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THE ARCHER

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Photo courtesy of Alan Philogene

Between two worlds

By Daphne Chamberlain

This is the story of Shirla Philogene, long-time East Finchley resident. Starting in the Caribbean island of St Vincent, it describes how a little girl who ran past her local hospital holding her nose, in case she caught something, was awarded an MBE for services to nursing leadership.

As a student nurse, she survived a frosty reception in training in Essex, going on to become a Queen's Nurse, NHS manager, and Head of the Nursing Service in the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association.

She worked with SSAFA in Germany and Hong Kong, where she developed a health promotion service for the families of Gurkha soldiers, while rising from Honorary Colonel to Honorary Brigadier (though always refusing to wear uniform).

In 1998, Shirla was included in a list of 50 women who have made a significant contribution to the work of the NHS.

Changing worlds

In her autobiography, poetic descriptions of the St Vincent of her childhood and its array of characters contrast with the account of her developing career in England. At first, she did indeed feel caught, but then realised that both her worlds were changing. The St Vincent she knew as a child no longer exists, but neither does the England of the 1950s.

Reading this book and talking to Shirla reminded me of folk tale characters, setting out

on a journey with the seeds of their own success within them. In Shirla's case, I would say these were determination, flexibility, and knowing the right time to move on.

She says she has always hated bureaucracy, but has obviously found her way round it to help people. The young girl who originally wanted to become a deaconess is now a pillar of our local Methodist church.

From nursing to writing

She also belongs to the East Finchley Writers Group, and was one of their contributors at the recent East Finchley Arts Festival. Many readers will enjoy *Between Two Worlds*, a book of memories, comments and photographs, published by Author House, ISBN 978-1-4389-1155-7 (sc) and also available through Amazon. Call 08001974150 or visit www.authorhouse.co.uk for further information.

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The shed that Ian built

Sue Baderman is a plot holder at East Finchley Allotments, off Plane Tree Walk. Here she describes how one act of kindness has stayed with her through the years.

About 18 years ago, I arrived back on my plot after a short holiday to find NO SHED, just a small pile of blackened metal and a handful of ornaments from some silly plimsolls.

We had inherited a very ordinary off-the-peg shed with the plot, no character, but useful. Now, nothing. I went to my old friend Ian and his

neighbour Jack for comfort, saying: "That's it. I'm never coming back."

A few weeks later I did go back, very half-heartedly,

to pick apples and damsons, and there was A SHED. Not a B&Q special but a quirky, handsome one, built entirely of other people's cast-offs, completely recycled and, to me, perfect.

When I opened the door, the inside was furnished too. There was a shelf with apples beautifully arranged on it, a bright green painted table, a handmade stool and assorted secondhand and homemade tools. There was also a large chocolate box picture of a cat on the wall. I don't really like cats, except this one, who makes me smile every time I open the door.

To say I was overwhelmed is an understatement, but the most revealing thing was realising how much pleasure Ian and his accomplice Jack had had in building it for me.

I love my shed. Nothing has changed over the years except for a few leaks in the roof and some more fixtures and fittings, but to me it embodies all the best things about our allotments, the help and friendship of your neighbours and the working together when you most need it.

There was a second building added a few years later, again a complete surprise. It's a sort of greenhouse or potting shed complete with a leaded light window and wood block floor from a skip. I love that too.



Community Focus Open Exhibition 1st prize winner, Sachin Meghani with Judith Taylor, CF Tutor,

Boundless creativity

Community Focus, the arts organisation based on level 2 at artsdepot, North Finchley, ran its second annual open exhibition showing the work of 100 local artists and CF students in a range of mediums.

The vibrant work exemplified the range of art created within the CF organisation. Sachin Meghani won First Prize, Mohammed Rahman and Janet Bagley were runners-up, and the People's Choice winner was Nadia Dada.

In the CF gallery until Friday 20 February is Spectrum, an exhibition of work by Syed Jamal.

While CF is dedicated to empowering vulnerable members of the community, it also champions individuals to develop powerful expression through specialised courses with high quality teaching, including, drama for radio, creative writing, Photoshop, IT, portraiture, acrylic painting, watercolour and drumming.

Design a poster

CF welcomes entries for a Disability Action in Barnet Poster Competition. All you need to do is draw, paint or photograph a picture using the theme of 'disability'. The winning image will be used in Barnet's new poster and displayed all over the borough.

Please submit your artwork on a sheet of A3 paper with a completed enrolment form, which you can download from the CF website www.communityfocus.co.uk. The closing date is Tuesday 17 February.

Future projects include CF's first playwriting competition to create a new play on the theme

of 30. The deadline is 6 March 2009 and the judging panel will include representatives from Channel 4, *Empire* and *Private Eye*. More details on the website.

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