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 The Archer is a non-profit-making, non-political & non-religious newspaper, run entirely by volunteers

Welcome to Festival 2026!

The full line-up for this year's East Finchley Festival has been announced. The annual, free-to-attend event returns to Cherry Tree Wood on Sunday 21 June from 12pm to 6pm.

Kasai Masai will open the Main Stage, with bands and artists from many genres playing throughout the afternoon. On the Community Stage, local students, artists and groups will showcase their dance, performance and musical talents.

More than 100 artists, makers and community groups will have stalls and there will be a large range of local food and drink vendors. For younger festivalgoers, there is the much-loved Storytelling Tent and the ever-popular Laser Tag returns in the woods, with tickets available in advance from the festival website. Finchley Rugby Club, Lemon Pickleball and FG Tennis will be putting on taster sessions and there will be a Wellness Zone.

Everyone is invited to take part in the festival Parade starting at Martin Primary School, Plane Tree Walk, at 11.30am and proceeding down the High Road into Cherry Tree Wood.

For more information, Laser Tag bookings or to volunteer, visit: www.eastfinchleyfestival.org



High spot: Visitors enjoy all the attractions of the 2025 festival in Cherry Tree Wood. Photo Mike

EAST FINCHLEY FESTIVAL: WHAT'S ON
 Sunday 21 June, 12-6pm, Cherry Tree Wood

<p>Main Stage Host: Kate Galston</p> <p>12:10 - Kasai Masai 12:50 - Gloryuss 13:30 - The Snakeoil Rattlers 14:10 - Her Name Was? 14:50 - JBC 15:30 - Ally London 16:10 - The Vivettes 16:50 - The Fortunistas 17:20 - Raffle draw 17:30 - Dreampark</p> <p>Community stage Host: Nick Allan</p> <p>12:00 - Bubbles The Elephant From The Learning Experience</p>	<p>12:15 - Tetherdown Primary School Choirs 12:40 - Fixation Academy 13:05 - Brookland Junior School Choir 13:30 - JK Dance Academy 13:55 - Archer Community Choir 14:15 - Martin Primary Year 3&4 Choir 14:40 - Coldfall Community Choir 15:05 - Highgate Primary School Choirs 15:25 - R Voices Choir Finchley Dancers 15:45 - Madhuriya School of Classical Indian Dance 16:05 - Shay Dolan 16:25 - Jazz Journey 16:45 - Serena Dench 17:05 - Rob Thom 17:25 - Groove Collective</p>	<p>Storytelling Tent</p> <p>12:15 - Pink Patsy puppet show 13:15 - The Magic Wagon puppet show 14:15 - Keilly Swift and Gathering Tree Theatre 15:15 - Singalong with Ilana Banana 16:15 - Story time with Jason Korsner 17:15 - Granny Franny with Sonia Beldom</p> <p>Wellbeing area</p> <p>12:30 - Meditation with Jo from from The Breathe Academy</p>	<p>13:15 - Kids' Yoga with Alexandra of The Iyengar Yoga Studio 14:00 - Yoga with Sunnah of Stretching People Yoga 14:45 - Super Power Breathing with Jo of Nervous System Mastery 15:30 - Pilates with Kerry of Happy Body Pilates 16:15 - Belly Dancing with Stefania of Bellydance London 17:00 - Tahitian Dancing with Stefania of Bellydance London</p>
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PROUD WINNER 2025

Planning something special?

Hampstead Garden Suburb, Swiss Cottage & Islington www.hsikitchenhaus.co.uk
 0203 948 5006

Phoenix fundraiser

East Finchley's treasured cinema has launched a major new fundraising campaign to help secure the venue's future and improve filmgoers' experience.

Full story on Page3

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Copy deadlines - July: 15 June August: 10 July September: 14 August

Citizen scientists discover evidence of water pollution

By Margaret Crockett



Evidence: Scum floats on the surface of Mutton Brook and citizen scientists take samples of the water quality

Retired chemists Agnes and Mike Segal have been measuring the quality of water in Mutton Brook in Hampstead Garden Suburb since about 2021. They apply for a testing kit each to test the water in two places: where the brook flows along Lyttelton Playing Fields and further up, near the North Circular.

The key scientific data is the level of nitrates and phosphates. This spring, the pH (acid/alkaline) level was also tested. Data is entered via an app onto a site updated with fresh incoming data every 30 minutes during the four-day WaterBlitz project.

Agnes and Mike use an old detergent measuring cup on a string to scoop up the water. The kit contains three sealed soft plastic tubes containing reagent and a measure together with a colour chart.

The tubes allow measured samples of water to be sucked up and left for the requisite amount of time for the reactant to work and the water to change colour and be matched to the chart. Results for the site closer to the North Circular indicate a 'poor' ecological status; unsurprising since it had foam and algae on

the surface and is directly below a drain. Where the brook runs by the playing fields it has a 'very good' ecological status.

Nutrient pollution from nitrates and phosphates is caused by agricultural fertiliser, intensive livestock farming, sewage discharge and fossil fuel emissions. It causes algae blooms harmful to native aquatic plants and changes to the habitat and food resources of aquatic animals. The release of toxins into water supplies, particularly high levels of nitrogen, is hazardous to humans. The Great UK WaterBlitz is run by Earthwatch Europe. Harnessing citizen scientists, this initiative produces results from thousands of locations at the same time, creating a powerful snapshot of water quality

across the country.

Last year's Autumn WaterBlitz indicated 60% of sites across the UK have poor water quality and unacceptable levels of nutrients. England is the worst, with London the second-to-worst county after Cambridgeshire. Looking at river drainage areas, our own Thames river basin district scores particularly badly, with London returning over 85% poor quality water.

What can we do about the poor quality of water in our local streams? You can express interest in joining the upcoming autumn WaterBlitz here: <https://earthwatch.org.uk/greatukwaterblitz/>.

The Archer will continue to monitor and report on developments.

BE PART OF IT Volunteers wanted

Compiled by Lynn Winton

Join the team at the new **Finchley Free Legal Advice Centre**. This new community-led initiative is providing free legal advice to residents who are most in need. If you have a legal background, and can spare two hours a month, your experience could make a profound impact on someone's life. They are particularly looking for lawyers with experience in immigration, housing, benefits, crime and family. The new Advice Centre will rotate to different venues in the constituency every other weekend. Find out more by emailing sarah.sackman.mp@parliament.uk.

Dovetail DaCapo is a friendly place where asylum-seekers and refugees meet to make music together on **Saturdays from 2pm to 3.30pm at Wren Academy, N12 9HB**. The music is followed by a shared vegetarian meal. If you are interested in joining its rota of volunteers who prepare the meal (heating up soup, putting out bread, hummus, fruit, etc), they'd love to hear from you. They are also interested to hear from volunteers who would like to help in other ways. Email: jam@dacapoco.co.uk

224 North London Air Scouts (N6) are looking for adult volunteers to help run fun weekly sessions for young people. No experience needed, full training provided. Flexible roles to suit your availability. Even a couple of hours a week makes a real difference. Interested? Get in touch at del@224.org.uk.

