



Open to discussion: Visitors of all faiths at the Jamatkhana

A visit to the cousins

By Daphne Chamberlain

Twice this autumn the Jamatkhana for the Ismaili Community, that attractive building in East End Road, has opened its doors to all local people; the first time on Silver Sunday in September and then for an open discussion day at the end of October. As Rabbi Mark Goldsmith put it: "We've come to visit the cousins for the afternoon."

Shia Ismaili Muslims give allegiance to the Aga Khan, who is a direct descendant of the Prophet Muhammad. The present Aga Khan, now celebrating his diamond jubilee, works constantly to improve inter-faith relations.

The day was planned as a

discussion between Muslims, Jews and Christians, but unfortunately no official representative of the Christian faith could be there in person.

It was just after the atrocious murder of Jews in Pittsburgh, and presenter Riaz Nanji expressed the general sadness

and shock. In his welcome, he strongly condemned hate crime, stressing the enormous importance of eradicating ignorance.

The discussion theme was the concept of sacrifice, as personified by the story of Abraham and Isaac, familiar to all three faiths. "We have the same family story, but the way of going about it is different, which is absolutely fair", said Rabbi Goldsmith.

Ismaili Dr Farouk Tobin agreed, pointing out the many parallels between Judaism and Islam, as well as differences in interpretation, and the Islamic recognition of Jesus as a prophet.

Tranquil setting

After general discussion groups, where a representative of Barnet Multi Faith said, "You people are an inspiration to the rest of Barnet", there was a tasty tea and a tour of the Jamatkhana.

A handstitched mural of birds reminded us to find God within ourselves. The spacious, all-white prayer-room with its geometric designs, window shutters and focussed lights is beautiful and very tranquil.

The message of the afternoon was that people who preach hatred and terrorism will not succeed. The most important thing is kindness. "Religion may divide us, but a common ethic unites."

Come dancing

By Malcolm Dunkeld

Emilia Georgiou has loved dance, the most ephemeral of the arts, since the age of two when her Greek Cypriot father (a frustrated breakdancer) encouraged her to join a dance class.

As a child she trained in ballet before swapping the stretched upper torso of classical ballet for the fluidity and improvisation of a Middlesex University degree course in Dance Performance, a course with philosophical underpinnings in American contemporary dance.

Emilia became a performance dancer until knee injuries required her to pursue her passion by becoming a teacher. In 2012 she helped form Something Out of the Ordinary (SOTO), a community arts organisation that introduces dance movement to young children but has since grown to include young people and vulnerable children.

Most of SOTO's work is done in schools such as the Archer Academy, East Finchley, where classes work towards Christmas cabarets, spring productions, summer community festivals and end of year fundraisers. Dance is used to build confidence, social skills, promote physical health and raise aspirations. Some children have gone on to become professional dancers.

Emilia, 30, from Southgate, is especially proud of SOTO's work with vulnerable children. The range of courses offered can be found at www.sotocic.org. Emilia can be contacted directly on 07949 235602 or by email at info@sotocic.org.



On stage: SOTO performers at this year's East Finchley Festival.
Photo by Mike Coles



Sparks in the wind: Visitors watch the Long Lane Pasture beacon on Armistice Day. Photo Donald Lyven.

Sparks for the fallen soar into the heavens

By Linda Dolata

On the 11th day of the 11th month 2018, the day was filled with ceremonies commemorating 100 years since the end of the First World War and the signing of the Armistice.

At Long Lane Pasture, we decided to have a Beacon of Light, joining in with a thousand more beacons lit across the UK in a coordinated 'Battle's Over' ceremony. The beacons were to signify the light of peace that emerged from the darkness of four years of war.

The allotment holders at the adjacent Pointalls site were invited to join us, and the large beacon did not disappoint. Wayne Armsby had skilfully built a safe and effective bonfire that roared magnificently into life at the allotted time, despite the hours of rain earlier in the day.

As the fire sent up its flames,

a myriad sparks soared into the celestial heights and a lady next to me expressed the poignant thought that the thousands of tiny glowing sparks represented, each one, a life that was lost before its time.

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