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# No.1 Coldfall Wood

By Ann Bronkhorst

Remember the tree house featured in September's ARCHER? Its mystery builders, we can reveal, are Luke Bowman and Peter Levy who go to Fortismere School. Peter, of Church Vale, told THE ARCHER their story.

Over eighteen months ago the boys found the right tree, a strong, healthy oak. Gradually they collected materials – wood, steel nails, coach bolts, etc. – and climbing gear (they've learned rock-climbing at the Climbing Centre in Green Lanes). Through the summer and autumn of 2002 they worked steadily and by Christmas the house was nearly completed.

Sounds easy? It wasn't! At first they chose the wrong wood. Only two inches thick, it looked elegant but was "too easy to smash" as Peter said ruefully. And sure enough, several attempts were made to smash up their tree house. It was saved by its height and by the boys' climbing, design and carpentry skills. The hardest part was putting up the beams; "You were hanging in mid air." Once one of the boys fell about six feet but was safely roped and so was unhurt. The weather did its worst, too. During one gale they watched anxiously from below (wearing helmets)

as the house was buffeted by the wind but held fast.

### Tree house tips

Any advice for would-be tree house builders? First, get permission – Luke and Peter checked with the Friends of Coldfall Wood. Choose a healthy tree with few dead branches and harm it as little as possible. Don't cut steps into the trunk or use copper or zinc-coated nails; untreated steel nails are best. Take safety seriously: helmets, proper climbing gear, good-quality tools.

School lessons in resistant materials may be useful but probably Luke and Peter have learned far more skills by constructing their tree house. Peter hopes to do a Modern Apprenticeship, later, in joinery and carpentry. Already both boys understand wood, tools and design principles better than most adults. I wonder what they'll tackle next?

The late January pictures on the right show that Luke and Peter's thorough work has paid off, and the tree house is weathering the winter well.

Photos by Tony Roberts



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