Finchley Foodbank is looking for a new kind of volunteer to help people with all things digital, such as searching the internet, sending emails and booking appointments. You will signpost people to help with the cost of living, employment, housing etc. You will need to be available for food bank sessions on Tuesdays and/or Saturdays between 11.30am and 2pm twice a month. To find out more about becoming a digital champion volunteer email: hello@finchleyfoodbank.org.uk

Youth communications charity **Exposure**, based in Muswell Hill, is looking for two new trustees, people who share a genuine commitment to young people and can bring expertise in fundraising, digital media, finance, charity governance or equality and inclusion. The role will entail four or five trustee meetings a year, with hybrid options available. To find out more contact: info@exposure.org.uk

Do you enjoy swimming? **WeSwim** is a London-based charity that creates safe, welcoming spaces where disabled adults can swim with the support of volunteers 1:1 in the water. They are looking for volunteers who are keen to make a difference by working with the disability community in Crouch End, giving just a few hours a month. No swim teaching/coaching qualifications required, although being comfortable in the water is a must. Contact harriet@weswim.club for more information.

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If you'd like your organisation to be included in this column please email news@the-archer.co.uk

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Barnet

31 Leopold Road, N2

Single-storey rear extension with pitched roof. Ref. No: 26/1870/192

43 Leopold Road, N2

Two-storey rear extension. New front refuse/recycling and cycle storage. Ref. No: 26/1795/HSE

17 New Trinity Road N2,

Roof extension with rear dormer with Juliette balcony, outrigger dormer, and three front facing rooflights. Ref. No: 26/1851/192

30 Summerlee Avenue, N2

Single-storey rear extension with a maximum proposed depth of 4.05m, maximum height of 3.33m and an eaves height of 3.33m (height of lowered section 3.08m). Ref. No: 26/1799/PNH

55 Summerlee Avenue, N2

Single-storey rear extension with two roof lanterns. Alterations to the existing patio area. Replacement of existing side store and insertion of one roof light. Ref. No: 26/1649/HSE

26 Abbots Gardens, N2

Submission of details of condition 8 (Front Landscaping) pursuant to planning permission 24/5627/HSE dated 14/04/2025. Ref No: 26/1788/CON

20 Leicester Road, N2

Roof extension involving hip to gable, rear dormer window following removal of the existing. Ref. No: 26/1751/192

330 High Road, N2

Implementation of planning permission 18/6392/FUL dated 19/12/18 for 'Demolition of rear storage/retail unit and construction of a retail unit with basement level and 2no self-contained flats over first and second floors, with side balconies and privacy screens. Associated refuse/recycling store, cycle store, parking and amenity space.' Ref. No: 26/1679/191

14 Viceroy Close, N2

Change of use of the property from a single family dwelling (Class C3) to a House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) (Class C4) (Retrospective Application). Ref. No: 26/1581/RCU

12-18 High Road, N2

Variation of condition 1 (Approved Plans) and removal of condition 31 (Oriel Windows - first floor east elevation) of appeal reference APP/N5090/W/23/3326949 dated 27/09/2024 (planning ref. 22/3419/S73 variation of 18/5822/FUL) for 'Demolition of existing buildings and construction of two four-storey buildings (plus basement) providing 24 self-contained flats and (Class B1a) office space with associated refuse and recycling storage, cycle storage, two off-street parking spaces and amenity space.' Variation to include removal of oriel windows and updated planting. Ref. No: 26/1457/S73

Haringey

6A Denmark Terrace, Fortis Green, N2

Demolition of existing building and structures on site and the erection of a three storey plus basement building, comprising four residential units and 50 sqm of commercial floorspace on the ground floor, with landscaping, cycle storage and bin storage. Ref: HGY/2026/1355



Fundraising campaign to secure cinema's future



Middlesex University design students, here sitting in the Phoenix, have been invited to reimagine the venue's foyer area

By Ruth Anders

There was a packed house of enthusiastic cinemagoers at the Phoenix Cinema on Saturday 16 May to enjoy 1973's tongue-in-cheek horror comedy film *Theatre of Blood*, starring Vincent Price.

The evening's draw card was local celebrity Steve Pemberton, of *The League of Gentlemen* and *Inside Number 9* fame, who chose the film as one of his favourites and who generously spent time answering questions from the stage afterwards.

The evening also marked the launch of the new fundraising



Film fan: Steve Pemberton

campaign, a vital initiative to help secure the cinema's future and improve customers' experience.

Following a welcome from Paul Rossi, Chair of the Phoenix Board of Trustees, the audience were left in no doubt as to the urgency of the support required to keep the landmark building open. Few realise that less than half the price of each ticket supports the running costs of the cinema and, without a dramatic uplift in audience numbers, the Phoenix runs the risk of closure.

As a major part of the campaign, the Phoenix welcomed a group of design students from Middlesex University at the end of April. Their visit was part of a design competition to update the cinema's front-of-house areas.

Budding designers and architects from the university's School of Art, Design and Architecture have been invited to submit plans to 'reimagine'

the cinema's foyer, making it even more welcoming for customers and the wider community, while preserving its historic Art Deco character.

The winning entry will go on public display at the cinema later in the year in a bid to help raise funds to put the plans into action. "We want people to see what we're trying to achieve with the foyer and hopefully that will encourage them to support us with donations," Paul Rossi told *The Archer*. "The initiative is also aimed at giving the students a unique opportunity to work on a real-world, creative brief at a Grade II listed building."

Phoenix Trustee Steve Smith added: "We've weathered hard times in the past, but they seem particularly difficult right now, hence the launch of our new fundraising campaign.

Our goals are ambitious but the marvellous team at the cinema are bursting with ideas about how we can achieve them. Do check us out on Instagram, Facebook, X and TikTok and don't forget to review us, follow us and hashtag us to spread the word."

Keep your eyes open for other upcoming events at the Phoenix, such as a live appearance



Steve Pemberton on stage, right, after the fundraising showing of *Theatre of Blood*. Photo: Mike Coles

by Phoenix Patron Sir Michael Palin on Saturday 27 June when he will introduce David Attenborough's 2020 film *A Life on our Planet*.

And meanwhile, if you can make a donation, no matter how small, visit www.phoenixcinema.co.uk or use the QR code in this article.

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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

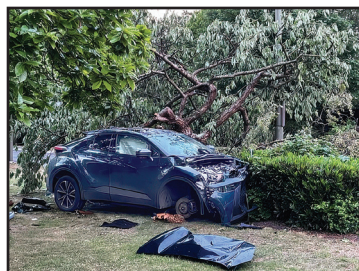


Car mounts pavement and smashes into tree

By Gail Norcliffe

East End Road, N2, was the scene of a serious car crash on Thursday 14 May. The accident had alarming results, with the car smashing headfirst into a tree, partially knocking it over.

