



Meet the Monarchs

By Daphne Chamberlain

As promised last month, I've discovered more about the Monarchs: Sylvia Murphy, whose daughter Julie belongs to the archery section, had told me about the friendly atmosphere "much friendlier than in many social clubs." Having visited a couple of times, I can now vouch for a very warm welcome.

Monarchs is a sports and recreational club for the disabled. I watched indoor bowls, table tennis, cards and board games. Cricket and basketball used to be on the menu too, but the club needs more helpers with specialised knowledge of individual sports. Coaching pays off, as both Alan Mark and Julie have won cups in archery competitions.

Hands on

Members' disabilities vary, but I was told that anyone thinking of joining would find it easier with some use in their hands.

Joyce and Vera, who provide refreshments, have been helpers for about 17 years. "It's a pity you couldn't be here for a party," they said. Every member has their own birthday celebration, with appropriately themed cakes made by Sylvia, and at Christmas everyone has a present. This year's outings include Southend, the Dome and the Eye.

The Monarchs receive a grant from Barnet for rent and equipment, and members pay £1 per session, while some of



Alan and Julie with their Archery competition cups. Photo by Daphne Chamberlain

the entertainments are provided by the Rotary Club.

Moving story

Transport is a major consideration, as quite a few members travel from outside Finchley. Some use Dial-a-Ride, but Stan, a long-time helper, brings several in his own car. Michael Stamway, who retired early, took to driving ambulances for both the Stroke Club and Monarchs,

but then suffered a stroke himself. He now sees to the secretarial side.

Why is the club called Monarchs? It was begun by a policeman, Sergeant John Butler, in King Alfred School, North End Road, in the early 1980s.

Now, though, it is established in Bishop Douglass School, Hamilton Road, meeting on Mondays in term-time at 8pm. Interested in joining or helping? The next meeting will be on 12 September.

Dawn Dip

By Judith Filkin

I can't imagine life without my daily 7am swim at the Manor Health Club. I love meeting the other early birds and listening to the changing room soap opera sagas.

Unlike those who say "Yes, I'm a member of the Club and really ought to go more often", the bleary-eyed regulars clock in every morning. They may catch colds, endure "gammy knees" or be blighted by family or work crises, but they return, absence notes at the ready, while the fly-by-nights vanish - perhaps it's as well; the pool is hardly Olympic size.

The regulars probably attend for a variety of reasons, loosely headed "getting fit". My husband gave me this year's membership as my Christmas present - so I need to justify my claim that: If I swim six out of seven days, each visit costs less than £1 which is vastly less than the Archway or Finchley pools.

Head above Water

I've felt physically fitter and more resilient since I've been swimming regularly. I'm convinced that my daily swim has helped me keep my head above water during a year marked by a barrage of life events, including my mother-in-law's death, my husband's unexpected early retirement, catering single-handed for our Silver Wedding party, my son scaling the Eiger and my "baby's" A levels, UCAS and departure for backpacking round Oz.

My own athletic achievements are meagre. I breast-stroke slowly beside those who streak through the water like dolphins, their heads plunged beneath the waves at each stroke. OK, I know I'm not getting the same level of workout, and unfortunately my weight's stationary, but I still feel like a million dollars as I walk home to my (large) breakfast.

Dawn patrol

Now it's summer and I walk back and forth to the Club in daylight. Despite the dawn birdsong and the bright morning star, plodding through the darkness during the winter months isn't much fun. But now the house martins have returned to Summerlee Avenue and fragrant front-garden flowers flourish brightly. Early one summer morning I encountered a mother hedgehog and her babies sauntering along Southern Road; I doubt I would have met them at mid-day.

The other swimmers' motivations must be as disparate as their ages; we have an age span of about fifty years! What turns an aspiration into a habit? Are the other women leading dynamic and successful lives? I must be sure to turn up tomorrow so I can ask them!

Care for Someone

Care for Someone is a charitable organisation, run entirely by volunteers, which was set up in 1999 with an aim to assisting AIDS orphans in Third World countries as well as the UK. At present it is focusing on Zimbabwe, where the AIDS epidemic is enormous.

CFS was founded by local single mother, Patricia Roque who, on a holiday to Zimbabwe last year, was touched by the plight and poverty as well as the effects of AIDS on families in Zimbabwe.

