



## YOUNG ARCHER

### The little Dutch boy

By Diana Cormack

The terrible disaster that caused New Orleans to be flooded reminded me of a story I first heard when I was a little girl living in Germany on an RAF camp near Holland. Some parts of Holland lie below sea level because a lot of the land has been reclaimed from the North Sea.

The Dutch people pumped out the water, but they had to make sure it never got back in. One of the ways they did this was to build special defences called dykes. These are banks and sea walls high enough to stop the waves flooding over.

The story is about a boy in Holland who was walking to school alongside a dyke when he heard water dripping. Looking around to see where the sound was coming from, he noticed a puddle. Looking up from the puddle, he was horrified to see water trickling down from a small hole in the dyke. There was no one else in sight, so it was up to him to do something in this dangerous situation. If the hole got bigger, more and more water could rush in. Like all Dutch children, he knew that if the sea ever broke over or

through the defending dykes, Holland could be flooded and many people would lose their homes or their lives.

He quickly climbed up the side of the dyke and stuck his finger into the hole to stop the water coming in. For hours and hours he lay there with his finger acting as a plug. As the day passed by, he got colder and hungrier. He felt scared and lonely and very, very tired, but he didn't dare go to sleep in case he moved his finger.

Just when he was beginning to think he would be there forever, he heard voices. It was a search party from his village! How pleased he was to see them and how amazed they were that the strength and common sense of one small child had saved the country from disaster.



Barbara Poulter (second adult from L) and Vanessa Elsley (fourth adult from L) with some of the regulars at the Green Man Mother and Toddler Group. Photo by Helen Drake

## Green Man mother and toddler group

By Helen Drake

A sponsored children's bike ride for Childline in October, a Christmas party in December, and regular craft sessions are just some of the activities planned for the autumn term by the Green Man Mother and Toddler Group.

The group, which is a member of the Pre-school Learning Alliance, is based at the Green Man Community Centre, Strawberry Vale, and has the use of a huge, airy room.

Azra Nath, who attends on a regular basis with her two-year-old twin boys Haani and Laith, enthused: "I love the space, and with everything in one room it is so easy for me to keep an eye on the children. The equipment changes every week so the children never get bored."

Vanessa Elsley and Barbara Poulter are the two local mums who have been run-

ning the group on a voluntary basis since January 2005. Both originally came along with their children, liked the friendly, relaxed atmosphere and kept returning.

One change they made immediately was introducing more fruit into the snacks on offer for the children. "They devour the grapes," laughed Vanessa. They also introduced a craft session every two weeks, adapting the complexity of the activity to suit the ages of the children attending.

The group is lucky in having the use of a safe, enclosed garden containing outdoor play

equipment such as a slide, little cars, rocking horses and bikes, so in good weather children can expend some of that excess energy in the fresh air.

The Mother and Toddler Group is a Thursday morning drop-in, from 9.30-11.30am during term time. Contributions requested are £1.50 for the first child and £1.00 per extra child per session, up to a maximum of £3.00. The price includes tea and coffee for the adults, and fruit, biscuits and drinks for the children. With the colder weather soon upon us, why not give this friendly mother and toddler group a try?

## 3,000 bookworms

By Sheila Armstrong

The national summer reading scheme for children - The Reading Voyage - has been very popular this year with children in Barnet. It is possible that this year more than 3,000 children from libraries all over the borough took part: the borough's Children's Librarian, Hannah Richens, is still counting.

She told *THE ARCHER* that last term children's librarians had been into Barnet's primary schools to introduce the scheme and encourage children to join in.

There will be a winner announced for each library and parties will be held locally for children who have taken part. For more information, see [www.readingvoyage.org.uk](http://www.readingvoyage.org.uk).

### Funnies ...

*What do you call cheese that isn't yours?  
Nacho Cheese.*

*What do you call four bull-fighters in quicksand?  
Quattro sinko.*

### East Finchley Baptist Church

Just off the High Road in Creighton Avenue N2

Sundays at 11.00 am and 6.30 pm

For more information  
please contact the Church Office  
Tel: 8883 1544 (Minister: Simon Dyke)

Visitors always welcome

All Saints' Church,  
Durham Road, East Finchley  
Church of England

Sunday masses at 8.00 a.m. and 10.00 a.m.  
Weekday masses at 10.00 a.m.  
Prayer requests are gladly accepted.

The Parish has a flourishing social life.  
Contact the Vicar, Fr Christopher Hardy,  
on 020 8883 9315.

All Saints' also has a strong musical tradition and an enthusiastic choir of both adults and children.  
Experienced singers are always welcome.  
Contact Geoffrey Hanson on 020 8444 9214.

<http://www.allsaints-eastfinchley.org.uk>

## Wildlife Diary

By Linda Mitchell

Recently I read in a national paper about someone else who keeps a garden diary. This man noted the difference between the times he did the first and last grass cuts of the year, and that has become a unique record for scientific research into global warming changes.

In my garden, swifts arrived in May, but left much earlier than usual, and there were lots of grasshoppers and small crickets this year. Are these signs of climate change, I wonder?

During March, robins, wrens and blue tits were all nesting. Many different finches came to the seed-feeder, and I was delighted to see goldfinches for only the second time in many years.

It was a treat to see mistle thrushes too. Magpies attacked a thrush nest relentlessly, but the thrushes stood their ground as they flew back and forth with worms and insects for the babies. Then, disaster - a crow flew off with a baby. The parents spent the rest of the day in the apple tree, making sad little "pip-pip" noises. They left, and have not returned.

I also watched a kestrel



We think Linda Mitchell was the first person in Finchley to record seeing a wild parakeet in her garden. At last she's managed to capture them on film!

hovering about on the lookout for his dinner.

The spotted woodpecker brought two babies to feed. One sat on the rotary clothesline, while the parent fed on the ground. Later in the summer, the large green woodpecker

tried to feed from the nut feeder. Most unusual!

The parakeets, which seem to be getting fatter each year, now visit more in the winter. I did manage to take some photos of them at the feeder, though - at last!