A nearby resident reported that in the afternoon she was driving along East End Road and a car was being driven very aggressively and erratically behind her. The car then attempted to overtake her near the junction with Church Lane. However, the overtaking driver lost control, veering over the pavement and driving at force into one of the trees on the grassy triangle at the end of Trinity Avenue and Church Lane.



Serious damage: The crashed car embedded partly in a tree and shrub

Luckily nobody was injured and it was incredibly fortunate that there were no pedestrians involved. The police quickly arrived and the area where the car crashed was cordoned off. There is concern locally about that section of East End Road which after some sharp bends

over the bridge, is straight and wide thus encouraging more reckless drivers to speed, sometimes with dangerous results. Recently, a car drove into the Trinity Avenue bus shelter and in a separate incident a car crashed into the grass area on the other side of the road outside Nazareth House.

Pub duo in running for national award



In the running: Arina Piskunova and Eamonn England

By David Melsome

Best of luck to Arina Piskunova and Eamonn England, of the Windsor Castle pub in The Walks, N2, who have been named among the six finalists in the British Institute of Innkeeping's Licensee of the Year Awards.

The couple were selected from a nationwide field of over 800 nominations based on their community impact, support for their teams, commitment to sustainability, their plans for diversification, and the 'X Factor' that makes pubs special.

The couple were selected from a nationwide field of over 800 nominations based on their community impact, support for their teams, commitment to sustainability, their plans for diversification, and the 'X Factor' that makes pubs special.



Team spirit: Friends of Richard Meier after playing a football match in his memory

Friends team up for football match in memory of Richard

By Matteo Lanzini

A group of neighbours and friends got together on Sunday 10 May to remember Richard Meier, with whom they shared a passion for amateur football until a few months ago, when he sadly passed away after a short but incurable illness.

In recognition of the care Richard received during his last days by staff at St Joseph's Hospice in Hackney, funds were raised in support of the charity and its amazing work. At the time of writing more than £800 were pledged to the cause and everyone is welcome to visit www.stjh.org.uk to find out more about the hospice and ways to

contribute.

The Archer Academy hosted the match and, after a sombre minute's silence, the game was entertaining, with the yellow and blue teams battling it out in good sport. There were moments of collective and individual brilliance, including a few remarkable goals which would have made Richard proud.

Known for his poetry, he could always spot harmony among the ordinary.

At the final whistle everyone, including members of his family, got together to cherish the occasion, taking home the memory and the desire to make the 'Richard Meier Memorial Cup' an annual fixture in future years.

Pasture opens its gates again

With spring well under way, much-loved local nature reserve Long Lane Pasture is opening up to the community again for the next four months or so.

The volunteers who run the wildlife haven opposite Finchley Fire Station in Long Lane, N3, hope to open every day from 9am to around 7pm, although not in bad weather.

They invite visitors to come and see the changes and progress that their working teams have made over the winter months, including making some of the paths wider and developing a scented winter garden near the gazebo in memory of stalwart volunteer Wayne Armsby.

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Musician conjures up Cuban beats for award-winning play

By Diana Cormack

Pat 'Have Mercy' Leacock is probably best known in East Finchley for his past hosting of our annual community festival. His performances then underlined the musical skills of a man who is not only a MOBO Award-winning multi-instrumentalist but also a prize-winning poet and a composer. It is in this role that Pat has been commissioned to write the score for a re-vamped former Time Out Critics Choice play.

Pat is also a talented teacher and he met the writer of the play, Dean Stalham, when he was delivering a teaching programme he had created to support and empower ex-prisoners. Dean decided to make a change to his life via the creative arts. He started writing poetry, which was published and performed at successful poetry events in which he invited Pat to participate after reading his acclaimed poem 'The Skin I'm In'.



Creative force: Pat Leacock

After hearing a variety of Pat's musical compositions and

seeing him perform with his live band, Dean commissioned Pat to write the music for SPORADICITY, which he has re-written and re-vamped since its 2010 success. Pat composed seven salsa/samba/Cuban-inspired tracks for the play, which is described as gritty, poetic and unflinchingly real.

He said: "It was a true joy creating the pulsating, dark, sultry and warmly hypnotic pieces for SPORADICITY. No genre of music is off limits for me to listen to and to create, so being asked to travel the Salsa/Cuban music route was an aural delight."

Pat will have to travel to Hastings, where Dean is based, to see the first performances of the play at the Stables Theatre on 5 and 6 June. From there it moves to London's Old Red Lion Theatre on 17 and 18 July and then to the Hen and Chicken N1 2LW on 4 September. Contact Pat on Instagram @patsfoodiejourney and @pathavemercy.

Five centuries of service

By Sheela Guttula

The Finchley Charities marked 538 years of service with a special Heritage Day event, bringing together residents, trustees, colleagues, supporters and distinguished guests to celebrate its legacy and reflect on its future.

Founded in 1488, when Robert Waren bequeathed 11 acres of land to support the church, improve highways and provide relief to the poor, the charity has served the Finchley community for more than five centuries. Today, it continues that mission as a sheltered housing charity, offering homes and supporting independent living for people aged 55 and over.

Guests including Barnet Mayor Councillor Danny Rich and local councillor Alison Moore enjoyed presentations and resident's stories. Talks by Simon Smith on the history of alms houses and Dr John Price on the history of The Finchley Charities brought the charity's legacy vividly to life. The event also introduced the Finchley Charities' Heritage Project, an initiative to preserve and protect



Finchley Charities: Residents Stephen and Valerie Gold speaking at the Heritage Day event

its extensive archive of historical documents.

The charity's CEO Carmel Miedziolka said: "There is real space for kindness, for small acts of care, for looking out for one another, and through our Residents' Voices, we experienced so much of that at this event. Community doesn't just happen. Community grows best when the conditions are right."



Backbone of support: Just some of the volunteer team at Finchley Foodbank

Volunteers are the backbone of the food bank

By Louis Victor

It's the UK's National Volunteers Week in the first week of June, and Finchley Foodbank would like to recognise the huge effort and dedication of its own brilliant team.

Chair Paul Woodward says: "Volunteers Week is the perfect time to recognise the invaluable contributions volunteers make to Finchley Foodbank. We simply couldn't exist without them. Thank you to all our volunteers for your dedication, passion, and time; you are the backbone of our efforts, and your work ensures the Foodbank is able to open its doors to people in need in Barnet."

Foodbank volunteers fill roles ranging from receiving deliveries to sorting donations to restocking shelves and staffing the two weekly client sessions. The Foodbank is always on the lookout for more volunteers to help with these tasks and also for the 'digital champions' role.

These are people who can show others how to use smartphones, computers and tablets safely and signpost clients to potential funds, council services, and other online resources.

Volunteering at Finchley Foodbank, based in East Finchley, is a great way to give to your local community and to gain a lot personally, and is perhaps best expressed in the words of some current volunteers.