Patricia lives in Prospect Ring with her three children: daughters Charlotte, 17, and Nyasha, 12, and 15-year-old son, Tawanda. Apart from working full time and running the home, she is also currently studying for a degree in psychology through the Open University.

Take aim

Care For Someone aims to: Help create a better environment for people affected by AIDS; empower people to meet their basic needs; assist with creating a new skills centre in Zimbabwe to provide vocational training, and fight illiteracy by providing volunteer teaching at the skills centre.

In the UK the Charity aims to work with the disadvantaged and ethnic minority groups through running personal and social development workshops to help build confidence and competitiveness to enter the job market and aim for better employment opportunities.

Professional Help

CFS is planning a formal launch on 19 August and would like to hear from successful professional people who would be willing to make a short presentation/speech on the launch night as a way of encouraging others who need help to come forward.

If anyone is interested in making a donation in cash or kind, please make cheques payable to: Care for Someone, 98 Prospect Ring, London, N2 8BS. Telephone: 020 8442 2501 or 0956 232 563.

Finchley Elim Pentecostal Church

Refreshing Spiritual lives since 1937

Come and worship with us
this Sunday at 11 am
Salvation Army Hall
Hertford Road (off High Road)
East Finchley
Enquiries - 020 8444 5472



Dear Deirdre...

Up to now we have always had our family summer holidays in Europe, usually in France or Spain, getting a ferry across the Channel and driving down. This year, for the first time, the kids will be going off on holiday with their friends, and my wife and I will be on our own. Recently she said to me: "Let's do something really different this year, go somewhere a bit exotic for a change. What about Thailand or Sri Lanka or Jamaica?" Well, I'd love to go to places like that, Deirdre, but the problem is that I'm terrified of getting on an aeroplane. I don't know why. I just am. I've told my wife about it and she just says: "Don't be silly, love, you'll be fine once you're on board."

Is that right? I'm not convinced. What do you think I should do?

Fearful Frank from Fortis Green

Dear Frank,

Feeling terrified about getting on an aeroplane could quite easily spoil the whole trip for both of you, not just because of the actual journey, but because you are already worrying about it in advance, and you would certainly be worried about flying back again too. But I don't think that you should let your anxiety get in the way of going somewhere you and your wife want to go. Much better to do something about it so you can look forward to the trip and thoroughly enjoy it! So, what can you do?

Relax

It's almost impossible to feel anxious if you're feeling deeply relaxed. So what's your best way of relaxing? Is it going fishing? Singing in the bath? Gardening? Watching TV? Whatever it is, make sure you do it often in the lead up to your trip. And whenever you begin to feel at all anxious at other times, shut your eyes for a moment (though preferably not if you happen to be driving!) and imagine yourself doing it then. Think of a word or phrase which helps you to conjure up this relaxed state. It might be something like 'Relax' or 'Calm' or 'I'm cool' or 'I'm mellow' ... whatever works for you. Practise using your imagination to get you into a relaxed state as often as you can before you go, do it again on the way to the airport, and/or in the departure lounge, as you go on board, as you're taking off. Do it whenever it helps.

You can also use deep breathing to calm you down and give yourself confidence that everything's going to be fine - something I described how to do in the last issue (if you can lay your hand on a copy). Deep breathing is something it's a good idea to practise well before you go and then again at any stage on the journey.

Mood music

And then there are things you can do just before and during the flight. (Alcohol isn't one of them, by the way, at least, not in large quantities. On a long flight especially, you are apt to become dehydrated and a lot of alcohol will only aggravate that, and make you more prone to jet lag.) If you have certain music you find particularly relaxing, take a walkman along with you and play it whenever you feel like it (though not during take-off and landing). The essential oil, lavender, is very soothing too, used in very small amounts. Place a couple of drops (no more) on your airline mini-pillow as you settle down to doze off.

And finally, there's a simple Brain Gym exercise you can do, and in fact we often do it instinctively when we're feeling stressed or anxious. Lightly place the tips of the three middle fingers of each hand on your forehead, about midway between each eyebrow and your hairline. Shut your eyes and breathe slowly several times. Try it and see how it feels. (Another one not to do in the car!)

Deirdre

The Dear Deirdre column is written by Jane Revell, therapist and stress management specialist. If you have a problem you think I can help you with, please write to Dear Deirdre at THE ARCHER. All replies will be treated with the strictest confidence.