debilitating illnesses. This is why we chose Mind and YoungMinds as our charities this year. "We are just a group of local mums trying to raise money for amazing charities. Please help us make a small difference to an incredible cause. Our ride was fully self-funded and all

donations go straight to the charities."

The cyclists thanked Ian and Oben Gray of Northern Heights bike shop in Muswell Hill, who helped them plan the route and gave support along the way. You can donate by searching '4 countries 4 days' at donate.giveasyoulive.com

Oasis of greenery before you go underground

By David Gritten

The average tube station, it's fair to say, is an unremarkable place, somewhere for travellers to wait for a train to arrive and take them to their preferred destination. East Finchley's station has long been rather more interesting.

It's an attractive place in its own right, largely as the result of its dedicated staff having decided to help in upgrading it over several years.

To first-time visitors, the results are immediately apparent. Stroll down either of the station's two busiest platforms (one for northbound trains to Barnet, the other for southbound towards central London) and you cannot fail to notice the gorgeous flowers in large, beautiful pots, many of them coloured deep blue.

Nino's cunning plan

None of this has happened by accident, and many East Finchley tube employees have played their part. Prominent among them is station manager Nino Santos, now a long-time employee who actively encourages plans to beautify his patch.

Currently Nino is working on plans for a tea party at the station, to coincide with Transport for London's annual gardening competition. This year's theme is entitled 'Healthy Plants, Healthy Planet.'

And this enthusiasm is not confined to the station's platforms. In its tall, broad, imposing entrance hall there are several containers of flowers on the shelves, not to mention the ever-popular book exchange. There's also a photo booth and a small convenience store only a few yards away.

Add to this the numerous attractive plants and general greenery outside the station entrance, on the way to the car park, and it's easy to conclude that East Finchley tube is unique. N2 is fortunate to have it.



Platform planters: Nino Santos among the shrubs at the tube station.

Party for pop icon George Michael

By Antonia Schewitz

Singer George Michael was born in 1963 in Church Road, N2, and one of his biggest fans is Sharon McGoey, who organised a summer party at the Cherry Tree Café that she co-manages to celebrate what would have been his 60th birthday.

There was a *Club Tropicana* Ibiza-themed barbecue run by volunteers and everyone was encouraged to dress up their favourite George Michael styles. Money raised from the drinks, food and raffle went to Finchley Foodbank, North London Hospice and Market Place Playground.

Anna Maughan of Finchley Foodbank said: "Celebrating what would have been George Michael's 60th birthday with great Greek food, themed cocktails and of course all his hits, whilst supporting a

local good cause describes our perfect afternoon. Customers of the Cherry Tree Café were very generous. A big Finchley Foodbank thank you to them."

Sharon said the enormous Wham! posters, George gallery and cut out roller skates were donated to by DCS London printers and sold for charity at the end of the night.

The singer, who died in 2016, was an avid supporter of many UK charities such as Macmillan Cancer Support and would no doubt have approved of the extensive charity work at the party.



Club Tropicana: Café co-owner Sharon McGoey, second right, with friends at the George Michael party.