Harry Harcus says: "My advice is to find something that you care about and that fits your lifestyle and routine because it is a commitment. For me it's been a way to give back to my community and use my skills and time to help others."

Begum Noormamode says: "I would wholeheartedly encourage people to volunteer. It has a way of opening your eyes in the best possible way. The people you meet are genuine, supportive, and quietly like-minded, and you end up learning so much simply by being part of it. If someone is thinking about volunteering, I would encourage them to take that first step. It might change their life for the better, just as it has mine."

If you want to find out more about helping out at Finchley Foodbank, visit finchleyfoodbank.org.uk where you will also find how to get in touch. And check out the Be Part of It column on page 2 of this newspaper to find opportunities with other local organisations.

Thirty years of garden glory in Muswell Hill

Susan Bennett and Earl Hyde are opening their fabulous Muswell Hill garden again in support of the National Garden Scheme (NGS). Last year, the couple raised £10,000 with a series of open days.

Now in their 30th year of welcoming public visitors, their garden is famous for its beauty and variety, and for Earl's mouth-watering homemade cakes.

Susan says: "In a world fraught with traumas beyond our control, the health benefits of gardens are universally recognised. King Charles, Patron of the NGS, knew that instinctively, practising organic principles and "talking to his plants" long before we learnt plants are sentient in their own way.

"A warm welcome awaits whatever the weather. Our plant sale is abundant, our pottery studio is open to browse, our homemade cakes are delicious. A huge thanks to our dream team of helpers who make it possible."

You can visit Susan and Earl on Sunday 14 June and Sunday 2 August, both days from 2pm to 6.30pm, at 5 St Regis Close, Alexandra Park Road, N10. Admission is £5, children free, dogs on leads welcome, disabled access. Cash preferred, cards accepted.



Garden guru: Susan Bennett during a visit to the Chelsea Flower Show

Looking for volunteers?

Are you looking for volunteers to help in your community group or organisation? Our Be Part of It column is published on page 2 every month and gets results.

Submissions are free and are included subject to available space. Please submit your listing up to a maximum of 80 words to news@the-archer.co.uk, marking your email 'Be Part of It'.



Family history of distinguished radio presenter

By Geoffrey Davies

It is wartime. Two young German emigres, both serving in the British Army, are lying in bed together in a hotel in St. Ives. "Do you like Winnie the Pooh?" he asks her. Somewhat bemused, Susan Cohn answers that she does. With her positive answer, Fritz Lustig asks his follow-up. "Will you marry me?" "Yes."

This connection to the stories by AA Milne is why the couple's first son is called Robin. Probably best known as the former presenter of BBC R4's *The World Tonight*, Robin Lustig has written the story of his family around his father Fritz who arrived in England with a clock, a copy of *Winnie the Pooh* in German and the musical instrument that gives this book its title: *And the Cello Came Too*.

"I was very lucky that my father, my mother and my uncle all left autobiographies," says Lustig, who lives in Muswell Hill. "But beyond that I researched my family of distinguished rabbis, Hebrew scholars and even journalists, going as far back as 1380.

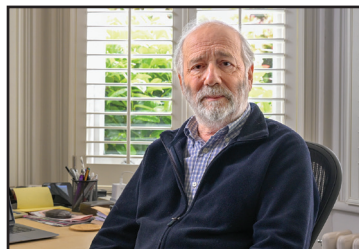
"My grandparents had a secular marriage in 1903 and did not consider themselves as Jewish. Indeed, soon after the First World War my grandfather told the authorities he had left the Jewish community and would no longer pay a tax collected for all religious communities." Escaping Germany after Kristallnacht, Fritz Lustig arrived in England, not for the first time, having been on a school exchange in Letchworth in 1936. Indeed, it was this connection that eased his passage.

Following a brief period of internment, a recommendation from English composer Vaughan Williams of his being a "distinguished" orchestral player led to him being a part of the Pioneer Corps Orchestra, whose standards Fritz felt "left a lot to be desired".

Later he became a listener at Trent Park, recording the indiscrete conversations of German POWs, who were otherwise being interrogated. He never spoke of this until 30 years later when the story was published

Tell us the news

Have you got a news story or an interesting photo for us? Our readers are our eyes and ears, and we are always pleased to hear what is going on in East Finchley. Tips, ideas and stories, large or small, are very welcome. Please email news@the-archer.co.uk or leave a message on our free phone line 0800 612 0748. Thank you



Former Radio 4 presenter Robin Lustig at home in Muswell Hill. Photo Geoffrey Davies

and his work was recorded in "generous obituaries" on his death in 2017.

But as well as the family history, including his uncle in America, Robin Lustig writes interesting chapters – some as drama script – about life in pre-war Berlin, the fake peer who dined with German Generals at the Ritz and a Nazi mass-murderer.

This is Robin Lustig's second book – his first was about his experience as a Reuters correspondent – and he thinks it is his last. "I feel I have mined my family history," he says. But it has not ended his interest in the Nazis and German immigration. "I found out only recently that ten times as many German refugees were refused entry to Britain as actually came. And for all the significance of the Kindertransport, all those children came unaccompanied, their parents being sent to the camps." Robin Lustig will be talking about his book at U3A, Hampstead Garden Suburb Free Church, North Square, NW11 7AG at 4pm on Thursday 11 June, at Waterstones in Crouch End at 7pm on Thursday 25 June and at Fellowship House, 136a Wilfield Way, Hampstead Garden Suburb NW11 6YD at 2.30pm on Tuesday 30 June.

The Archer on the move

The Archer's website is now easier to use on your mobile phone. Our online pages have been redesigned to make it quicker to find important information like contact details and deadlines, and simpler to read our latest edition or search and browse past editions of the newspaper in our archive stretching back to 1993. So now you really can take The Archer with you wherever you go. Bookmark our website at www.the-archer.co.uk



Royal entrance: Garden Party guests get their first glimpse of King Charles, Queen Camilla, Princess Anne, Prince Edward and Sophie, Duchess of Edinburgh. Photo Caroline Broome

The day we took tea at a Royal Garden Party

It's not every day you get invited to a Royal Garden Party at Buckingham Palace but this year Caroline and David Broome, of Church Lane, N2, were asked to represent the London Gardens Society. Prince Edward, now the Duke of Edinburgh, is the Patron of the LGS, and David is Membership Secretary. The couple are both LGS judges. Here, Caroline remembers the special day.

On the day of the party, the weather was cold but dry. Everybody was in their finery, lots of lovely hats and flowery dresses. Guests started to assemble outside the Palace gates from about 1pm, so by the time we were admitted at 3pm, there was quite a crowd.

Once inside the Palace garden gate, everybody surged towards the tea tents. Miniature strawberry tarts, cheesecakes and chocolate brownies, and dainty sandwiches, were served on small, white china plates with an indentation for your teacup. Service was very well organised and queues moved quickly. We were not alone in going back for seconds!

