



Zayne's endurance challenge

East Finchley Territorial Army Officer Captain Zayne Crow is currently undergoing rigorous training to compete in one of the world's toughest long-distance running races, the 2009 Marathon des Sables, in aid of Help for Heroes.

This gruelling and demanding six-day endurance race sets off on 26 March and will see her running 151 miles (243km) in intense heat across the Sahara Desert in Morocco through rugged terrain, over rough tracks, stony ground and sand dunes.

The Marathon des Sables is heralded as the toughest footrace on the planet with runners covering the equivalent to five and a half regular marathons during the six-day period, in temperatures up to 120°F. In addition to the extreme mental and physical stamina required to undertake such a challenge, the competitors will also have to carry everything needed for the duration on their backs in a rucksack (food, clothes, medical kit, sleeping bag, etc).

Marathon veteran

South African born Captain Crow, 33, is no stranger to long-distance running competitions, having already successfully completed 19 marathons and two ultra distance marathons (52 miles) before signing up for this next challenge.

Captain Crow has high hopes that her preparation will stand her in good stead to finish the Marathon des Sables.

"I am feeling really strong and looking forward to this race. Because of the extreme temperatures and the weight I'll be carrying, it will be an immense

challenge but I've put in lots of miles already and in terms of physical and mental fitness I'm now in peak condition. Obviously my main aim is to complete the course and cross

the finish line".

When she is not running, Captain Crow is a Recovery Sister at the King Edward VII Hospital in London and has been a member of the Ter-

ritorial Army for five years. You can sponsor efforts on behalf of the armed forces charity Help for Heroes by going to www.justgiving.com/zaynecrow.



Captain Zayne Crow will run 151 miles in six days.

Playgroup may be priced out of its home

By Diana Cormack

After more than a quarter of a century of providing young children and their carers with an opportunity to meet, play and learn together, the Parent and Toddler Group which meets at St Mary's RC Church is in danger of disappearing.

This year the group has halved its sessions and now meets only on Tuesday mornings from 9.30 - 11.30am, a disappointment to those for whom such gatherings can be important. As well as being a centre of support and help for adults, playgroups contribute greatly to a child's speech, mental and physical development through shared activities which extend social skills.

Hire charge rising

The group has the use of two large halls owned by St Mary's, with plenty of space for the children to play as well as storage for their equipment. It is run by Rebecca Weston, who told *THE ARCHER* that they are facing a problem over payment. Not long before Christmas she was informed that the hiring charge was to rise from

£30 to £50 per session.

Parish priest Father Tony said: "A charge of £50 will bring the Parent and Toddler group in line with the Monday Club. This does not seem an unreasonable charge for the use of two large halls, the kitchen and other facilities. The January gas bill was £1,200."

Rebecca said that at present there are about 30 playgroup users who pay as and when they attend. Payment for one child is £2.50; for two it is £4, which includes a drink and fruit.

In the summer months, however, contributions drop when the good weather attracts people to parks and other outdoor facilities. Rebecca feels this could lead to the playgroup being closed during that time of year and fears for its future.

Fabulous Finchley on foot

Paul Baker, a City of London guide, has been leading tours around the borough of Barnet since 2004. The walks have elicited a lot of interest from Barnet residents and beyond the borough.

His latest is 'Fabulous Finchley'. It takes a leisurely stroll down East End Road and through 1,000 years of history, finishing at East Finchley tube. Along the way, walkers will learn more about the famous sites of Finchley: St Mary's Church, The Manor House, Avenue House and Christ's College.

There will also be fascinating stories about some of the famous people who have lived in Finchley, ranging from Harry Beck, designer of the London tube map, to Richard Cromwell, son of the famous Oliver. And

the stories of two infamous murders will be told.

Paul will also ask why the air in Finchley attracts so many world famous comedians. Eric Morecambe, Peter Sellers and Spike Milligan all lived for many years in the area. The walk will take place on Sunday 22 March, starting at Finchley Central tube station (Ballards Lane exit) at 11am, and lasting about two hours. The cost is £7, under 12s £3. The walk will be repeated on Sundays 28 June and 13 September at 2pm. For further details, contact Paul on 020 8440 6805.

Blitz mentality in a power cut

By Peter Murphy

At least 44 houses in Fortis Green were left without power for 23 hours on Monday 9 February. The power went off without warning at 11am and didn't come on again until 10am the following day. This was part of a much larger power cut throughout London.

Apparently, the situation was so severe the EDF Energy Network Centre couldn't cope. Instead of a recorded message saying "We apologise for your loss of power and we're doing everything we can to restore it," customers heard: "Due to the adverse weather conditions we are getting a lot of calls and we would like you to know that,

as safety is important to us, it's taking a lot longer." Make of that what you will.

Candles and compensation

When it became apparent that we were in for the long haul, the blitz mentality kicked in and neighbours who had never spoken (and may never speak again) showed concern for each other. Needless to say, according to a well-known universal law, neither Amy's or Budgens had packs of cheap household candles in stock. It might come as a pleasant

surprise to those who were without power for longer than 18 hours to know that EDF will be contacting them in the next couple of weeks with an application form for compensation of £50.

I phoned EDF and asked if they were prepared to compensate for loss of earnings incurred by those freelancers who worked from home. I was told that the £50 was a good will gesture and not in any way an admission of responsibility and that they were not prepared to compensate for loss of earnings.

Professional couple with young child seek two bedroom flat in N2 or N10 with wood floors, gas central heating and outside space. Contact Andrew on 020 7518 3453 after 6 pm.

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