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A choir is born

By Marian Bunzl

The North London Chorus recently went back to school. Angelina Barlow, Head of Music at The Compton School, decided to introduce her students to the glories and complexities of major choral works, and so recruited singers from local choral societies to help start the children off.

One Tuesday evening back in September, a handful of singers from North London Chorus, Barnet Choral Society and Finchley Choral Society joined a classroom full of boys and girls from Year 7 through to Year 10. It was an ambitious programme, including works by Rutter, Berlioz and excerpts from Handel's *Messiah*.

Scores were distributed, the baton was raised, a chord from the pianist...and only adult voices were heard for about three weeks.

Finding their voices

Finally, Ms Barlow issued an edict. Arctic Monkeys et al were banned from iPods and MP3 players, only Berlioz and Handel were allowed and gradually the children began to sing. Beautifully! Three girls with angelic voices were chosen to sing the recitatives.

Although rehearsals were held after school, the children attended regularly, without complaints or excuses. Indeed "Hurrah, it's choir night!" was a frequent comment on Tues-

days and, as the day of the concert approached, I began to feel we weren't really needed anymore.

Hard work pays off

The concert, held in December at Trinity Church, North Finchley, was a major musical event. There were several numbers from the Compton School Orchestra, including Winter from Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*, played with great concentration and precision by children of all ages, from tiny to teenager.

There was a carol group, soloists on the piano and saxophone, and an amazing riff on drums. In the Compton Community Choir, the girls were elegant in black, and the boys were smart in bow ties (adults, ditto).

Everyone's spirited and disciplined performance repaid all Ms Barlow's enthusiasm and all their hard work. The last 'Good Will Towards Men' raised the roof. Next term the students will tackle Faure's *Requiem*. The CCC is here to stay!

A lovin' spoonful

By Diana Cormack

A token of affection on St Valentine's Day can be an expensive business, with so many retailers finding ways of parting fond partners from their money. Despite this, it isn't always easy to find the card or present that expresses exactly what you want to say. Yet hundreds of years ago that problem was overcome by even the poorest of people.

All over Europe, but particularly in Wales and other Celtic countries, it was the custom for young men to spend hours after a long day's work carving a single piece of wood into the shape of a spoon. This was not just any old spoon, but one intended for the woman of his choice. The hard work put into it was also intended to impress her father, as were the symbolic carvings worked into the wood. For instance, an anchor meant security and a desire to settle down; a ring meant together forever; a wheel meant supporting a loved one.

This special love token would be presented at a suitable time and, should the girl accept it, she was showing an interest in her suitor which would mark the beginning of their relationship. It is said that this is the origin of the word "spooning". Today Welsh love spoons are created to commemorate a range of special occasions, with both old and new symbols being used to express some aspect of love.

Sherlock Holmes illustrator commemorated

An exhibition showing work by the Sherlock Holmes illustrator Sidney Paget is on now until 5 May to coincide with the 100th anniversary of his death on 28 January.

The Case of the Influential Illustrator, at the Church Farmhouse Museum, Greyhound Hill, Hendon, traces Sidney Paget's view of the master detective.

It is to Paget's black and white drawings that we owe the now-iconic image of Holmes: the hawk-like features, the deerstalker cap and Inverness cape. Paget lived for a time in Finchley and he is buried in St Marylebone Cemetery (now called East Finchley Cemetery) in East End Road.

Paget was born in Pentonville Road, London, on 4 October 1860, the son of a vestry clerk. In 1881 he entered the Royal Academy Schools, following in the footsteps of his brothers Henry and Walter, both noted artists.

In his short life, he produced numerous portraits in oils, including one of Holmes's creator Arthur Conan Doyle, and other paintings and hundreds of drawings for magazines such as the Graphic, the Sphere and the Illustrated London News.

However, he is now best remembered for the 350 or so illustrations he produced to accompany the publication of Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories in *Strand* magazine.

To add excitement, the exhibition contains its very own mystery. A number of clues are given to visitors who have to try to guess which Holmes story they represent.



A classic illustration of Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson by Sidney Paget, courtesy Barnet Council

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Barnet swimmers are winners

Barnet swimmers have won the most prestigious gala for London swimmers for the third year in a row.

Athletes from across the capital took part in the 2007 London Inter-boroughs final but once again it was Barnet swimmers who scooped the top prize. The gala, which has been running in London since 1972, was devised to promote

the benefits of swimming in all age groups. It has attracted in excess of 32,000 swimmers, including notable champions Mark Foster, Mike Fibbens and Sarah Price, who have all represented Barnet down the years.

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