It was soon time for the Royals to emerge from the Palace, to walk among the guests. It was exciting to see King Charles and Queen Camilla, Princess Anne, and Edward and Sophie. A pre-selected list of guests were presented to King Charles, while the crowds were kept back by the royal bodyguards, to maintain the wide pathway for his walkabout.

On the other side, the minor Royals also chatted with guests, and you could ask one of the guards to be introduced to them if you wished. We could not get over to the other side, so contented ourselves with photos. Once the Royals had finished their walkabout, and entered the Royal tent, we explored the gardens, a misnomer if ever there was one. With a large lake, extensive flowerbeds and lawns, it's more park than garden. Alongside the predictable immaculate lawns, precision-cut edges, swathes of perfect

hostas and a densely planted rose garden, you could see Charles's influence coming through. Areas of lawn were 'rewilded', with curved paths mown through the meadows, and a long border was planted

with more contemporary exotic perennials.

All too soon it was time to leave. As we exited the Palace, we reflected on what a special privilege it had been to experience this day.



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Into the world of conspiracy theories

By Geoffrey Davies

Anthony Fauci is the son of Mother Teresa, the Rothschilds own the Red Cross and children's blood is used to make matzo balls - just some of the beliefs of the main characters in Liz Smith's documentary film The Conspiracists.



Film makers: Liz Smith, left, and Noelle Cook flank moderator Pragna Patel at the Phoenix Cinema screening. Photo Geoffrey Davies

Shown at the Phoenix at the end of April, the film was followed by a Q&A with the director and co-producer Noelle Cook, who was studying women in far-right movements.

The film focuses on Yvonne, who was convicted for taking part in the January 6th riots at the Capitol in Washington, as the three women take a 2,500-mile road trip across America. In a constant stream of conspiracy-think, director Liz Smith listens intently, helped by Noelle providing additional detail.

"It is my style to listen. Yvonne never stopped talking. I think being English helped," Liz Smith told the Phoenix audience. "At no time did Yvonne ever ask me about my politics." Yvonne, a former US Marine drill instructor, is seen on video as she live-streams from the barricades at the Capitol. Sentenced to 30 months in prison - at her trial she refused to acknowledge the legitimacy of the court - she served half her sentence before President Trump pardoned the rioters.

Liz Smith told the Phoenix moderator Pragna Patel that she thought a lot of the women in the conspiracy movement became involved during Covid, when they were isolated and had

self-educated through the internet. Issues like vaccination contributed to feelings of "pain, anger and hopelessness." "This is a film about middle-aged women made by middle-aged women," she said. Noelle Cook added that 17% of those arrested on January 6th were women, who were predominantly Gen X (aged 46-61) with a wide range of educational achievement.

"Influencers raised questions about vaccination," she said. "Then these people brain-wash themselves. It's not about fact, but how you feel. It is a faith-based system."

Asked about the future, Liz Smith said that while Yvonne has not moderated her views, another interviewee Tammy had moderated hers, but as for turning against President Trump she was: "not ready to go there yet." She added that it was important to engage with conspiracists as it was essential to try and re-establish trust and that could only happen by talking. "I'm not convinced we will do that, but we have to try."

The Conspiracists is made by Page75 Productions. The trailer can be found here: <https://page75productions.com/the-films/>

Walkathon fundraiser

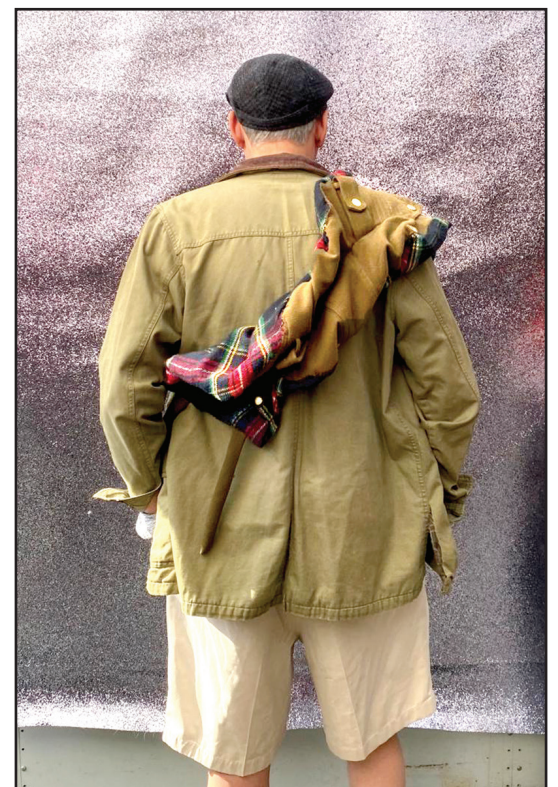
The Our North Finchley campaign is organising a Walkathon to raise funds for its work and for local charities. The event will be at the Glebelands Playing Fields behind the Hollywood Bowl, N12, on Sunday 14 June at 2pm.

The course is 5 km, consisting of five laps around the open space, next to Great North Leisure Park and Glebelands Nature Reserve.

Organisers stress that those preferring to take fewer than five laps are more than welcome. Book at: www.zeffy.com/en-GB/ticketing/gnlp-walkathon

The campaigners have been opposing the redevelopment of Great North Leisure Park by the developer Arada.

They say it is an over-dense scheme of very tall blocks that will harm local character and deprive the community and young people of entertainment.



Ready to wear: People who are homeless model some of the fashions created for the Off the Street Fashion Show

Fashioned from living on the streets

By Gail Norcliffe

Homeless Action in Barnet hosted a unique and inspiring fashion show on last month. Led by individuals who have experienced homelessness, the Off the Street Fashion Show was a powerful expression of creativity.

A case worker had floated the idea some time ago but it didn't come to fruition until Night Shelter Coordinator Marcin Nocek was helping a client with new clothes and they agreed the guest looked good enough to be on the catwalk.

This chance remark prompted Francesca, another client, to start planning and stitching outfits for a possible fashion show. Other guests, previous clients, volunteers and case workers joined in to work together on the idea.

One of the designers created over 40 original outfits, using repurposed second-hand clothing and unexpected materials such as sleeping bags and

mattresses. Through upcycling and reimagining everyday items, the collection was a reflection of real-life experiences and the resourcefulness needed when living on the streets.

Models included guests and their pets, which can be so important to people experiencing homelessness. In addition to the fashion show, the event on Sunday 17 May included community stalls selling a range of food, cakes, jewellery and cards.

Marcin said: "The fashion show has sparked motivation, imagination and a shared sense of purpose. Our guests demon-

strate tremendous resilience in rebuilding their lives and some of that bravery was evident as they proudly modelled the fashion creations to our audience. This was about much more than fashion to everyone involved. It's about confidence, creativity, and having the opportunity to be seen in a different way."

