



Sliding tackle: Wingate & Finchley, in blue and white, take on Hastings United last season. Photo Martin Addison

Optimism overcomes The Blues ahead of new season

By Liam Blaney

Wingate & Finchley FC had one of the most successful seasons in their history in 2023/24. The Blues, whose home is in North Finchley, managed a fourth place finish with a tally of 76 points, meaning that they qualified for the Isthmian Premier League play-offs.

Unfortunately the play-offs proved a step too far, with a narrow 1-0 defeat in front of more than 2,000 spectators at Enfield Town, who eventually won in the final and will be promoted into the National League South in 2024/25.

The success of this season has not come overnight and is the culmination of a lot of hard work by the management team, led by club legend and all-time record appearance holder Ahmet Rifat, who took

over during the previous season when the Blues were rooted to the bottom of the table. His first game in charge was a 5-0 victory and there was no looking back as he led the Summers Lane side to safety. The squad that Rifat has assembled during his time in charge is young and exciting, full of talented young players. The Blues will be looking to build on last season's success to push for another top-half finish in 2024/25.

As chairman Aron Sharpe alluded to during the club's end of season awards ceremony, there is a real optimism around the team, demonstrated by a growth in attendance of 34% compared with the previous season, and the involvement of a growing number of young and motivated people. The club is always looking for enthusiastic volunteers – if you'd like to get involved in the club, contact them via www.wingatefinchley.com

Book awards for new Jewish writers and illustrators

Green Bean Books, run by East Finchley resident Michael Leventhal, and The Jewish Literary Foundation have announced the return of the Jewish Children's Book Awards for 2025.

Now in their fourth year, the awards recognise exciting and previously unpublished new work by Jewish writers and illustrators living in the UK and Europe.

One author and one illustrator will each receive a separate £1,000 prize and their winning entries will be considered for publication by Green Bean Books. The winner of the writing prize in 2024 was Julie Form from Germany for *Moses the Matzah Sparrow*. The winner

of the illustration prize was Ukrainian-born designer and illustrator Julia Krasovitsky.

"The awards can be an amaz-



Winner: Illustrations by Julia Krasovitsky were honoured in last year's awards

ing springboard for previously unpublished writers and illus-

trators," said Michael. "Each year it is wonderful to see how Jewish themes are explored in fresh hands and I can't wait to see the new entries."

Fellow judge and magazine editor Rebecca Taylor added that the awards embrace diversity in Jewish writing. "If you have a great story with beautiful illustrations there's no reason why its protagonists shouldn't be from any kind of background. The book awards have shown that this is absolutely possible and are hopefully heralding a new era for Jewish children's stories."

Full submission criteria for the awards can be found at greenbeanbooks.com/JCBA2025. Submissions close on Monday 28 October.

Heaven for our busy pollinators

By David Melsome

The residents of Leopold Road, N2, have been praised as Buzzy Street Champions after adding hundreds of bee and pollinator-friendly plants to their gardens and window boxes. The Finchley Pollinator Project made them winners after 16 households added almost 500 plants.

This is the first year of the competition, which aims to increase biodiversity across Finchley through providing habitats and food sources for bees, butterflies, hoverflies, moths and other life-sustaining pollinators. Overall, 1,400 plants were added in gardens across the area.

Run and water

Running group GoodGym Barnet are contributing in their

own way by planting part of the grassland in Manor Cottages Approach, N2, with pollinator-friendly plants. They are inviting the whole community to help them thrive by watering them through the summer. Take along your own bucket or watering can and the nearby Spanners with Manners garage on Long Lane, N2, will let you fill them up from their tap. They also have a watering can to lend.



Fresh produce: The new East Finchley farmers market draws customers on its first day. Photo Mike Coles

Farmers in the city

Sales were buzzing at the new weekly East Finchley Farmers' Market on the forecourt of the Hexagon showroom, Great North Road, on its first outing on Sunday 16 June, and a sunny day helped to keep business lively.

The variety of stalls ticked every box with fruit and veg, free range eggs, meat, fish, bread, cheese and fruit juices. A number of ready-made food outlets were selling slow-cooked beef, salads, wraps, dumplings, quiches and pies. Coffee was available from Hexagon together with a popular outside seating area.

Several considered the market a great addition to East Finchley's food offerings. One visitor commented to *The Archer* that the market seemed expensive. However, it is widely acknowledged that contribu-

tors to most farmers' markets charge more for their produce than supermarkets, as goods are likely to be more ethically sourced.

These providers drive from as far afield as the Isle of Wight (tomatoes), Somerset (White Lake Cheese and Bagnell Farm), Warwickshire (Galileo Farm) and Cambridge (North Sea Seafood Ltd, who work with a small fleet of boats in Wells on the North Norfolk coast). Bagnell Farm offered to bring pork chops with rinds next week for a shopper who made a special request.

Summer at the U3A

Are you retired or semi-retired and looking for some new activities to get involved in? During July and August, North London U3A is again opening up their programme of activities to people who would like to give the organisation a try. Their Summer Programme includes a wide variety of events, from walks to wine tasting, and there are no upper or lower age limits.

Organiser Michael Lewin said: "As a member of NLU3A we can introduce you to new skills and subjects or perhaps even persuade you to share your own specialist skills and interests. Why not come along and sample the experience?"

North London U3A holds meetings in Finchley, Highgate, Muswell Hill and provides

opportunities throughout the year to meet new people through talks, interest group meetings and local events. Some events go further afield, ranging from walking tours of the City of London and Richmond to visits to the Museum of Brands in Notting Hill and the William Morris Gallery in Walthamstow. Find out more at www.nlu3a.org.uk