



Headteacher wins gold for innovation

By Anna Hindmarsh

Archer Academy headteacher Lucy Harrison has received the Pearson Headteacher of the Year Gold Award in recognition of her innovative leadership at the East Finchley secondary school and her dedication to the community.

Referred to as the 'Oscars' of teaching, the Pearson awards recognise teachers who have a passion for supporting their student and staff communities.

At the Archer Academy, Ms Harrison has pioneered several transformative decisions. She said it is "very special" to be credited for decisions such as the smartphone ban and restructuring the school day to optimise productivity.

Ten years ago, Ms Harrison introduced a policy to ban smartphones on campus. At a time when social media and WhatsApp were relatively new, the move sparked debate.

Ms Harrison said: "It's been fascinating how much focus there has been on the smartphone ban... I think that

winning the award has further spotlighted the importance of young people not having smartphones in school." The decision was a response to emerging problems, such as filming in class and sharing photos taken in school online. She noticed that "[having phones] was really distracting from school and from the friendships that the young people had with each other."

Now, Archer students are in a "protected bubble", said Ms Harrison, "we don't realise what challenges [having a smartphone] can cause for young people in school, other than my experience of talking to other headteachers, where they say at lunchtime nobody speaks to anybody, because they're all

on their phones."

Having been at the school since before its opening in 2013, Ms Harrison was initially drawn to its values and wanted to contribute to the community where she lived.

The rewards of being part of a new school's journey have kept her at the Archer Academy ever since. She said: "I don't think there are many points in your career as a teacher that you get the chance to join something from the beginning, and that was exciting. I will always see it as my greatest privilege."

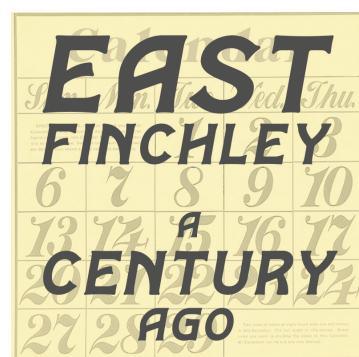
Her leadership philosophy revolves around a belief in "joy" and now, with this prestigious award, Ms Harrison hopes to continue to innovate in the education sector.



Award winner: Archer Academy headteacher Lucy Harrison

Highway piracy and passenger perils in early days for buses

By Frank Edwards



This is some of the news from East Finchley, 100 years ago, as revealed in newspaper archives.

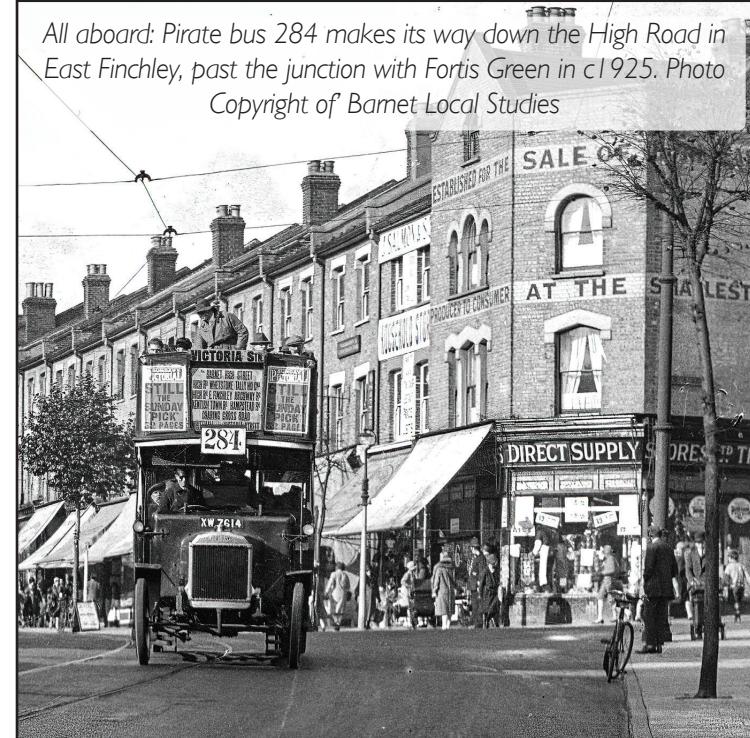
It's all buses this month. In the 1920s, rapidly expanding bus services were gradually displacing older tram networks. The General Omnibus Company (GOC) provided most of the timetabled services in London. However, other operators, often with just a few vehicles, also jostled for fares. These companies were sometimes unscrupulous in pursuit of business, often clashing with each other and the GOC. The press dubbed them pirates.

Hold on tight

Travelling on a pirate bus in East Finchley 100 years ago was risky. One bus, motoring at top speed, burst into flames in the High Road. "Fiery tongues caused by ignited petrol enveloped the engine and licked around the bonnet," reported a lyrical Finchley Press. The driver turned off the petrol (good idea), halted the bus and extinguished the fire.

A second, gathering speed downhill from Church Lane towards Islington and St Pancras Cemetery, lost its steering. Fortunately, the brakes still worked and the driver brought it to a standstill before any collision occurred.

Other pirate buses in East Finchley were not so lucky. One struck a dairy van. The van's horse bolted, leaving a 100-yard milky trail. A second ran into a GOC bus, ripping off its side. A third, admittedly in foggy and icy weather, skidded a full circle and hit a lorry. As the shaken passengers drew breath, a GOC bus ploughed into the pirate from behind and a second lorry, advancing from the opposite direction, did a bit more damage at the front.



Typical really, you wait ages for a bus story, then several come along at once. And, given the risk of fire, collision and rivalrous drivers that they reveal, you might think that residents, 100 years ago, were wary of bus travel. But a correspondent to the Finchley Press, picking up on complaints that a bus failed to stop in East Finchley during a snowstorm, rose to its defence.

Bus travel is much better than tram travel, they claimed. It's more reliable and passengers alight at the kerb rather than in the middle of the road. Let us all patronise buses, the correspondent concluded, and be thankful they are here.

Perhaps try to remember that when next waiting for a 263.

NO
ORDINARY
ART FAIR
FRESH: ART FAIR
ALEXANDRA PALACE
30 JANUARY to 1 FEBRUARY 2026



Fresh: Art Fair is back with more galleries, more artists, and more to discover.

From emerging talent to iconic names, buy original art you'll love. Plus enjoy artist demos, free workshops, and licensed cafés.

Book tickets at freshartfair.net