The Homeless in Action Barnet website at www.habcntr.org provides information on how to help through volunteering and/or making financial and other donations. To stay connected with HAB's work, subscribe to the monthly email updates here: <https://mailchi.mp/habcntr/newsletter>

A connection for women in business

By Lynn Winton

It's exciting to be building a fledgling business on your own and yet at the same time unnerving to feel cut adrift and alone, especially if you've always enjoyed the camaraderie of an office full of co-workers.

Now there's a solution for women who are embarking on what's been coined "solopreneurship". The Switch Network currently has 150 members, and they have a whole programme of meetings, walks and talks based in and around East Finchley or online via a WhatsApp group.

Its founder Susie Weisberger explained why she came up with the idea: "For many women running their own businesses, the hardest part isn't the work, it's too many hours spent on their own at their desk, no one to bounce ideas around with, to share the wins or the challenges. "I started my career in big-brand advertising and marketing, thriving on the team energy, the collaboration and

the constant creative banter that came with it. When I stepped away to raise my daughters and began exploring what came next, I knew I wanted to build



Members of The Switch Network

something of my own, I just didn't want to lose those 'can I run it past you' moments."

As she began meeting other women who had made the leap into self-employment, she noticed the same pattern again and again: bold, ambitious

women building impressive businesses, but spending too many hours alone in their own heads, all missing the same thing, the team. So she decided to build it herself, on her doorstep.

Results have been palpable. One of the members is Zoe, a photographer in Muswell Hill. "My first meet-up completely changed my view of networking. I made genuine connections. The woman I sat next to even booked me for a brand photo shoot that week."

The Switch Network is open to new members, and information about the joining fees and the latest list of events can be found at theswitchnetwork.co.uk



Tops of the shops... when I'm 64

By Diana Cormack

There has been a dry-cleaners at 3 Fortis Green in East Finchley since the mid-1960s, when the proprietor of the nearby Coral Travel and two business colleagues set up in business together.



Four decades of service: Asghar Shaikh celebrates 40 years of Tops Dry Cleaners

In 1986 Asghar Shaikh, who had been learning the trade in Kensington for seven years, spotted the premises for sale. So, believing it to be a good career move, he took over and opened Tops Dry Cleaners.

Obviously that early career move 40 years ago worked well. Being a big Beatles fan, Asghar has long wondered what life would be like when he reached 64 and feels that it is significant that, now at that age, he is running a successful business which originally opened in 1964.

During his four decades of dry cleaning in Fortis Green, Asghar has kept up with modern methods whilst building up a loyal clientele. Many customers have become old friends and evidence of their closeness can be seen with the wall of photos

to which they have contributed. It is worth a look as there are quite a few well-known faces and signatures.

There are also cuttings of Archer articles that have featured some of his customers, with the people of East Finchley feeling to him "like an extended family".

Asghar wonders if his business could be one of the oldest still running in East Finchley. Sadly, he listed those that have had to close down or move away in recent years. He is close to The Retreat Hair and Beauty Salon, which has battled off a high rent increase (see The Archer, March 2026). I asked if he had any worries about his rent being put up. He smiled happily and said that as he is the owner, he has no such problems.

RICKY SAVAGE... THE VOICE OF IRRESPONSIBILITY

The price of being an icon

To be an icon your fame must outlast you and you must have left behind something unforgettable. Hollywood is the home of the icon because celluloid heroes are preserved on film, frozen in time, never ageing and never dying. And the greatest of them is Marilyn Monroe, who would have been 100 on 1 June.

She may have had a horrible childhood shuttled between children's home and foster parents, but she went on to become the ultimate image of the American Fifties. Her career started as a pin-up girl in the late Forties and she first came to notice as bit-part player in All About Eve and The Blackboard Jungle in 1950.

Two years and 11 films later she was probably the most famous star in the world and remained so until her death in 1962. Why? Because she was the perfect image of post-war boom town America, the sassy blonde who everyone wished was the girl next door.

You don't need to have seen the films like Niagara, Gentlemen Prefer Blondes or Some Like it Hot to know the image. The famous photo of her standing over a subway grating with her skirt billowing became the ubiquitous poster on schoolboy walls and a nude photo shoot she did in 1948 launched Playboy five years later. All those pictures of Marilyn, all those posters on the wall.

Not that things were easy for her. Her third husband, the playwright Arthur Miller, said she was looking for the impossible, a man who would be her 'father, lover, friend and agent' and that she always had death on her shoulder. Her death from an overdose



Street food: Bhola Prasad and Masud Rana are offering a varied Vietnamese menu. Photo John Lawrence

Street food served up by chef friends

By John Lawrence

Two chef friends with a love of international cuisines have gone into business together and opened the Bun Bun Pho Vietnamese restaurant at the top end of the High Road in East Finchley.

After working in other peoples' kitchens for 30 years and being friends with each other for the last 16, Masud Rana and Bhola Prasad decided it was time to fire up their own ovens and do things their way.

Masud spent time in Vietnam as a student and learned the art of making pho, the country's staple street food dish consisting of broth, rice noodles, herbs and meat. Bhola specialised in Vietnamese cooking techniques when he worked for six years at a restaurant in Canary Wharf.

"We hope customers will like what we do," said Masud. "Our food is fresh, with no chemicals and it's not over-spicy. We make it on the day and we serve it on the day."

Bhola said he stays closely involved in everything, from preparation to team training, to ensure standards stay high. "Our goal is to serve honest, authentic food that resonates with people," he said.

The partners took over the premises close to the junction with Creighton Avenue from

former owner Aki Toumazos, who helped them during a short handover period before retiring altogether after more than 40 years in the restaurant trade (The Archer, December 2025).

Kitchen life is in their souls, say the pair, who work every day preparing ingredients from the early morning to waving the last customers off at the end of the night. Bun Bun Pho is open Monday to Saturday from 11.30am to 10.30pm and on Sunday from 11.30am to 10pm.

New puzzle: Re-Griddable

Re-Griddable is a twist on the free daily online game grid-dable.co.uk created by two East Finchley residents, Stuart Miller and Matt Robinson.

There may be more than one solution to each Re-Griddable but there is definitely at least one, which comes from a maximum scoring game of Griddable.

Re-Griddable
No.4
Place the letters to create eight four-letter words — four left-to-right and four downwards.

ACEESRRW

C		A	
	A		E
	G		
P		S	T

in 1962, aged 36, seemed inevitable to him. And once she was gone the myth and the memory could take over.

But what if she'd lived? By 1962 the world was changing, a year later President Kennedy was shot, within five years America was being ripped apart by Vietnam and new stars were in town. Her image couldn't have coped with Jane Fonda. It's hard to imagine her moving into a graceful old age as a character actor like Bette Davis or Lauren Bacall.

Instead she was immortalised in song by the likes of Elton John with Candle in the Wind and by Ray Davies in his song about Hollywood Boulevard, when he sang 'don't step on dearest Marilyn, because not very tough, she should have been made of iron and steel, but she was only made of flesh and blood.' So watch the movies and remember the actor, not the gilded cage she lived in.

