



The rub in rubbish

By Sheila Armstrong

It's great to have a clear-out and get rid of those unwanted gifts, old clothes and things from IKEA you bought but can't remember why, except it seemed like such a bargain at the time. So you put it all in a black rubbish sack and dump it at the nearest charity shop.

No matter if the shop is closed, you leave it on the step. Local free loaders may well go through it but that's not your problem because at least you've got it out of your house. Virtue rewarded, you go home confident that in feng shui terms the chi will be able to flow more freely round your living room.

Blue bags

But did you know that all your stuff has to be carefully sorted by shop volunteers, the saleable items priced and the real rubbish thrown away or recycled? And there's the rub.

It costs charity shops £1.50 per bag for the special blue bags that Barnet asks traders to use for rubbish. One shop told *THE ARCHER* that two bags a day are needed on average so over a week that is £21, and over a year a sizeable amount of cash.

Most donations are gratefully received but not all. Some of what ends up on the doorstep of the charity shop could and probably should have been thrown out or recycled: the clothes that aren't actually clean, the broken pots and burnt pans. Think before you offload, please.

Oakhill Park golf course re-opened

Oakhill Park 9-hole golf course in East Barnet was officially re-opened to the public on Saturday 4 August by the Mayor of Barnet, Councillor Maureen Braun; her son, Michael Braun, hit the first shot.

Members of the public were invited to come to the opening ceremony and then, during the afternoon, to try out the course free of charge.

Ian and Paul Scagnelli have signed a 20-year lease to run the course within the council's park. This is part of a new scheme by Barnet Council for leasing the day-to-day running of amenities such as golf courses to private

organisations whose expertise will help to develop them into top-grade facilities.

The course will be open Monday to Sunday. A round of golf costs £3.70, and £2.20 for senior citizens (Monday to Friday). Golf clubs of all sizes can be hired at £1.80 with a refundable deposit of £5.00. Golf balls are sold separately. To book a round, call 020 8368 8460.

Oakhill Park is a large informal landscaped park, with an open aspect and outstanding views. It is the venue for the East Barnet Festival. As well as the golf course there is a bowls green, café, pavilion with changing rooms, toilets, football pitches, multi-sports court, two play areas, a site-based park keeper and three tennis courts. The Green Flag Award scheme is the national standard for parks; Oakhill is one of six Barnet parks that have been awarded Green Flag status.

It's a jungle out there!

By Lucy Chamberlin

Earlier this year I spent two months doing my bit to conserve the planet, living a spartan existence in the rainforest of Belize.



Lucy Chamberlin in Central America

Trained and led by Trekforce, a company dedicated to conservation in Belize and Borneo, whose previous participants have included Ben Fogle and Jack Osbourne, our project group of 25 young people worked on a site by Davis Falls, the second largest waterfall in the country.

Tough conditions

Eight miles from the nearest road, we slept in hammocks strung from trees, collected water and washed in the river, and picked our only fresh food from the orange orchards below. Even boiling a kettle involved first making a fire, and our machetes soon became our best friends. By the end we had cleared trails, built bridges and handrails, and thatched two new 'palapas', a type of indigenous shelter, with 20ft cahoun leaves.

The idea behind all this

industry was to give locals an alternative to illegal logging by encouraging eco-tourism in the area. Explorations made into a little-known section of jungle documented geology, flora and fauna; this, together with the discovery of a new waterfall, will give evidential backing to those lobbying to make the location a national park.

Travelling through Central America

The following two months I spent travelling in Mexico, Guatemala and Honduras, and diving on the reef off a couple of Caribbean islands. We climbed a live volcano, bathed in hot springs, and took countless hairy bus journeys on half-built mountain roads.

Central America contains a relatively high proportion

of the world's biodiversity in a surprisingly small land-mass - and I don't mean just plants and animals. The people we came across were as varied and interesting as the landscape: Mayans living side by side with Afro-Caribbeans and descendants of Spanish settlers.

Guatemala was a particularly fascinating and beautiful country, one that seemed in many ways to have it all. From the colonial culture of Antigua to the living tradition of rural villages; from the highland lakes of the north to the dry barren plains in the south east: the contrasts were compelling. All this against a backdrop of mystical Mayan history glimpsed unexpectedly but definitely, like the ancient temples through the leaves of the jungle.

Eyes up

By Ann Bronkhorst

What's bright green and screeches in the treetops? Answer: a ring-necked parakeet, once an exotic rarity in this country and now seen (and heard) quite widely in south east England. Noisy groups of parakeets have moved into St Pancras Cemetery and Coldfall Wood, but it's hard to see them in the thick leafy canopy. As the leaves turn colour that flash of green feathers may show up more clearly.

According to the RSPB, parakeets compete with our native woodpeckers so there's a potential problem. Should they be discouraged, even culled, or encouraged as delightful new residents? Maybe readers of *THE ARCHER* have views about this.

While you're looking up into the trees in Coldfall Wood you may notice the new bat boxes being fixed in position this autumn, thanks to funding obtained by the Friends of Coldfall Wood. And if you visited the Friends' stall at the Muswell Hill Festival on 16 September you'll have heard about their other activities and plans, which *THE ARCHER* will cover.



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