



Civil servant was victim of gang attack, court is told

By Danny Shaw

One of the brothers accused of the long unsolved murder of civil servant Anthony Littler near East Finchley station in May 1984 told police that the victim was attacked because it was thought he was gay, a court heard.

After a re-investigation of the case and his arrest in December 2023, Michael Stewart, 57, said Mr Littler had been killed after fighting back against a “gang” that was out “gay bashing or queer bashing”, the Old Bailey was told.

Mr Stewart, from Station Road, New Barnet, and his half-brother, Anthony Stewart, 60, who lives in Old Farm Road, Strawberry Vale, N2, have both denied any involvement in the killing, which happened when they were aged 15 and 18. As we went to press, their six-week trial was in its closing stages.



Attacked: Anthony Littler

The prosecution in the case has claimed that the pair were among a group who “ambushed” Mr Littler in an alleyway leading from East Finchley tube station to East End Road as he walked to his home in nearby Leslie Road after midnight, following an evening with fellow real ale enthusiasts at a pub in south London. The 45-year-old, who lived by himself, was struck on the head sustaining two skull fractures and a “catastrophic” brain injury, the jury heard. He was left to die in a pool of blood.

During Michael Stewart’s police interviews, which were read to the court, he said Mr Littler may have been “followed” out of some public toilets before

being hit with a crash helmet and an axe. “They obviously assumed that he must have been gay and they’ve got him... and attacked him. He’s fought back and he got killed,” he told officers.

Mr Stewart said he had been “nowhere near” the alleyway on the night of the fatal attack but admitted to police that he was a trouble-maker in his teens and had occasionally gone gay-bashing, as it was termed then, waiting around men’s toilets at Glebelands, near the North Circular Road, where homosexuals would meet.

The jury were played recordings of conversations between Michael Stewart and an undercover police officer, “Jay-Jay”, who had been deployed to befriend him, in which the defendant alleged that his half-brother Anthony Stewart was present during the killing.

“It was my brother and three of his mates,” Michael Stewart told Jay-Jay. “They got this geezer in an alleyway, but he grabbed hold of my brother and he wouldn’t let go, so his mates smashed him over the head.”

After his arrest, also in 2023, Anthony Stewart told police that he had not gone out attacking men in the 1980s, had “never” used East Finchley tube station nor the dimly-lit pathway where the attack took place, which the court heard was known locally as “Dead Dog’s Alley”.

Asked by detectives whether he was aware of who Anthony Littler was, Anthony Stewart replied: “I haven’t got a clue about him. Never heard of him.”

Neither brother has chosen to give evidence at the trial in their defence. The jury has been told they may consider manslaughter as an alternative charge to murder.



Stories to tell: Michael Morpurgo reads to students during his visit to the Archer Academy.

Famed author reveals his golden rules for writing

By Anna Hindmarsh

The Archer Academy in East Finchley welcomed award-winning author Michael Morpurgo back to the school for the first time since he formally opened it in 2013. His visit formed the highlight of this year’s LitFest, focusing on books, stories and the power of language.

As part of the event, Year 9 prefect students have been working together to raise money for Mr Morpurgo’s charity Farms for City Children, which he founded with his wife. The charity invites inner-city schools to spend time on a farm, encouraging children to connect with the countryside and explore nature.

Students have taken part in bake sales to raise funds, designing their own adverts and working with the school’s finance office to plan how the money will be collected. Headteacher Lucy Harrison said they are aiming to raise £200.

To reward their hard work, these students sat down with Mr Morpurgo and had the opportunity to quiz him over his writing and seek advice for young readers.

The author of *War Horse* and many other modern children’s classics shared some of his tips for overcoming writer’s block and committing pen to paper when he starts writing. He said: “Don’t write as if you

are writing something down, tell it, tell it as thoughts are pouring out onto the page. That’s what your story should be... and with your heart and soul you should mean it.”

Encouraging students to stay curious, he added that ideas for his stories have come from everyday details, from wallpaper and furniture to conversations at social gatherings. “The golden rule for a writer is that you write about what you care about... I write about war, actually, because I care about peace.”

The visit concluded with an assembly for years 7-9, and a few year groups from neighbouring primary school Holy Trinity, where Mr Morpurgo gave a talk and read out some poetry from his collection *My Heart was a Tree*.

He left the students with a message about the power of reading stories: “If you read books, you can travel the world and meet extraordinary people without getting on a plane, and you will find out more about yourself.”

estate and a new film called *Live at the Boogaloo*, and the *LOVE* exhibition at Lauderdale House will show the work of 15 local artists.

As part of the music programme, Bafta-winning local composer Vince Pope is holding a Listening Party, The Red Hedgehog has a line-up of

world-renowned musicians as well as an open call for locals to perform in the *Anything Goes Community Cabaret*.

The Highgate Festival runs from Saturday 13 to Sunday 21 June. Find the full programme at <https://highgatefestival.org/events-2026/>

From The Archer archives...

By Jane Marsh

**10 years ago:
June 2016**

After 25 years in East End Road, the Bobath Centre for Children with Cerebral Palsy left its home in the old Grade II listed Holy Trinity School building and put it up for sale. Proceeds from the sale were to fund the centre’s relocation and develop new services. Sadly, having moved to Watford, the Bobath Centre closed in 2024. The old Holy Trinity School became nursery The Learning Experience, which continues to operate.

**15 years ago:
June 2011**

A memorial plaque was unveiled outside 111-113 Abbots Gardens to commemorate the five lives lost when a V2 bomb destroyed five houses and damaged many more on 15 November 1944. Those attending the unveiling included local councillors and family members of those killed or injured in the explosion.

**25 years ago:
June 2001**

A memorial plaque was unveiled outside 111-113 Abbots Gardens to commemorate the five lives lost when a V2 bomb destroyed five houses and damaged many more on 15 November 1944. Those attending the unveiling included local councillors and family members of those killed or injured in the explosion.

Annual Highgate Festival in June

The week-long Highgate Festival returns this month with a varied arts and culture programme. One of the highlights is a celebration of the music and life of George Michael, ten years after his death, with a sing-a-long in Pond Square on Saturday 20 June.

There will be a programme of films about Highgate, including the documentary *The White Flats* about the Whittington