



First-ever winter outing for Race the Neighbours

By David Melsome

The popular 10km Race the Neighbours, following a route between East Finchley and Muswell Hill, is to be held in the winter for the first time. Entry is already open for the event taking place on Sunday 26 January 2025.

The additional date is a significant step up for the race, which has been held in June or July since 2016. It was close to being cancelled this year when the event's volunteer organisers had to pull out but was put back on the starting blocks when the North London Hospice offered to take over.

The hospice team said the summer race was a huge success, with 500 amateur athletes

to run for their area: N2 East Finchley, N10 Muswell Hill, N6 Highgate, and N22 Ally Pally & Wood Green, with the best-performing postcode being awarded the Cherry Tree Cup. Or anyone from outside the area can take part for the fun of it. Registration costs £20 (+£2 booking fee) plus a minimum sponsorship of £30 or £32.50 (+£2 booking fee) to enter without sponsorship. Event proceeds



Hot and cold: The new winter version of Race the Neighbours may call for warmer running gear than the summer outing. Photo Mike Coles

raising more than £22,000 for the charity and many of them requesting more chances to run. "Starting and finishing at Cherry Tree Wood, the ethos and spirit of the event will remain the same, but with a small route adjustment to ensure safety in the winter conditions," said the new organisers. "It will be a great opportunity to train for any upcoming spring or summer races. You'll be able to enjoy a great run with a dash of friendly neighbourhood rivalry – just with a crisper, cooler backdrop."

Sign up now

Participants can choose

Weekend of art

The East Finchley Open Artists group is holding its Winter Fair at All Saints Church, Durham Road, N2, on Saturday 23 November from 11am to 7pm and on Sunday 24 November from 11.30am to 5pm.

There will be a raffle and plenty of handmade gifts by local artists working with glass, jewellery, textiles, ceramics, wall art, photography and greetings cards, along with a café serving healthy refreshments and mulled wine. The event supports the group's charity of the year, Destitute Asylum Seekers.

will help the hospice to provide care for more than 3,500 patients with life-limiting illnesses every year, whilst also providing support for their families, friends and carers.

Places are strictly limited to 500 entries, so runners are being encouraged to register soon to secure a spot. Entries close at midday on Friday 24 January 2025. For more information and to sign up find the 'Support Us' options at <https://northlondonhospice.org>

Art fair

Highgate Art Fair is taking place on the weekend of 8-10 November at Highgate Primary School on North Hill, Highgate, showcasing the work of more than 30 established and emerging artists in the creative community.

Alongside the main exhibition in the school's Victorian hall, there will be a collection of children's art, community workshops sponsored by Cass Art, installations and a bar selling a selection of refreshments over the weekend.

All proceeds from the Highgate Art Fair digital auction will go to the school to support its commitment to excellence in the arts. Find out more about times and tickets at www.highgateartfair.co.uk



Neighbourly network: People living in Bancroft Avenue say their WhatsApp group has brought them closer together. Photo Amaya Shankardass

WhatsApp opens up avenue

Neighbours have arguably never been more connected than they are today, thanks to the proliferation of street WhatsApp groups, like the one in Bancroft Avenue, N2. Amaya Shankardass finds out why it is flourishing.

In an increasingly digital world, we are often cautioned on the dangers of social media and the importance of prioritising real-life interactions with our fellow humans. However, as the residents of Bancroft Avenue have proved, both digital and physical can be brought together.

"I've been living here for 42 years and neighbours have never been so helpful and supporting of each other as now," said Yoya Karageorgis. "That's mostly due to our street's WhatsApp group."

Hours of research have been saved by a simple handyman recommendation. "Through this technology we can harness not just a single lifetime but hundreds upon hundreds of collective years of knowledge and life experience," said Kerry Karageorgis, emphasising the supremacy of human collaboration over artificial intelligence or AI.

The group was especially valued during the pandemic; whether it was buying supplies for the elderly, or sending uplifting photos of rainbows, sunsets, or the first goldfinch spotted that season, the WhatsApp members cultivated a community that thrived on impromptu chats and clinking wine glasses over garden fences.

Young entrepreneurs

Nearly five years on from lockdown and the group chat has only flourished, becoming a platform for young Bancroft Avenue entrepreneurs to sell homemade brownies or offer babysitting and gardening work.

"We couldn't have asked for better neighbours to help us transition from overseas," said Shefali Mukul, one of many to experience the comforting flood of welcome messages when moving in.

For those desiring fewer notifications, a separate 'emergency' chat handles matters ranging from suspicious vehicles lingering on the road, to rescuing children stuck in bathrooms while their parents are on holiday.

Although perhaps the chat can be too vigilant. Like a scene from a spy movie, residents rallied together to shadow someone 'suspiciously' pacing the street... who was in fact a friend waiting for a resident to return home.

Safer

"I definitely feel safer knowing we're just a message away from support," said Tulika Byce, who first proposed the idea of a group

chat by posting letters through mailboxes.

The chat has also increased awareness and mutual celebration of religious festivals and other traditions. For Halloween, Rita Shankardass used the WhatsApp group to coordinate neighbours, creating a trail of decorated houses for children to trick-or-treat safely and independently.

Overall, the Bancroft residents highly recommend establishing a group chat. Perhaps it is through streets and platforms like these that London will become a safer, happier city.

How are you connecting with your neighbours? Tell us your stories by emailing news@the-archer.co.uk


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