



Champion in the making

By Helen Drake

When his dad suggested Muay Thai (a martial art a bit like kick boxing) as an after-school activity, Anthony Sparks wasn't sure it was for him. "But," he says, "I went to the Minotaur Gym in Burnt Oak and had a go and I liked it."

At the first assembly after the spring holiday, Anthony, a Year 4 pupil at Martin Primary School, spoke about what he does at his Muay Thai classes and showed his three trophies, two of which he won during the school holiday.

Protective kit

Anthony describes his training kit: "I have to wear Thai boxing shorts which are loose and make it easier to kick. I wear a t-shirt and Thai boxing gloves when I am training on the pads or punch bags.

"When I am sparring or fighting I wear a body shield and a head guard to stop me from getting hurt, a gum shield to protect my teeth, shin and instep pads and a groin guard."

After that initial visit to the Minotaur Gym, Anthony started training three times a week. He progressed quickly and his trainer, Chris Knowles, suggested he should take part in a competition.

"It's my choice"

His first fight was last year when he had just turned eight years old. His second was a "win or lose" fight and he won it. His third was an inter-club fight but his opponent pulled out at the last minute. Anthony was matched with another boy who turned out to be a three times champion. It was tough but he did very well.

Anthony explained that



Champion ambitions: Anthony Sparks. Photo by Helen Drake

despite some differences in age and ability, children are matched by height and weight. "It's my choice to get in the ring to fight".

So what does Anthony like about Muay Thai? "You get really fit - you do lots of skipping. I've learnt about self-defence and discipline and know that I have to work hard and do my best all the time, not only when I am training. It's helped me to concentrate and focus better and I've made a lot of new friends at the club." And his ambition? "To be the world's Children's Muay Thai Champion" of course!

For more information go to www.minotaurgym.com.



Tudor and Hilary Spencer enjoy an afternoon tea break with Helen O'Toole. Photo by Diana Cormack

Beauty spots

Cottage gardens in East Finchley opened their gates to the public on Sunday 18 May. Tudor and Hilary Spencer's wheelchair friendly garden in Stanley Road, along with gardens in Trinity Road and Long Lane, attracted over 170 visitors. The Spencers' densely planted garden has eight distinct areas and includes raised areas, some of which are used for growing vegetables. Designed to be completely wheelchair friendly, it is probably the only garden in East Finchley which includes a life belt, strategically placed on the fence alongside the heron-proof pond.

Two of those deer spotted from time to time in the area live in the garden of 399 Long Lane. So do other appealing ornaments, including gnomes and a red toadstool, nestling among a profusion of plants. Dense planting and a minute pond still leave a choice of seating (some under cover) in this tiny but sociable garden for owner Jonathan Maitland and his friends. Amazingly, the garden is only two years old. Two other beautiful gardens in Trinity Road were also on show to raise funds for the National Gardens Scheme.

Do you have a blocked drain near you?

By Diana Cormack

Finding a blocked drain isn't that difficult these days. Just take a look as you walk along the streets or even through the park. At the time of writing those near the Lazy Sally Kiosk in Cherry Tree Wood are completely clogged and could perhaps cause back up problems to the café's own drainage system. Recent rainstorms produced roadside pools in some areas as water failed to flow away effectively. But don't despair: Barnet Council can clear things up.



Full to the brim. Photo by Diana Cormack

The council told *THE ARCHER* that a contractor clears each of the borough's gullies (drains) once a year. Also, a number of gullies within the borough are designated as 'vulnerable' due to a history of flooding in the local area and it is planned that these gullies will be cleaned six times a year. Some gullies are missed during the annual cleaning when access is blocked by parked cars. However, if residents have specific concerns over gullies they can report them to the council via online reporting forms at www.barnet.gov.uk/online-services/online-services-forms.htm or by calling the Customer Care Unit on 020 8359 2000. Officers from the council will assess the need for

a gully to be cleaned and when this is done there is no charge to either local residents or the person making the report.

High hopes, low turnout

Who would not want to know about an organisation that aims to reduce waste, increase co-operation and give more say to the individual? It seems that few are interested.

Have you lost a ring?

THE ARCHER is hoping it can reunite a reader with something that is precious to them. Bethany, a pupil at Holy Trinity School, saw a glint in a puddle in Market Place and bent down to pick up what we think is a wedding ring.

Her mum handed it to us and now we'd be happy to reunite it with its owner. The ring is gold and has a distinctive pattern along with an initial and date carved on the inside.

You can get in touch with us by email on the-archer@lineone.net or by phoning 08717 334465. Please give us the date and initial on the ring.

The Finchley Society tells us that the talk they hosted by Michael Lassman on 24 April about the Local Partnership Strategic Community Group was poorly attended.

The group includes senior representatives of the NHS, the police and Barnet Council and, by law, must engage effectively with the community.

The aim is to promote co-operation on common problems, searching for solutions that are not wasteful of time and money. The group also tries to promote happiness and a good fellow feeling.

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www.eastfinchleyclinic.co.uk
East Finchley Clinic
2-3 Bedford Mews
Bedford Road
London N2 9DF
020 8883 5888
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