Turn to page 11 for this month's solution



Sword fights in the Suburb



Roman wrangle: Two of the cast of *Boudica* in rehearsal for *Garden*

Garden Suburb Theatre's summer production is *Boudica* by Tristan Bernay, a gripping historical drama packed with sword fights, earthy humour and powerful emotion.

Set in Roman Britain, the play follows Boudica's fierce uprising against Roman rule after the assault on her and her daughters. After burning Londinium, Boudica and her army may even have passed through what is now Hampstead Garden Suburb on their way to Verulamium (St Albans). A spokesman for the theatre company said: "At Little Wood Theatre, in the heart of the Suburb, you will be transported

back to Roman Britain and leave the modern world behind. A talented local cast will bring those distant times thrillingly to life in a production that is as thought-provoking as it is exhilarating."

Performances run from 19–21 June and 25–27 June 2026. Tickets priced from £10 are on sale now at www.ticketsource.com/gardensubtheatre

East Finchley artists open their houses

By Mike Coles

Beginning 22 years ago, members of the East Finchley Open Artists group have opened their houses for two weekends every summer to showcase their work. On display to view or buy this year will be ceramics, paintings, prints, photography, sculpture, jewellery, textiles and more.



Beautiful art available on show at the Artists Open House weekends. Photo montage Mike Coles

Drama and despair in choir triple bill

North London Chorus is looking forward to its next concert at St James Church, Muswell Hill, on Saturday 4 July when it will be performing a triple bill of works inspired by biblical characters.



Massed voices: The North London Chorus will be performing a triple bill of works

Continuing the choir's commitment to perform works by often neglected female composers, the concert will include two pieces by Fanny Hensel (née Mendelssohn), opening with her Overture in C, and continuing with her short cantata *Hiob*, whose text details Job's despair as he contemplates a series of disasters that have beset his family.

The centrepiece of the evening is Mozart's *Dauid penitente*, a ten-movement cantata, which arguably contains some of Mozart's most evocative music. The text

is taken from psalms written after David was rebuked for his adultery with Bathsheba.

Completing the programme is Schubert's dramatic miniature oratorio *Mirjams Siegesgesang* which tells the story of the parting of the Red Sea as told by Miriam the Israelite prophetess.

NLC will be accompanied by the Meridian Sinfonia and joined by a quartet of soloists: Eleanor Sanderson-Nash, Eleanor Pennell-Briggs, Mark Milhofer and Henry George Page. Tickets are available online from northlondonchorus.org/tickets or at St James bookshop (unreserved).

Fifteen houses will be throwing open their doors, featuring 47 artists. The weekends are 27-28 June and 4-5 July, the two weekends after the East Finchley Festival.

Watch out for a flyer coming through your door with all the details. It's entirely free and open from 12 noon to 6pm every day plus an additional Group show at All Saints Church in

in Durham Road, N2, and shop displays around the High Road. Everyone will be assured of a warm welcome. Find more information at www.eastfinchleyopen.org.uk

Wetland walk

The Alexandra Park and Palace Charitable Trust and the Friends of Alexandra Park have launched a £10,000 fundraiser for a new boardwalk through the park's wetland area, enabling more visitors to experience one of its most important wildlife habitats.

The campaign will support the creation of an accessible route through the wetlands in the south-east corner of the park, opening the birdwatching platform for people of all abilities and ages.

Park users, residents and supporters of local green spaces are invited to contribute to the campaign. Organisers hope to reach their £10,000 target by Monday 15 June 2026.

All public donations made during the campaign period will be match funded, with every £1 donated becoming £2. To donate visit www.crowdfunder.co.uk and search 'Alexandra Palace wetland'.

COMING SOON AT ARTSDEPOT



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JOYFULLY JEWISH: GETTING ON

Thu 4 Jun



PAULINE EYRE: ANYONE FOR TENNIS?

Sat 13 Jun



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Letters

Buses are a bust

Dear Editor,

I write regarding the 143 bus route that is relied on by many people in East Finchley and beyond which must rank as one of the worst routes in the area. Firstly, there is the hopeless failure to run to the published timetable. Passengers frequently endure gaps of 20-minutes or clusters of buses arriving 2/3 minutes apart.

Then there is the severe overcrowding of the buses between around 3-4pm on part of the route during term times when they are filled to bursting point with school children since the operator abandoned putting on extra double deck buses to absorb the surge in passengers.

The new all electric buses may be planet friendly but it is doubtful the design was ever tested by real passengers. These new buses are a masterpiece of poor design and feature. They have oversprung suspension that rocks the body of the bus on braking, cornering and acceleration. This is made worse by some drivers who stab at the accelerator and brake (not all drivers by any means but a significant proportion). This regularly catapults recent boarders down the bus as it lurches away from the stop or pitches them towards the front of the bus as it brakes for a stop or in stop/start traffic. The buses have wholly inadequate ventilation, which is very noticeable especially in warmer weather,

when the larger windows act like a greenhouse and elevate the internal temperature. Soon after introduction of these buses, it appears that drivers' cabs were fitted with mini-fans, presumably because of driver discomfort. Meanwhile passengers are left to stew in excessive heat.

And they have a bizarre seating provision. There are only two non-priority seats which do not require passengers to climb up a platform of approximately 30cm in height. The rear sets of four facing seats are up a slope of the bus floor and then a further platform of around 30cm.

Preparing to disembark and approaching the exit doors is a dangerous gamble. A passenger carrying a bag has to climb down from the platform and then negotiate the downward slope with nothing immediate to hold onto.

Perhaps the operator would like to respond to these criticisms or, if sceptical, it could canvass its passengers to see what they think about the issues raised. Better still, the operator could take steps to sort out these issues.



Rough ride: An electric bus on the 143 route

Name and address supplied



Unique character: East Finchley High Road. Photo Mike Coles

Supermarket creep

Dear Editor,

East Finchley is a community that famously defeated McDonald's in the 1990s and saved our beloved Phoenix Cinema because stalwarts like Peter Hart, Roger Chapman, Kate Brown, Dame Frances Crook and the late Rudi Vis understood that representing N2 is about more than just administration—it is about protecting a soul. They didn't just manage our streets; they championed our identity against corporate overreach.

Today, that identity faces an insidious and equally relentless challenge: 'supermarket creep.' With two Tescos and a Sainsbury's now occupying a single stretch of the High Road, we are becoming a 'clone town', a

transit zone of self-service checkouts rather than a unique community 'village' with a backbone.

We felt this most keenly with the loss of our unique bookshop, Black Gull Books. It was the perfect antidote to cynicism and a cultural hub for residents and artists alike. However, there is real hope in the new Community Right to Buy powers which give us the legal teeth to rescue empty units and save them for the community. I would love to see these powers used to facilitate the return of a community-led bookshop to our High Road, a place where ideas, rather than just plastic-wrapped groceries, are traded once more.

