



# Hello: My first year living in East Finchley

By Karly Benson

Just over a year ago, I arrived in Muswell Hill with three suitcases, a backpack, and a short-term flat agreement. I had visited London before and knew that I preferred the north but underestimated what it would mean to really make this city my home.



Here to stay: Karly Benson

Compared to my earlier move to Berlin, I thought London would feel easier—familiar language, familiar culture, and the comfort of a direct flight home. Yet, as I quickly learned, navigating

a city of this size (and pace) is no small task. The adjustment took longer than I expected, and in many ways, I'm still adjusting.

My early days in Muswell Hill were spent tackling busy roundabouts and climbing steep hills. I wandered aimlessly, stumbling into charity shops, bakeries, and butchers who all greeted me with a familiar nod.

One evening, standing on Hillfield Park and looking out over the skyline, I exhaled for the first time in months. I felt I had carved out a little pocket of London where I could truly belong.

When it came time to move three months later, I was reluctant to leave the comfort of this part of town. So, I carried my three suitcases and backpack just 15 minutes down the road to East Finchley, where I live now.

Here, I've once again found pleasure in the independent shops that anchor the neighbourhood: Tony's Continental, Amy's Housewares and Cootes Pharmacy, to name a few. Even the local library (a place I never expected to spend much time) has welcomed me, supported me, and introduced me to The Archer.

To a long-time resident, these places may blend into the background of daily life. But for me, in a city that often feels overpopulated and overwhelming, these small shops, familiar faces and simple conversations have created a soft place for me to land. I never imagined I would find comfort and familiarity in a city as vast as London.

And yet, a year later, I'm grateful to have renewed my lease in this little pocket of the city that now feels like home.

# Goodbye: A fond farewell to N2

By Iqbal Ahmed

I moved to East Finchley in 2007 from the south side of Hampstead Heath. I have lived in London for the past three decades and spent more than half of this period in East Finchley.



Moving away: Iqbal Ahmed and his son

It seemed like a friendly neighbourhood when I was house hunting before moving to the area. Shortly after moving here, I was leaving a local supermarket when I encountered a white-haired man with a friendly face. I nodded and he spontaneously shook my hand. A few weeks later, I learned that he was the MP for Finchley and Golders Green, Dr Rudi Vis. I greeted him when I saw him again walking down High Road.

Time has really flown while I have lived in this neighbourhood and nothing untoward has ever happened to me during these years. I felt safe cycling home from work at midnight.

I had lived a rootless life for many years in Hampstead. It was in East Finchley that I finally put down roots when my son was born. He went on to attend a local infant and primary school and the school run meant carrying him downhill on my bike.

My local newspaper, The Archer, has always been very supportive by featuring my work as an author a few times in its pages. I have fond memories of Daphne Chamberlain, who volunteered for the paper until she passed away a year ago.

I wrote my previous book during the Covid lockdowns and a neighbour very kindly let me use her spare room to work during the day because my son was attending online classes in our small home. I wrote my new book, The Snows of Kashmir, sitting in a local coffee shop.

East Finchley will stay with me forever, wherever I may live. It seems as if it was yesterday when I first cycled from Hampstead to explore this neighbourhood, although it was 20 years ago. I am moving away to be nearer to my son's secondary school. However, East Finchley will always have a special place in my heart.

## RICKY SAVAGE... THE VOICE OF IRRESPONSIBILITY Wet and Dry

Well it's over. Dry January is gone for another year and now's the time to have proper gin with your tonic. But not if you want to time travel back to 1920s America, because you'd have been in the middle of that great social experiment, Prohibition. You know, no booze and the chance for disorganised criminals to engage in organised crime.

The American temperance movement had a long history going back to 17th-century puritans in New England who wanted to ban booze, but it really kicked off after 1890 and, by 1917, the Prohibitionists had a majority in Congress. Time for the 18th Amendment, which aimed to stop drinking in its tracks – in 1920, America went dry.

This shut bars, breweries and distilleries, and destroyed the fledgling wine industry. No Jack Daniel's for the duration. You could make your own wine and beer for personal consumption, and 'medical alcohol' and communion wine was allowed, but that was it.

This called for innovation and America had that by the bottle. You could buy grape juice which came with guidance about how to turn it into wine, a kind of home brew guide as all you needed to do was leave it for a couple of weeks and you'd got basic plonk. But the bootleggers went one better, using industrial alcohol with added flavourings. The government tried to stop them by bunging in increasingly dangerous additives until they killed about 10,000 drinkers by adding methanol.

Smuggling took place throughout the era, mostly from Canada and the West Indies. America asked Britain to stop it, we refused and Churchill described Prohibition as an abomination. Besides, it didn't bother the rich; they stockpiled and President Woodrow Wilson set the trend by taking his drinks cabinet with him when he left office.

If you couldn't get a beer in a bar, there was always the local speak-easy. As African Americans moved north for work, they took jazz with them, played in the speak-easies for people drowning their sorrows in weird cocktails. Meanwhile, the government lost tax revenue, and Prohibition created unemployment and helped crime get embedded in society. No Prohibition, no Al Capone, no St Valentine's Day Massacre.

By 1930, Prohibition had lost its appeal and Franklin Roosevelt promised to repeal it if elected. He kept his promise in 1933 with the 21st amendment, the only time one constitutional amendment had been repealed by another. As he said as he signed into the end of dry America, "Seems like a good day for a beer."

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