



A valuable service in court

In the January edition of *THE ARCHER* we reported on the Haringey Magistrates' Court Witness Service, which provides support through trained volunteers for people going through the daunting experience of giving evidence in court.

Bridget Daly, who lives in one of the county roads in East Finchley, has been in Victim Support, which runs the Witness Services, for over 20 years. She manages the service at Blackfriars Crown Court and also trains regional and national staff and volunteers.

"While people joining the Witness Service do not need any special qualifications other than a caring attitude and good communication skills," says Bridget, "it is vital that they are properly trained."

"We are the only voluntary organisation in the courts and

at first the statutory court agencies thought we might act in an unprofessional manner and influence the course of a trial. However, due to the fact that our volunteers are properly trained, supported and supervised, the other agencies now realise that our work makes their jobs easier by enabling witnesses to give their best evidence."

Volunteers undergo a six-day assessed induction course. It includes training on how to explain the court process to lay people, how crime affects victims, how to address witnesses' concerns, listening skills, equalities issues and working within the Court Code of Conduct. This last subject is vital because it stresses the fact that volunteers do not discuss the evidence in a case, nor do they give legal advice.

The course is highly interactive with small group work, role plays, videos, quizzes, discussions and the minimum amount of lecturing.

Bridget adds: "We try to have fun though dealing with a serious subject and feedback has often stated that it was the best course people had been on."

Come and join in, folk

By Jonathan Doering

Are you interested in open music sessions? You should check out the session running at Maddens in the High Road, every second Monday from 8.30pm.

For centuries folk music has been a way for people to make their own entertainment, telling tales through music, and this session carries on that community spirit. All instruments and traditions are welcome, from penny whistles and Irish flutes, through guitars and mandolins, to the hurdy-gurdy, a stringed instrument operated by a crank handle on the end and keys along the side.

Traditional music from Ireland (naturally!), England, Wales, Scotland, America, and France was being played at the session held on Monday 10 April. There were even some Reggae covers for good measure.

Bob Dylan said, "He not busy being born is busy dying". All the people at Maddens are busy being born: trying out new tunes and old favourites, picking away at their own songs, punctuating rounds of music with chat. There is no band or group as such if anyone is

welcome who wants to bring an instrument and join in.

The organiser, Peter Eiseman-Renyard, explained: "Any musicians are welcome. It's not about grandstanding but participation and enjoyment."

Take the young man with a penny whistle quietly following some of the tunes before breaking into two of his own, enthusiastically accompanied by guitar and mandolin, getting the loudest rounds of applause. In the buck and sway the audience is swept along as well. Everything becomes an instrument: your voice humming, a foot drumming, a glass tapping on the table.

This session has been running since November and is a welcome addition to a thriving scene in North London. Come along and listen. You'll be beating time before they call time.

Contact Peter Eiseman-Renyard on 07958 282898 for details.

Letters without verifiable contact addresses will not be reviewed or printed. Contact details can be withheld, however, at publication.

Letters to the editor

We should preserve our green spaces

Dear Editor,

The cuts to East Finchley library and other traditional housing development plans for the green spaces of East Finchley are short-sighted and probably irreversible.

How will East Finchley be in the future? Will it become just another featureless urban sprawl with all the associated social and economic problems?

Because of global warming, we can and must become more innovative and imaginative. We are part of the 'lungs' of London. This is an invaluable resource that we can maximise.

We can create a 'green' high-profile model and working centre to develop the local economy for and by the community to serve the wider public.

By combining new technologies with the arts and the natural environment we can improve the quality of life to produce interactive exhibitions, entertainment, education and sports facilities, through collaborating with businesses and sponsorship.

With foresight, the library and surrounding areas in East Finchley could become a far more valuable resource.

**Yours faithfully,
Sheila Stewart,
Church Lane, N2.**

Send your correspondence to: "Letters Page", The Archer, PO Box 3699, London N2 8JA or e-mail the-archer@lineone.net.

Walk a dog for someone who can't

Dear Editor,

I am writing to you to appeal for volunteer dog walkers.

Cinnamon Trust is the national charity for elderly and terminally ill people and their pets. We seek to keep owner and pet together for as long as possible with the help of a national network of volunteers who assist when any aspect of day-to-day care poses a problem.

Some volunteers also offer foster care of these pets in their own homes, when the elderly or terminally ill face a short spell in hospital. The Trust also provides permanent home from home sanctuary for companion animals which outlive their owners.

