



Fundraiser, Former MP and journalist Martin Bell hands over a cheque to Combat Stress.

A fine total for soldier's charity

Following the success of the Hampstead Garden Suburb Combat Stress Winter Fair last November, organisers were able to hand over a giant cheque for £5,123 to the veterans' mental health charity. Fair opener and suburb resident Martin Bell, a former MP and BBC war correspondent, presented the money to Josephine Grace, community fundraising manager of Combat Stress.

Places for preschoolers

A not-for-profit charity run by parents is making plans to open a new preschool venue in Muswell Hill in September.

345 preschools currently operates in Tetherdown and Church Crescent in Muswell Hill, along with another unit in The Grove area of Alexandra Park.

From September, the charity will be merging its two Muswell Hill preschools into one new setting in Pages Lane. It will offer three-hour sessions as well as full-day preschool care, with a secure and private entrance.

General manager Lou Colley said: "We are a not-for-profit charity run by our parents, who

form a committee whose role is to oversee our direction and our financial workings.

"Not-for-profit means that we are able to offer our families childcare at cost; it's not our business to make huge profit from children. Our aim is to reach out to all families and build a community of like-minded people who care about their local preschool."

For more details or to register your child for September 2015, see www.345preschools.co.uk or arrange a visit.

Change of a dress shop

By Diana Cormack

After four months of running her pop up shop at the rear of Ryker Kids, 162 High Road (see THE ARCHER Nov 2014) Aida Khaledi has moved to her own premises at 58 High Road.

'Aliya.J' opened on Valentine's Day, which proved to be beneficial as the florist Josephines next door was really busy, so Aida's fashion shop attracted attention.

Having more space has meant an increase in the brands stocked, with Noa Noa, Fever and Yas from Denmark being added to those from Italy, Spain and Sweden along with British made clothing. Also on sale are accessories including those from the Ted Baker range, plus attractive handcrafted jewellery and some interesting gifts.

Woodland teaches trust... and how to let go

By Ann Bronkhorst

If you notice small groups of children (plus teachers) busy in Coldfall Wood and wonder why they're not in the classroom, here's the reason: Forest School education.

Curious to know more, I joined a Saturday morning walk led by local teacher Ewan Marshall on 7 March. There were adults of all ages and several young children. Ewan's kitbox produced surprises such as hot chocolate, blindfolds, tools, rope ... and for an hour or two he demonstrated how the theory of Forest School education works.

blindfolded, is gently led towards a tree, gauging the feel of the ground, light, wind, sounds and, finally, texture of bark and bulk of trunk. Later, minus blindfold, they find their tree again. All the senses have played a part in their 'internal mapping'; so has trust.

Whittling, knotting and letting go

On this introductory walk we didn't filter clay or study invertebrates but we did handle knives (with much emphasis on safety) and discover the quiet satisfaction of whittling wood. The physical skills and confidence encouraged by this activity can be therapeutic.

Our final activity must have looked comical because of our different heights and weights. A rope was knotted securely (by a child) to make a circle. We held on to it, letting go with one hand when it was taut and we felt secure. The messages about body awareness, co-operation and trust were clear.

Thanks to Ewan Marshall and the Friends of Coldfall Wood for another interesting walk; see www.coldfallwoods.co.uk for more.

Outdoor learning

Basically it's learning, not just messing about: woodland becomes a resource to stimulate children's curiosity, imagination, language, social development and even what were once called the three Rs. Having Coldfall Wood at the back door provides a wonderful opportunity for Coldfall Primary School, where Ewan teaches; another local school is showing interest, too.

Once, school-age children could range freely some way away from their parents; now that sense of what is a 'safe distance' has shrunk to about ten metres. Forest School methods help to build the child's confidence, its own sense of a safe distance from the adult in charge and trust in other children.

For example, a child or adult,

RICKY SAVAGE ...

"The voice of social irresponsibility"

The end of magic

ISHOULD WRITE THIS ENTIRELY IN CAPITALS BECAUSE THAT'S THE WAY THAT DEATH SPEAKS. But if I do that then some wizened sub-editor in the printing district of Terry Pratchett's fictional city-state of Ankh-Morpork will just run a red herring through it before the trolls bash it into shape. And I wonder what will Lord Vetinari think?

In the back streets of Ankh-Morpork there is muttering in the shadows, Angua is unsure about changing from human to werewolf and Captain Carrot wonders if the Dwarf Bread Museum really needs him. Even Arch Chancellor Ridcully cannot decide on a second portion of lunch and wonders if the stumbling towers of the Unseen University can hold up much longer now that the Creator has kept his appointment with Death.

In teenage bedrooms, student residences and the kind of run-down dwellings where former hipsters admire the hot and cold rising damp, there is a great sorrow. Among backstreet cabinet makers and greying book sellers there is nothing but despair that Death has got his man. Sellers of dodgy meat pies fear for the future and shake with terror at the thought of troll health inspectors. Whilst in the far off distance, in a corner of the Disc called Battered Sea, a small swamp dragon finds a partially rebuilt arts centre to explode in.

Terry Pratchett may not have been Dickens or written plays to rival Shakespeare, but he did write the kind of books that low brow readers like me wanted to read. This was not Tolkein making Hobbits, this was the rest of us having a good laugh at pomposity. This was satire wrapped up in a stolen invisibility cloak that had been left out in the mud for the night. This was where everything you thought you knew got slightly twisted and where books had to be chained up to protect the reader, not the other way round.

There was always a point or three to the stories as the Discworld's inhabitants grappled with rock'n roll, movies and gender discrimination. It's just that no one took them seriously because no one takes anything with incontinent dragons in it seriously anymore. And maybe that's why I will miss Terry Pratchett more than I'd miss an entire coachload of Nobel prizewinners. As they say in Ankh-Morpork, the two things in life you can't avoid are Death and taxis.

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