



Derek Ball displays his Civic Award. Photo by Doreen Ball.

## A just award

By Diana Cormack

After taking early retirement from his job as a carpenter, Derek Ball of Brackenbury Road began to feel that he wanted to do something for the community. As he was particularly interested in helping children, he approached the charity Volunteer Reading Help to offer his services with the request that he should be placed in Martin School, which he knew well. Both his son and daughter had been pupils there and when they were in the infants Derek, always willing to lend a hand, used to pop in to mend any broken toys and equipment.

Although Derek does VRH work on two designated days, he can be found lending a hand in Martin Juniors on virtually every day of the week. When *THE ARCHER* asked him what he did, Derek replied, "It's easier to tell you what I don't do." In fact, over the last seven years it seems that Derek, one of Volunteer Reading Help's original mem-

bers, has made himself almost indispensable at the school. As well as supporting the children in reading he has been involved in cookery, computer work, photography, arts and crafts, dancing and many school trips and events.

### Very valued volunteer

Last autumn, in recognition of his amazing contribution to the school, many of the staff

nominated Derek for Barnet's fifth Civic Award Scheme. This scheme honours people from all walks of life who do so much for the community. Fifty nominees were selected to attend a ceremony at the Town Hall at the end of January, where the five winners were announced. To the delight of those accompanying him, Derek's was the first name to be read out and the Mayor of Barnet, Wendy Prentice, presented him with an award certificate.

Derek, who has lived in East Finchley since 1962, would like to thank Martin Junior School for nominating him, whilst the school is more than grateful for its 'Volunteer Reading helper extraordinaire'.

If you would like to join Volunteer Reading Help, phone Harriet Watson on 0207 372 7523 or email her at [harriet.watson@vrh.org.uk](mailto:harriet.watson@vrh.org.uk)

## Snowdrops to remember

By Daphne Chamberlain

Barnet is planning to plant a million and a half snowdrops to commemorate children lost in the Holocaust. One hundred were planted by 100 of today's children in Avenue House grounds in January. "They will grow high," said three-year-old Dror Lavee, newly arrived from Israel.

The children, their families and guests, including Rabbi Julia Neuberger, packed out Avenue House on a cold Sunday afternoon. East Finchley mother Nikki Joule told *THE ARCHER*, "This has been a really successful event."

The event, a party with games, singing and food, was celebrating the Jewish New Year for Trees – Tu B'Shevat – and a rose bud (or red bud) tree was planted too. The snowdrops are now set in a circle around it.

Organiser Juliet Simmons from the Jewish Community Centre for London told us that the Centre is planning more festive occasions throughout the year, some of which may well be in the Barnet area. The Centre, which was launched in 2003, is still planning its permanent home. The aim is to develop a friendly and welcoming place with a range of activities for all ages. For further information, call 020 7722 5080 or e-mail [info@jewishcommunitycentre.org.uk](mailto:info@jewishcommunitycentre.org.uk).



6 year-old Rachel Clifton plants a commemorative snowdrop. Photo by Daphne Chamberlain

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## Dyslexia help

There have been many famous dyslexics – Leonardo, Picasso, Nigel Kennedy, Richard Branson, and Cher to name a few. Dyslexia is an umbrella term covering what is basically difficulty in any of the following: reading, writing, spelling, short-term memory, concentration and organisation skills. But there is more help of various kinds available now than ever before.

### Local colour

Sam Wan who works at Stewart Duncan Opticians offers help with one aspect of dyslexia – visual instability – moving or shimmering print. Tests can be done to see whether coloured spectacle lenses can help, the colour varying with the individual. These can help individuals to read with more speed and

accuracy, though it is not really known why it works.

A full eye test is given and followed by trials with coloured transparent overlays to put over the printed word for a couple of months. A decision can then be made on the exact colour of the spectacle lenses needed. Although this help has been available for about 20 years not all opti-

cians are trained to offer this service, which is still not covered under the NHS. The test costs about £40, takes about an hour, and is not recommended for children under six years old.

Referrals to Sam are by parents or educational psychologists. Stewart Duncan Opticians are at 126 High Road, telephone 020 8883 2020.