



Karen Mattison, left, and Emma Stewart at Buckingham Palace, where they received an award from The Queen.

Women like them

Karen Mattison, a mother of three children from East Finchley, and Emma Stewart, from south London, went to Buckingham Palace to receive The Queen's Award for Enterprise. The award recognised their innovation in setting up the Women Like Us organisation that connects mums who need flexible working arrangements to fit around family life with local employers who need talented part-time staff.

Women Like Us has partnerships with 170 London schools and goes to the school gates to talk to women about making the return journey into the world of work. Nearly 11,000 women are registered.

Blissful time in N2

By Brian Timms

A leading Australian cancer surgeon's fond memories of the "small town" of East Finchley are outlined in his autobiography.

Professor Chris O'Brien, a revered head and neck cancer specialist who died of a brain tumour in Sydney in June, aged 57, lived in East Finchley in the mid-1980s.

He describes living with his wife, Gail, and their two young children in a one-bedroom flat behind Bernard Johnson House in "busy but picturesque" Fortis Green near "a village called Muswell Hill".

"It was a blissful time," he writes, referring warmly to the nearby "verdant" park called Cherry Tree Wood, with its tennis courts and well-equipped playground, plus the "excellent" bike shop in Muswell Hill.

But a scary plunge down the playground slide stayed in his memory. After watching his three-year-old son Adam repeatedly climb up the steep steps and slide down, Chris decided it was safer to put Adam on his lap and slide down with him. However, "Adam's little foot slipped between my legs, catching his sneaker on the slide and causing his leg to slip under mine," he writes. Adam had a spiral fracture of his tibia, which was put in plaster for four weeks.

Cancer surgery achievements

While living in East Finchley, Chris O'Brien worked in the

head and neck unit at the Royal Marsden Hospital, Chelsea. His excellent book *Never Say Die* (HarperCollins) details his life's work in cancer surgery and emphasises a positive outlook.

Professor O'Brien was Director of the Sydney Head and Neck Cancer Institute, which he founded. He was given a state funeral and made an officer in the Order of Australia.

The famous surgeon's links with East Finchley were spotted by ex-Finchley resident Shirley Crane, now in West Australia. Maybe other *ARCHER* readers remember Chris O'Brien from his days in and around the "spacious and leafy" environment of Cherry Tree Wood.

Good weed

By Linda Dolata

Long Lane Pastures continues to be increasingly popular, with a steady stream of visitors throughout the weekend (opening hours 10am to 5pm Saturday and Sunday). It is a fairly quiet time of the year, with the blackberries almost over, and all the young frogs, toads, newts, voles, birds and foxes fully grown and starting to disperse.

There are still plenty of flowers, and consequently lots of butterflies, bees, hoverflies and other insects. The grass is populated by spiders and stridulating grasshoppers, and the pond always has a few dragonflies and damselflies on patrol.

This year the pond has done extremely well, but we have a surfeit of elodea (Canadian pond weed) so it is being removed in vast quantities and (having allowed time for the pond creatures to crawl back into the water) composted. This is not in itself a bad thing, as it attracts insects, which in turn feed birds such as the wagtails.

However, this elodea is the oxygenating weed sold (for a couple of pounds for a tiny bunch) to improve garden ponds or aquaria, so if any readers would like to bring a polythene bag or jar, they are welcome to take as much pond weed as they need. It is beautifully healthy, and makes a good excuse to come and see the pastures. The entrance is from the track on Long Lane opposite the Fire Station.

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Wendy Hallett celebrates her award. Photo courtesy of everywoman

Wendy leads the way

Businesswoman Wendy Hallett was named Innovator of the Year in the Specsavers everywoman in Retail Awards 2009 in September for her dynamic approach to her retail clothing business.

Wendy, who runs Hallett Retail in East Finchley, began her career with the Arcadia group. She became a working mother in her 30s and had ideas to help smaller brands set up boutique outlets. With just £1,000 to buy a PC, Wendy set up Hallett Retail from home and within 12 months had her concept trialled in Debenhams. It was an instant success and was quickly rolled out into more stores. She continued to develop her idea, adapting it beyond department stores, and in 2007 launched in 150 New Look outlets. Today she employs 400 individuals in over 200 sites.

Family first

Talking about her success, Wendy comments: "Passion for and a thorough knowledge of the retail sector definitely helped me launch my business,

but my outstanding team must take much of the credit. One of my philosophies in life is that 'no meeting is more important than your family' and it is a principle I extend to my staff, many of whom work part-time to balance child-care commitments."

The everywoman organisation is a resource for women in business and its awards seek to identify and celebrate the contribution made by women excelling in the retail sector.

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