



Moment of fame: Nick Young, right, with a fellow extra and star Domhnall Gleeson, front, in the film *Goodbye Christopher Robin*.

The day I was paid £50 to shake someone's hand

By Nick Young

On my first day at work, I was paid £50 to shake someone's hand. I was a journalist at the time, but I've also been a farm labourer and an MP, in addition to my most frequent role as someone in the crowd.

Why? Well, for a couple of years, 'work' for me partly meant being a film extra: a low-level inhabitant of a world of early starts, free haircuts, fried food and lots of waiting around, sometimes without a mobile phone due to the secrecy surrounding the film in question (*Fantastic Beasts* or, as it's known in my house, 'the one with the £50 handshake').

All I'd had to do was send my details to a casting agency which would contact me in advance with dates for a job, usually referred to by a code name. Confirmation about whether I would actually be needed would only be forthcoming a day or two prior to shooting. Not the most reliable way to earn a living, but it was fun while it lasted.

Being background

For the most part I was 'background', which could mean placing bets in a casino (*Film Stars Don't Die in Liverpool*), attending a royal garden-

party (*Victoria & Abdul*) or walking around, either in Gray's Inn (*The Children Act*) or along a mock-up of Downing Street (the second series of *The Crown*). My most prominent role was in *Goodbye Christopher Robin* as 'man standing next to the female lead'. Margot Robbie is a much nicer person than most of the characters she plays!

Where's Nick?

I was an MP in *Darkest Hour*, for which a mock-up of the House of Commons was constructed at Leavesden Studios. Several hundred people dressed as 1940 MPs were gathered together for the set-piece speeches by Winston Churchill, played by Gary Oldman.

Before he appeared on-set (thanks to spending hours in make-up, he was always the last to arrive), the director kept us entertained by playing music, and at one point he had the 1940 House of Commons singing along to The Beatles'

Hey Jude. If you can find that on YouTube, I recommend it. Good luck spotting me in the crowd!

Dietitian scoops top award

Cath Fogarty, a specialist paediatric dietitian from East Finchley, won top prize at the Central London Community Healthcare NHS Trust staff awards.

Cath won 'Registered healthcare professional of the year' awarded to a staff member who has consistently provided excellent care and support to service users, families and carers. Close to 400 staff from across the organisation came together for the annual staff awards at Porchester Hall in Bayswater.

Positive signs of progress from Grange Big Local

By Ruth Anders

The last Saturday in October dawned bitterly cold, but the welcome awaiting visitors to the Grange Big Local project's annual meeting at St Mary's Parish Centre on the High Road was warm enough to thaw any nerves or icy fingers. Smiles and coffee greeted everyone from the very young to those well past retirement.

Pudding persuasion

Guest speaker John Mayford launched the proceedings with a lively talk about community leadership and the skills and experience required to constitute an effective Board. As Chief Executive of OLMEC, a social enterprise organisation championing race equality through economic and social justice, John had heaps of wise advice to share.

He began by asking everyone to tell him who they were, what they hoped to gain from his talk and their favourite pudding. This banished any shred of resistance in terms of everyone's willingness to take part and be heard!

Range of achievements

After John's valuable insights, we were given a summary of Grange Big Local's achievements over the past 12 months. These included a Fun Palace festival, development of an imaginative open spaces

strategy, negotiations on the Tarling Road community hub and a weekly local Citizens Advice Barnet service that has put £34,000 into the pockets of local people.

One of the largest projects GBL is funding is their Art Against Knives initiative, which provides activities, support and mentoring for local young people. And everyone was delighted to hear that funds have now been raised to improve the infamous Trinity Road underpass.

Thanks were given to outgoing chair, the tireless Pat Murphy, and a warm welcome to her replacement, James Masters. GBL's principal challenge is to attract a more varied membership that represents the community, to help spend the lottery funding awarded to make the area an even better place to live. To find out more text Grange to 66777 or visit www.grangebiglocal.org.



TV's Topsyie opens the Holy Trinity Autumn Fair. Photo Mike Coles

Raise the rafters

Drag artist Topsyie Redfern opened the autumn fair at Holy Trinity Church in Church Lane, N2, on Saturday 10 November which raised more than £2,000 for the church. Organisers thanked everyone who came along and all those who contributed a prize for their famous raffle.

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