

An unforgettable moment in the history of punk

Ry John Lawrence

It was a baking hot night 40 years ago. It was a tiny wood-built community centre in East Finchley with hundreds of young fans packed in. And on stage were a band that had just broken into the big time as kings of the punk rock scene.



Glory days: (left to right) Stranglers lead singer Hugh Comwell with Finchley Boys Al Hillier, Dennis Marks, Chris Green, Tommy McGonnall and Steve Hillier, plus Bruce Foxton of The Jam and The Stranglers' lean-Jacques Burnel, pictured at The Roundhouse in 1977.

The date was Saturday 27 August 1977, the place was the now-demolished Herbert Wilmot Centre in Eagans Place, next to Holy Trinity School, and the band were The Stranglers. At the time of the gig, their single Peaches had just been one of the summer's big hits.

The Finchley Boys

So why were they playing to a jumping crowd in a community centre in N2? Well, Hugh Cornwell and the rest of the band were friends with a gang of lads called The Finchley Boys who had a football team in the Barnet Sunday League, so they agreed to help raise money to

Kathryn scorza

buy them some kit.

Steve Hillier, now 61, grew up on The Grange estate and was one of the Finchley Boys. After first meeting The Stranglers at The Torrington in North Finchley, he went on to work on their worldwide tours for 17 years.

Legendary gig

He recalls the Herbert Wilmot gig like it was yesterday: "The centre usually just had discos and there was only a low platform stage. But it didn't bother us. We cleared all the pinball machines and sofas out of the way and hundreds of people turned up, all ages, from all over Finchley.

"It was absolutely rammed on a very hot night and was so steamy inside. The audience was wall-to-wall and there were people stage diving and doing all sorts. The energy was fantastic. For everybody there on that day and in that summer the music was a lifechanging experience. It's still a legendary gig among Stranglers fans."

Forty years on from their East Finchley debut, The Stranglers are still playing live. Later this month they're in Belfast, then later in the year they will be touring France before moving on to New Zealand and Australia early next year.



Nice 'n' sleazy: The Stranglers play the Herbert Wilmot Centre in August 1977. Photos courtesy of Steve Hillier

Car abandoned after crash

By Janet Maitland

Broken metal was scattered in all directions when a man crashed a stolen car straight into the central barrier on Falloden Way, NW11, at about 8.30pm on 2 July.

The driver of a blue BMW had been travelling east along the A1 when he suddenly swerved to the right just before the traffic lights at Hill Rise and smashed the car head on into the barrier. Although the front of the car was badly damaged, the driver managed to get out.

"Witnesses saw the driver cuss what to do about leave the car and then get into a this stretch of the A1.

car driven by someone else," said a police spokesperson. "The car was left abandoned and was later recovered." The BMW had been stolen from an address in Southall.

On 13 July, Barnet Council officers, Transport for London and local councillors met at the Ossulton Way crossroads to discuss what to do about safety on this stretch of the A1.

Motorcyclist named

By Janet Maitland

The motorcyclist killed when his bike collided with a car on Falloden Way on 21 June has been named as 29-year-old Benjamin Hillbrook, from Southgate. Emergency services were called just before 11am to reports of an accident on the A1, just past the traffic lights at the junction with Hill Rise and Northway, NW11. Despite the best efforts of everyone involved Mr Hillbrook was pronounced dead at the scene.

"We urge anyone who saw anything to come forward," said Detective Sergeant Jane Mallet. "It could prove vital to our ongoing investigation." Contact the dedicated witness appeal line on 020 8991 9555. You can also tweet police via @MetCC.

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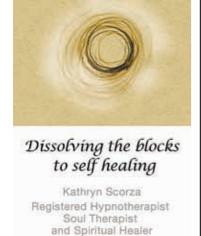
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