Denise Wyllie-Ballard,
Address supplied



Chris Berlingieri, second right, and family at his celebration party

My party to celebrate life

Dear Editor,

Five years ago to the day when I had a near-fatal accident, I had the pleasure of hosting a celebration party at Madden's Ale House in the High Road in April, the same venue where my band Sound of the Suburb played many times.

After the accident, I was in an induced coma for three months, in a hospital bed for a year, then in a wheelchair. Thankfully, I no longer need a wheelchair and not even a walking stick. I walk with a limp, but that is hardly a problem, considering that I had come very close to dying.

I must thank all the surgeons, doctors, physios, and fellow chiropractors who have enabled me to make such great improvements. Most of this was done with the help of a GoFundMe campaign that my sisters kindly set up for me.

And I want to say thank you for all the very generous donations from my family members, friends and even former patients of mine. I will soon be getting back to the chiropractic profession that I love.

Unfortunately, I will never be able to play guitar again as I did in our band Sound of the Suburb, but luckily after three surgeries on my left arm I can bend my left elbow fully, which allows me to play drums. So watch this space for a new band I will be forming soon.

Chris Belingieri
Address supplied

Re-Griddable solution from page 9

Across:

CRAW
RACE
AGES
PEST

Down:

CRAP
RAGE
ACES
WEST

Not for resale

Dear Editor,

What a pity that the welcome return of the book exchange in East Finchley Station is being spoilt by two separate individuals who come and sweep everything from the shelves for their own use. They've been spoken to, but take no notice.



The station bookcase

I now write inside the front wrapper of my book donations: "East Finchley FREE Book Exchange, NOT FOR RESALE" and add a small spine label "Free Book Exchange". It may deter the thieves, but they obviously have no shame.

Jacky Wood
Cherry Tree Road, N2

Unnamed path

Dear Editor,

The walkway that runs alongside Long Lane Pasture, between Long Lane and the junction between Rosemary Avenue and Tangle Tree Close, parallel with the noisy North Circular Road and crossing the Northern line, does not, as far as I am aware, have a name.

It is an important and busy thoroughfare, not least for pupils on their way to and from the schools on East End Road. I think it deserves a name. How about 'Pasture Passage'?



Needs a name: The path alongside Long Lane Pasture. Photo John Lawrence

John Scadding
Address supplied



Dawn light: Long Lane Pasture in the early morning. Photo Linda Dolata

Dawn delight

Dear Editor,

3rd May, 4.45am, and Long Lane Pasture was open for a chance to hear the dawn chorus. Amazingly a total of 17 species was identified (using the Merlin app for accuracy). For a two-acre nature reserve like the Pasture, this is outstanding.

A wide range of habitats, native woodland, meadow, ponds and scrub boosts the biodiversity. The list of species included wren, blackcap, blackbird, song thrush, great tit, robin, chiffchaff, blue tit,

garden warbler, carrion crow, ring-necked parakeet, jackdaw and coal tit.

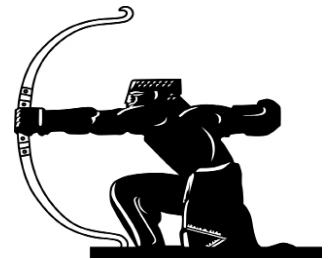
House sparrows, dunnocks, black headed gulls, wood pigeons and two species of bat were also seen. All this against a background of traffic on the North Circular Road, running alongside! Sadly it was too cloudy to see the sunrise, but it was still well worth the early start.

Linda Dolata
Address supplied

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news@the-archer.co.uk

Letters without verifiable contact addresses will not be printed. Contact details can be

withheld on request at publication. We reserve the right to abridge letters for reasons of space.



Place to gather: Face-painting was just one of the fun attractions as the first Round the Square event in the High Road. Photos Mike Coles

Entertainment in the square

By Diana Cormack

East Finchley Town Team's 'Round the Square' celebration took place on Saturday 2 May, marking the start of plans for a new performance and event space on the High Road, N2.

An impressive number of people turned up to be entertained for two hours by local dancers, instrumentalists and singers. The youngest were dancers from the Fixation Academy, who also ran a glitter bar for children, followed by guitarist Dayvid singing mostly

60s and 70s classics. Folk singer Maggie played the penny whistle and sang a song she wrote about Horace White, a much-missed East Finchley character. His call 'The best of luck' was echoed by the audience led by Maggie's son Jake.

Then starting with 'Make

your own kind of music' the Archer Community Choir impressed with three songs to round off the afternoon's entertainment.

Ice creams at half price were offered by Budgens throughout the programme. They also provided ladders and plants for

the flower bed outside. Amy's kindly provided electrical facilities. The proposed town square will use the pavement area between these two stores, where work has recently started with the removal of a shrubbery bed and some of the plants being re-sited.

People were invited to find out more about plans for the High Road at the event. They were also able to sign a petition asking Barnet Council to work with the community to deliver a greener, better town square for East Finchley. You can sign it yourself by using this link: <https://c.org/2QbctgnDPd>

Hindu community helps the hospice

By Sangita Thakkar

A vibrant and heartwarming community walk on Friday 10 April brought people of all ages together in support of North London Hospice, celebrating compassion, unity, and the spirit of giving back.

Together, participants raised an incredible £2,500 for the charity. The walk set off from Victoria Park in N3 and there were over 100 participants from all ages.

Participants from Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh (HSS UK) Finchley and Depala communities gathered with enthusiasm and purpose, walking side-by-side to make a meaningful difference. Adding to the uplifting atmosphere, Kiya Popatiya, one of the youth leaders from HSS UK, led the group in the chant "Sanghathan mein shakti hai" which means "in unity lies strength". A special thanks to Finchley Victoria Bowling and Croquet Club for allowing us to use their facilities to host the event.



En route: Walkers enjoying their pavement trek

Heard the buzz about pollinator pathways?

By Roger Chapman, East Finchley Community Trust

Buzz along to East Finchley's town square outside Amy's and Budgens early next month to hear about a new project aiming to reconnect people, green spaces and local history by telling stories of Finchley's wonderful community gardens.

Created by the East Finchley Community Trust and Finchley Pollinators, it's called 'Light and Flight: Pollinators, pathways and the historic walks of Finchley'.

On Saturday 4 July from 11am to 2pm in the town square on East Finchley High Road, the Finchley Pollinators will use the inspiration of the community gardens to share with you simple ways you can enrich your own spaces to better support our essential pollinators.

Could you improve local biodiversity by planting your own mini 'buzz stop' full of pollinator friendly flowers and herbs for bees and butterflies, or create a hoverfly lagoon or bee hotel?

Come along to learn more through interactive discussions, practical demonstrations and free hands-on activities for children and their families, so

that together we can ensure that the historic green corridors of the past can be replicated as

highways for pollinators and other local wildlife today and for the future.



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