



Coaching companions: Andrew Waddell and Lottie

Talkie walkies with one man and his dog

By David Gritten

Take a local stroll around some of our more peaceful, leafy places, East Finchley Cemetery, maybe, or further afield on Hampstead Heath, and you might encounter local resident Andrew Waddell. He'll be walking, often with another man and perhaps with his cocker spaniel Lottie trotting alongside too. He isn't just taking a casual stroll: Andrew, 46, is doing his job as a walking coach.

This involves giving advice on his walks to men, many of them in his age bracket and discontented in some way, and helping them to discover how their lives could be far better. In speaking of this, he cites his own experience.

"I was in advertising for 20 years, latterly as chief operating officer of a large marketing agency," he recalls. "When I turned 40, my Dad died of cancer, and I did the classic thing, not dealing with grief, but burying myself in work. And because of that I was missing everything I'd always wanted: my wife, my kids, a home. I started seeing a therapist and through her I came to realise I hated my job."

His therapist recommended Andrew to the Tavistock Clinic, where he completed a course in organisational psychology, then quit the world of advertising to re-train as a midlife coach.

Side by side

"The reason for it is to help men who are woefully misinformed about how to deal with their emotions," he says. "Society sees it as a joke, but men are having midlife crises. There's a whole generation of men who suffer from emotional self-doubt, yet they can't talk about it. They have no way of expressing it."

His first clients were all local to N2 and he started 'walking coaching' on the Heath: "I quickly discovered that the balance of exercise and nature created a positive space for my clients. And then there's the sheer pleasure of walking with someone while you're

coaching. There's something powerful about that combination of walking and talking."

As Andrew tells it, it's effective too: "Studies have shown that being side to side when you're talking, rather than face to face, feels less confrontational or judgmental."

Friends for Lottie

Andrew has had a full complement of clients who simply walk but he is now swelling the ranks by actively encouraging clients with dogs to bring them along to keep Lottie company. "There's something about those animals that's so free and happy," he explains. His new venture along these lines is called.... Talkie Walkies. Find out more at www.midlife-coach.co.uk/talk-walkies

Bake Off Matt brings star power to school campaign

By Chloe Davies

Comedian and *Great British Bake Off* host Matt Lucas is the new face of the campaign to raise funds to build a performing arts studio at the Archer Academy in East Finchley.

The TV star, who has spoken of how performing arts transformed his school days, will be patron of the school's Raise the Roof campaign. He will be drumming up support and hosting a special 'Evening With' event in the coming months.

Matt is also expected to come into the school to meet staff and students and run a workshop for drama GCSE students.

He said: "I know how vital it is to have a performing arts outlet growing up and how much of a difference it made to me. The Archer Academy has already been incredibly successful across the arts field, winning trophies galore. I now want to give future generations of young performers a dedicated studio, so the school can not only build on its achievements, but also allow more students to get thoroughly involved."

Onward and upward

He joins the campaign at a critical time, with the school halfway towards hitting its campaign target of £300,000. An application to the Wolfson Foundation for £100,000 has recently been approved, and £40,000 has

been allocated from the school's capital funding budget; a further £10,000 has been raised by the school community through initiatives including the annual Archer Adventure, the summer

demic year in September.

A special space

Head teacher Lucy Harrison said a new performance space was crucial to nurture talent in a school that is at full capacity following an increase in the number of students on the roll.

"We do not have a proper space in which our talented young people can rehearse or perform," she said. "This will provide a creative outlet which is more important than ever as our children continue to navigate the impact of the pandemic. And, of course, it will provide our wider community with a high-spec, professional standard space for hire. But first, we need to raise the additional funds to make it possible."



Studio backer: Matt Lucas

fair, and other Parents Association activities.

An architect and building company have been appointed and an application for planning permission is being submitted. If all goes smoothly, the aim is to have the building work done over the summer, and have the studio ready for the new aca-

The school is also welcoming information about, or links to, any trusts and foundations that might be interested in supporting the campaign. Individuals or organisations who may be able to help should contact the head teacher's PA, Jessica Bryant: jbryant@thearcheracademy.org.uk

Advice on how to never let down your guard against the scammers

A new service has been launched to safeguard older people against the growing threat of scams and to provide support to those who have fallen victim.

Sophisticated scams have been on the rise during the pandemic with criminals devising even more ways to target those they believe to be vulner-

able. In December alone, some 215 people in Barnet reported a scam, with a total loss to victims of nearly £840,000. Fraudsters can cold-call at your front door

and by phone, or try to catch you out by email or text message.

Age UK Barnet, which is launching the Scams Prevention and Victim Support Service for people over 50, says that age group can be particularly vulnerable to fraud and it often has a serious impact on their quality of life and wellbeing.

Personal help too

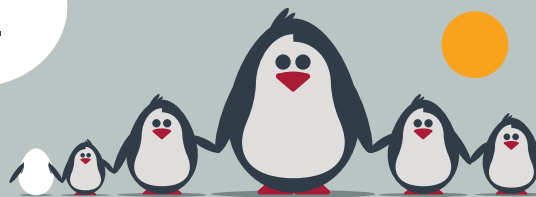
As well as putting on awareness-raising events to help people spot scams and creating links with local organisations and community groups to give people the tools to stay safe, advisers will provide one-to-one support to vulnerable older people.

Jenny adds: "We will also be working with participants on our computer support sessions, helping them to stay safe when they're shopping online."

To find out more about Age UK Barnet's service, to enquire about a talk or to report a scam, email scamsawareness@ageuk-barnet.org.uk or telephone 020 8432 2217.

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