Although we are always seeking volunteers in all parts of the country, we have a particular problem at present in the East Finchley area. We have owners most concerned because, due to failing health, they are no longer able to exercise their dogs.

We would like to arrange for a rota of people to help these elderly owners, but unfortunately we do not have enough volunteers available in the immediate area at the moment.

Potential volunteers are asked to ring 01736 757900 during office hours to register. Alternatively fax your address to 01736 757010 or email moira@cinnamon.org.uk for an information pack.

Anyone with even an hour a week to spare can make a huge difference!

**Kind regards,
Moira Butler
Volunteer Co-Ordinator**

Festival date

Get the date of the East Finchley Festival in your diaries now. It's the weekend of 24-25 June, with the main event taking place in Cherry Tree Woods as usual.

All right on the night

Marian Bunzl reveals the rehearsal agonies that make for a perfect performance.

We in the North London Chorus seem to be addicted to cliffhangers. Rehearsing recently for a concert at St. Michael's Church in Highgate we tested our conductor's nerve to the limit. But it's the composer's fault, not ours. The Bach B 'Minus' is complex and difficult, but Holst's Hymn of Jesus is fiendish. In this short and intense piece, Holst has managed to throw in everything to make life difficult for a chorus.

For a start, it is written for two choirs and a semi-chorus of high young voices, so the chorus has to split up. There are staggered entries for each section of each choir, variable time signatures that most of us have never heard of, let alone tried to count, and chords of the utmost dissonance (aka divine discord!). We were never sure if we were singing the right note at the right time and our voices tended to die away into an anxious silence. By the end of the rehearsal period, the choir (and the conductor) had lost the will to live.

To cap it all, our semi chorus, the Finchley Children's Music Group, came to the last rehearsal and sang beautifully and with no problem at all, while we floundered. Our conductor gave us a look that said 'I don't think I love you anymore'.

However, performance day worked its magic: St Michael's Church was warmly lit, the choir was elegant in black and when

our conductor raised his baton we suddenly realised that his patient coaching had actually got through to us, and we gave him (almost) everything he asked for. At the end he actually smiled at us for the first time in weeks.

We did, of course, sing other pieces. The Hymn of Jesus, after all that angst, only lasted ten minutes. In the second half of the concert we sang a short work by Finzi, and Faure's lovely Requiem. These had had their difficulties in rehearsal, but we got through without too much anguish. We were very fortunate to have as our soloists Janis Kelly and Toby Stafford-Allen, both Principal singers with The English National Opera. Their exquisitely sung solos brought an extra lustre to the performance. And when the last gentle 'requiem' died away there was a wonderful hushed silence before the audience erupted in applause, and our conductor looked as though he loved us after all.

KALASHNIKOV KULTUR

By Ricky Savage, the voice of social irresponsibility

The complaining classes

The sun is shining, the flowers are bursting into bloom, vermin of the air are coughing happily on Nelson's Column and the old gits are complaining once again. You can't go into a pub or bar or Starbucks without hearing someone moaning that things aren't what they used to be. And, guess what, the grumpy old men are whingeing their way back on to TV as well.

The leading grump is one-time prog rock keyboard fonder Rick Wakeman and if I'm going to complain it is about him. This is a man who once did King Arthur on ice, complete with red and silver cape and symphony orchestra. Just as he would never fondle one piece of electronic junk when 25 would do, he can't just moan about one thing when there's so much else available to moan about. People ask what use are wasps? I want to know what is the point of Rick Wakeman?

The list of things that wind up the old gits gets longer with each passing wind. 'Why can't they make good films like *Towering Inferno*?' asked one of the whingers. Simple answer, *Towering Inferno* was rubbish and if you want to watch rubbish movies subscribe to Sky.

The list of things that old gits can moan about has no end. Bottled water? They can moan that it is French or Welsh or Scottish or not out of a tap and doesn't taste like a municipal swimming pool. They can find something wrong with just about anything, from computers to Beijing to postmen to mobile phones to the price of cheese.

They come on like they want to go back to the 'good old days' of black'n'white TV, smog and only two channels, BBC1 and BBC2 - people like them don't want to sully their minds with commercial television.

Sometimes it's hard to remember that they were once young and funky, except they probably weren't. They were probably the kind of kids who went from being children to being middle-aged without any of the interesting, drug-crazed bits in between. So where does that leave me? Well, I haven't got past the drug-crazed bit and, looking at the old gits moaning, I sure as hell don't want to.

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