



YOUNG ARCHER

Adolf the tortoise rises - for his 100th summer?

By Carey Miller

Spring is here again and providing the usual stress for me and my family. Adolf, our beloved but very tricky tortoise may, or may not, wake up. This happens every year.

Adolf out-dates us all. In 1941, during the Second World War, he (or is it she?) was found shell-shocked in a crater in the garden next door to where we live now in Woodside Avenue, to the south of Cherry Tree Wood. This was as a result of a parachute mine being dropped there.

As far as we know, no one died (including the tortoise) but the house and garden were destroyed and not rebuilt until

on several occasions.

He lost part of his shell after foolishly trying to hibernate in a bonfire, been found encased in a block of frozen earth during a harsh winter, and has escaped and run away on several occasions. Adolf always got found and brought back home again to Woodside Avenue, and has been adored by our eight grandchildren even though one of them managed to drop him.

As he must be approaching



Survivor: Adolf the tortoise has come out of hibernation and is contemplating a dandelion lunch. Photo Mike Coles

some years later. The family who lived in our house then took Adolf in and looked after him until they retired.

Knowing nothing of this we bought the house and moved into it with our family. We were introduced to Adolf, and agreed to adopt him. Since then and 40 years on, he has cheated death

about 90 years old and could be approaching 100, we now put him in a special box in our garage to hibernate in. We always worry if he is alive and ready to come out and return to the garden where he enjoys his favourite food of green beans and dandelions. Every year we keep our fingers crossed!



Out in the woods: Children enjoying some learning in the fresh air. Photo waowcio.org

Where the wild things are

By Ann Bronkhorst

You follow a path that curves round the edge of a little orchard, its fruit trees in blossom. Nearby there's a pond alive with tadpoles and newts. Ahead, a small wood holds a hidden clearing which, when you reach it, seems like every child's dream den.

Perhaps you recognise this place? In the grounds of Martin School, close to East Finchley allotments, this once neglected strip of woodland has become the setting for open-air learning and fun.

For several years an organisation called Wild About Our Woods has been based at the school, developing a Forest School programme. Here, too, their woodland holiday clubs for local children have been running last summer, last October and this Easter, with backing from Grange Big Local and the John Lyons charity.

A special place

After one of the Easter holiday sessions, Janine Young from Wild About Our Woods showed

me round the site. Striking features are the huge parachute stretched above the meeting area, the safely-designed central fire pit, and the logs for seating. There are signs of the children's activities: rope ladders, some delicious fresh pineapple in lime syrup they'd cooked, but the site doesn't look a mess. It's clear that the impact on nature is minimal and the gains enormous.

Many London children are distanced from the natural world and even from being outdoors. Janine, a calm friendly woman with children of her own, has noticed how some are nervous at first and reluctant to get 'dirty'. Accepting the weather, handling natural materials, noticing and

learning about plants and creatures and sharing food together bring rich benefits.

Forest School

More schools are running or enabling clubs of this kind, often managing to do so 'in house' as part of the curriculum after special training for the teachers. There's quite a variety of provision, however, as the term Forest School is sometimes loosely applied.

For information about the Forest School movement, its philosophy and development, visit www.forestschoollassociation.org and for Janine Young's work in North London go to www.waowcio.org and www.wildaboutourwoods.yahoo.com.

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Parent power raises £132,000 for library

The Archer Academy will start building its new library in July after award-winning local children's author Anne-Marie Conway presented headteacher Lucy Harrison with a cheque for £4,400.

Anne-Marie handed over the proceeds from sales of her latest book, *Unicorn Girl*, at the school's end-of-term assembly on Friday 5 April, which marked the end of the school's annual LitFest week.

The donation brings the amount raised for the academy's 'Make Beaumont Brilliant' campaign to £132,000, within reach of its final target of £150,000 and already enough to start breaking ground while students are away for the summer. Construction on the site of the upper school in Beaumont Close, next to East Finchley tube station, should be completed by autumn this year.

Miss Harrison said: "I have been genuinely moved by the level of parental support this project has secured. To everyone who has contributed



Library fundraiser: Author Anne-Marie Conway presents her cheque to Archer Academy students and headteacher Lucy Harrison.

to this fundraising project, in whatever way, I am incredibly grateful and of course it means so much to me and the school that Anne-Marie has made such a generous donation."

Anne-Marie said: "I'm enormously proud that *Unicorn Girl* has raised so much money." *Unicorn Girl* is her seventh book. It is aimed at 9-12 year

olds and tells the story of Ariella, who discovers a unicorn at the bottom of her garden, just as she is facing personal issues such as school bullying and the illness of her baby brother.

Donations to the Archer Academy's 'Make Beaumont Brilliant' library and resource fund are still welcome at <https://tinyurl.com/archermbb>.