



Night work: Resurfacing machinery and crews move up the High Road after evening rush hour. Photo Mike Coles

## Smoother journeys after hole ridden High Road resurfacing

This was the scene overnight early last month as heavy machinery began resurfacing a long section of the High Road that was riddled with hazardous potholes. Drivers had complained for months that they were being forced to swerve violently to avoid hitting the deepest holes.

So poor was the condition of the heavily-used stretch approaching the North Circular that complete resurfacing was considered the only option. Work took place in February. According to analysis by Smart-Survey released last month,

Barnet was the worst borough in the country for potholes. In January it had 4,656 holes in its roads and a 'fix rate' of just 32.6%. Barnet Council said the borough had one of the largest road networks in London and among the highest volume of

vehicle movements in a day. It claimed the most urgent potholes were fixed within 24 hours and all other between seven and 28 days. You can report a pothole hazard by going to [barnet.gov.uk](http://barnet.gov.uk) and searching 'Potholes'.

## Shop raids and cluttered pavements

By Frank Edwards

*Greengrocers' displays in the way, smash and grabs on the High Road, a spectacular visitor and a choice of entertainment. This is some of the news from East Finchley 100 years ago, as revealed in newspaper archives.*

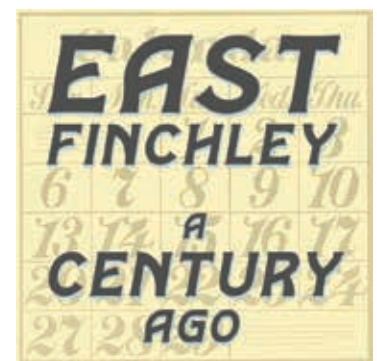
In January 1924 Mr and Mrs Alexander, greengrocers at 26 High Road, just south of Baronsmere Road, were summonsed for obstructing the pavement with a fruit bin. They had heavy rents, rates and taxes to pay, they told magistrates, and the practice of displaying produce for sale on the street was "winked at all over London." In a novel further defence, they argued they could not obstruct the High Road because East Finchley was a "very deserted place." The magistrates were unimpressed and fined them 10s. They were undeterred and three weeks later were fined again.

### Jeweller's raid

Next door, at 28 High Road, one night in March, someone threw a brick through the window of George Freeman's jewellers and stole rings and necklaces worth £4. That same night police officers saw Arthur Johnson outside a jewellers in the Archway Road. Noticing the window was broken, Arthur's leg was bleeding and his pockets bulging, they detained him. "You have got me fair," said Arthur. He confessed to putting his foot through the glass

and taking two watches before adding "I have just done another job about a mile and half down the road."

Admitting responsibility for the East Finchley burglary improved the rate of solved crimes but may not have helped Arthur, an unemployed miner of No Fixed Abode, recently



released from prison. In April, at the Middlesex Sessions, he was sentenced to 10 months hard labour. George Freeman's problems also continued. Persons unknown broke his shop window twice more and stole items worth over £20.

### What a spectacle!

Meanwhile, more people in East Finchley started wearing glasses, well probably. In February 1924 "London's

foremost scientific expert in eyesight testing", a Mr Salmonson, set up in the Wesleyan Church Parlour on the corner of Park Road and the High Road, offering free eye tests and, if "absolutely necessary", lenses and frames at a "nominal price". Unsurprisingly, Mr Salmonson was a spectacles fan. If properly fitted, they "work wonders," he promised and even "tend to gradually strengthen the vision." Confessing alarm at the "numerous cases in East Finchley" of neglected eyesight he was "persuaded" to extend his stay to three weeks, before moving to Hendon and other London venues. He was a "pop-up" optician, long before that term was first coined.

### Evening entertainment

Finally, in the early months of 1924, residents, when not acquiring glasses, could attend Holy Trinity Hall in Church Lane for a Dance and Whist Drive, sing with the East Finchley Choral Society at the Baptist Church in Creighton Avenue or even go to North Road schools (now Martin School) for a lecture on 'Textile Fibres and How they are Dyed'.

## Children's Laureate enlists young testers

By Mike Coles

**Joseph Coelho, the Children's Laureate, visited Martin Primary School in January to seek help in testing a new play kit he is developing.**

His *Poetry Play Kit* contains 25 games that encourage youngsters to write all kinds of poems from acrostics to haikus, and give them a chance to play poetry consequences and rhyming dominoes.

for organising his visit.

*The Poetry Play Kit* by Joseph Coelho will be available in September. The Children's Laureate role was the brainchild of Ted Hughes and Michael

Since Sarah Batten, from publisher Kaddo, grew up in East Finchley she arranged with Martin Primary to get the school's pupils involved.

Joseph spent the day working with years four and five and their feedback was invaluable to him and Kaddo

in making final changes to the kit. He thanked the children for their time, energy and enthusiasm, and teacher Tracey Hills

Morpurgo, and promotes the importance of children's literature, reading, creativity and storytelling.



Test kit: Children's laureate Joseph Coelho at Martin Primary School

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