



Animal art: Oak Lodge pupil Leo, left, shows his elephant mask to Virginia McKenna, who also met teacher Sally Adams, who had lived in Kenya.

Elephants are born to live free in the wild too

By David Melsome

When wildlife campaigner Virginia McKenna arrived at Oak Lodge School in East Finchley in her Born Free jeep last month, it was the exciting finale

to an intensive week of workshops where staff and pupils worked closely with the conservation charity to learn about saving endangered elephants.

The actress spent all morning at the school for students with learning disabilities, including autism, enjoying the elephant art work they had created, talking about wildlife and watching an Africa-inspired music and drama show.

A joy for Virginia

Virginia said: "I have had an unforgettable morning at Oak Lodge School. Watching the performances about elephants, imaginatively written and acted, with a backdrop of amazing paintings and collages, was a joy. Above all, I was delighted to meet so many fascinating children, and the wonderful teachers who are dedicated to their care."

Teacher's personal link

The visit was particularly special for humanities teacher Sally Adams, who taught in Kenya and had been a friend of George Adamson, the game warden at the centre of the *Born Free* story portrayed in the 1966 film.

"George's camp in Kora was my favourite weekend retreat," explained Sally. "I loved having supper in the evening with the lamps burning, surrounded by millions of insects and hearing the occasional roar of George's

lions outside the camp. He knew the sounds of all his lions; they were his life.

"When I came back to the UK and started teaching at Oak Lodge I knew it was important for the students to share with me and the other teachers a love for wild animals through developing an understanding of their lives.

"It is thanks to charities

such as Born Free that we are reminded how we should treat animals, with care and compassion and opposing their exploitation. We were all incredibly excited about Virginia's visit so the children could hear her passion for animal conservation first hand. She, just like George, has dedicated her life to helping wildlife."

Burglars pose as council workers

By Janet Maitland

Police are warning residents to be careful who they let into their homes after men claiming to have been sent by the council stole a total of £2,500 from two residents, both living in social housing provided by Barnet Homes.

The victims lived on Norfolk Close, N2, and Basing Way, N3. Both thought the men were genuine when they claimed to be water board workers contracted by the council. It is likely that their homes were targeted because water works happened to be going on nearby. Neither of the victims was elderly or vulnerable.

Once inside the victims' homes, one of the men distracted the residents while the others searched the property and then left with the stolen cash.

Callous thieves get easy pickings

Jan Lovell, from East Finchley Safer Neighbourhood

Team, said the men, two or three of them, were described as 30 to 40-years-old, white, wearing all black and with possibly Eastern European accents.

"They offered a fake business card saying G and Sons Roofing and may have left in a white van. They stole £2,500, a good result for an afternoon's work and likely to encourage them to make more attempts.

"Please do not allow anyone you do not personally know into your home without an appointment arranged with the agency, and use the chain on your front door when you answer it."



Born Free: Virginia arrives in her charity's jeep.

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