



Hospice owls take up their roosts

By Lynn Winton
For art lovers and for anyone who just loves going for an urban walk, the North London Hospice's easy-to-follow Owl Trail will be launched on Saturday 17 August and will be out on the streets of north London for eight weeks.



Painted plumage: Artists put the finishing touches to two of the North London Hospice owls, above and below

Everyone can enjoy scouting for the 30 giant owl sculptures, each one painted by a different local artist, including comic actor Matt Lucas and children's author Rob Biddulph, to help raise awareness and funds for the only hospice providing support

for the residents of Barnet, Haringey and Enfield. There will also be a parliament of 20 owlets, decorated by schools and community groups, waiting to be spotted in various indoor venues.

The hospice picked owls because they are known for their wisdom and for passing on stories through generations and across cultures. North London Hospice staff, like owls, also work through the night supporting patients and healthcare professionals.

After eight weeks on their perches, the colourful owls, each one sponsored by a business, will be auctioned to raise much-needed funds for the hospice, and the owlets will be returned to the care of their school or group. You can find a trail map to print or download and all the auction details on the hospice website northlondonhospice.org or follow them on their social media channels.

Splash of colour at summer show

All-inclusive arts charity Community Focus hosted its summer exhibition last month at the Artsdepot in North Finchley, showcasing the colourful creations of its students with additional needs. During the event, the charity was presented with a cheque for £1,000 by friends of the late artist Debbie Jedwab, whose artwork was displayed and made available to buyers at the same venue in May.



Cheers: Dennis Evans

Poem for a poet

Dennis Evans, East Finchley poet and publisher of the N2 Poetry magazine, celebrated his 91st birthday in June with a birthday lunch for friends at the Genzo Greek restaurant in the High Road. Here one of his friends, **Shereen Abdallah**, has written a poem in his honour.

Dennis

Garden bulbs wait for promised spring,
still, deep earth. I ring the bell.
You open the door, red braces
wide smile, peppered chin,
you lead me in.
'Would you like a cup of tea?'
Yes please
'I only have soya milk'
That's fine
Your sitting-room is as it's
always been;
Aladdin's Cave of books,
russet and green.
Sofa cushions lean into our
conversation.
You bring a tray, two sturdy
mugs, rose-leafed
plate of chocolate digestives.
'Dig In'

Single shingles jab was not all it seemed

By Diana Cormack
Last September, a new version of the Shingles National Immunisation Programme was launched, which made more individuals eligible for a free shingles vaccination on the National Health Service. Visit GetShinglesReady.co.uk or contact your local surgery or pharmacist for details.

Shingles is caused by the same virus as chickenpox, so you can only develop it if you have had that particular disease. There seems to be no definite reason why this happens, but as we age our immune system gradually weakens and may allow the inactive virus in our body to reactivate.

Treatment within the first 72 hours is vital to try to ensure as little development as possible. It first appears as a red, sore area where little spots show, then develop into liquid filled blisters. The rash can be on several sites on one side of the body, following the path of nerves. It is extremely painful and can take four weeks or more to heal, though sometimes long-term pain or other complications develop.

I speak from bitter experience because, at the time of writing, I have just left that fourth week of my third bout of shingles. "But didn't you have the vaccination?" friends ask. Well yes, I did. Not the new one which is two separate jabs a few weeks apart, but the single one during a previous shingles prevention programme.

Last month, recognising it straight away, I was prescribed medication within 24 hours which I believe saved me from the horrendous rash I have suffered from in the past, though the pain level was still high. It's like being wrapped in a thorn bush!

I felt hard-done-by too, having believed I was immune to the disease. Further investi-

gation revealed the vaccination not to be 100% effective nor to last as long as I hope to! Maybe it saved me from having shingles so severely? Medical advice was that I could not have another jab but other sources have said I could, at a price, though not on the NHS. Either way, it seems I could get the condition again.



Fringe farce: The cast of *Argy Bargy*

Comedy kidnap caper

East Finchley theatre company Mutley and Minques are bringing their new comedy *Argy Bargy* to Upstairs at the Gatehouse in Highgate this month as part of the Camden Fringe.

Two hopelessly inept kidnapers navigate the dark world of drug cartels, canal-side shoot outs, freshly baked shortbread and 80s prog rock in this farcical road trip comedy set entirely on a narrowboat heading towards Camden Lock.

Playwright Dave Barron and artistic director Mary Musker

live in East Finchley and have set up their company as a spin-off group from the Garden Suburb Theatre.

Argy Bargy runs from Wednesday 7 to Friday 9 August at the theatre in Highgate Village. Tickets are available from www.upstairsatthegatehouse.com. Suitable for 12 years upwards.

