



YOUNG ARCHER



Andrew Wilkes, Fred Isaac and Charlie Gould at the end of their Paris Metro challenge.

Tunnel vision

By John Lawrence

Two 15-year-old schoolboys set out on a subterranean odyssey to visit every station on the Paris Metro in a single day. Fred Isaac and Charlie Gould were determined to beat the system after just missing out on setting a record for travelling to every stop on the London tube network last year.

This time, Fred, who lives in Huntingdon Road, and Charlie, of Hampstead Garden Suburb, were triumphant. Having started their quest at 5.31am, they returned to the surface 15 hours and 57 minutes later, having visited all 371 stops.

Moody on the Metro

Nearly 16 hours on the underground gave them plenty of time for memorable encounters. "One lady rambled at us for ages in French about the Bible. We didn't understand much, so all we could say in return was 'Merci'," said Fred.

"It was fascinating to see the difference between the tube and

Metro. The Metro has more leg-room but is far more dirty and seems to be filled with down and outs. People on the tube tend to be quite reclusive while those on the Metro seemed to be moodier."

The boys were accompanied on their journey by Andrew Wilkes, one of their teachers at University College School in Hampstead. They passed the time by listening to their iPods and arguing about League Two football. They support Barnet, while Mr Wilkes is a Bury fan.

Boost for charities

"It was completely exhausting but was actually great fun and a fantastic way to raise money for the charities," said Charlie.

The trip has raised over £1,500, to be split between Marie Curie Cancer Care, the 'Make a Wish' Foundation, the Equatorial College School in Uganda and Casa Lumini, an orphanage for Romanian children.

It's not too late to sponsor the boys. Please send a cheque made payable to University College School, and marked Community Action for Paris Metro. The address for the school is Frognaal, Hampstead, London NW3 6XH.

So what's next? Having said never again after their attempt on the London tube, their Parisian success is spurring Fred and Charlie to consider taking on the Moscow or Tokyo underground network next.

School of

rock

Talented young singers, songwriters and musicians aged 13-19 are being given the chance to taste fame at Barnet's Rock School.

Six bands will be chosen to spend time rehearsing at a professional, well-equipped studio in Barnet. The course will culminate in the acts performing live at a one-off show called a Rock 'n' Roll Circus, when artsdepot is transformed into a rock venue on Friday 27 February.

Visit the Myspace page at www.myspace.com/barnetrockschool to get a taster of the acts involved last year and to keep updated with this year's highlights. Anyone interested in taking part should contact lloyd.gee@barnet.gov.uk

Lucy's Alterations

Do your children's school uniforms always need altering & name tags sewn on?

Any alterations undertaken by an experienced dressmaker.

07884 227 372

Hope is in the air

Everyone is invited to take part in a programme of uplifting activities as Hope Week comes to East Finchley Baptist Church. Pastor Simon Dyke said: "With the current financial gloom that has gripped the country recently, we thought hope was a particularly relevant theme."

Hope Week starts on Saturday 7 February, with church members carrying out a community survey on the High Road. They will ask people what they think the purpose of life is and what their opinions are of the Bible and Jesus. Special assemblies will take place during the week at Holy Trinity and Martin Primary Schools.

On Friday 13 February, The Still Time Band will perform at a live music evening at 7.45pm at the church building on Creighton Avenue. Tickets for drinks, canapés and enter-

tainment are £5 for adults and £3.50 for concessions.

A family fun afternoon at the church from 2-4pm on Saturday 14 February will have a three-legged treasure hunt, hair braiding, face painting, crafts and a bouncy castle for children aged 11 and under. Meanwhile, the adults can relax with tea, coffee and cakes.

A special community service takes place at the Church on Sunday 15 February at 10.30am with a crèche and activities for children and young people.

To find out more about Hope Week, call Simon on 020 8444 0365 or visit www.eastfinchleybc.org.uk. To buy tickets for the music evening please contact Sarah on 020 8883 1544 or email eastfinchleybaptistchurch@yahoo.com.

Step into the limelight

By Lucy Chamberlin

The back-street treasure that is the Incognito Theatre is on the lookout for new blood: actors, set designers, directors and back-stage crew, anyone enthusiastic enough to give a few hours of their time and help a very worthy cause.

"We treat it as a professional theatre," says artistic director Sonja Taylor, who is also Head of Expressive Arts at Highlands School in Enfield. "We're not just a group of luvvies. Everyone gets on really well and pulls together." It is an incredibly fun, sociable crowd and, as publicity officer Will Piper says, the friends you make here are for life.

Despite being voluntary, the group puts on six productions a year, and has won numerous awards in the annual Barnet Drama Festival, most recently for its production of *Breaking the Code*, a play about Alan Turing and the Enigma machine.

Tight for space

Incognito is the theatre where actor David Jason began his illustrious career, and he remains a patron. He once likened the Incognito stage to acting on television: the defined (and confined) space means dramatic gestures must be kept to a minimum.

The auditorium of the Friern Barnet theatre contains just 60 velveteen seats, taken from a cinema. Backstage, and above stage, not only is there little space, but with ladders to climb and creaking floorboards to contend with, it is a miracle that any cast and crew manage to manoeuvre around, let alone produce their stunning, plays.

Through the dressing rooms is the costume store, with racks of clothes from all eras and in

all sizes hung precisely by Ann Lewis and Carol Belsten. Brave a precarious stairway and you find a little attic room with shelves of props: vases, candlesticks and masks, a bucket of swords in one corner and antique furnishings in another, all laid out neatly by Moira Wallace and set dresser Jose Cronin.

Flats for the set are kept in a shed-like store behind the stage, and larger props and furniture are housed wherever there's room, or returned to the living rooms of cast members and kind donors.

New foyer and new blood

Incognito's funding comes merely from bums on seats and the actors' annual subscriptions. The group is fundraising for a new foyer, creating space for an extra room for auditions and rehearsals, and hopefully a bar too.

Any help is welcomed, but the group is particularly looking for younger actors in their 20s and 30s. Wednesday night is club night, when John Savage's set-building team and the behind-the-scenes hands get to work. Rehearsals take place on Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday evenings for six weeks before each play. Actors can get involved in as many or as few plays as they like per year.

For more information, or to join Incognito, contact the box office on 0791 287 5700 and visit the website www.incognitotheatre.com



Props and costumes packed tightly in the backstage area of Incognito Theatre. Photo by John Lawrence