



Michael Palin makes friends at the Phoenix

By Ann Bronkhorst

Since 1910 over seven million film-goers have attended the cinema we now call The Phoenix. On 9 April yet another audience enjoyed a special event: watching a film, meeting Michael Palin and supporting the cinema's fundraising drive.

American Friends is fiction, but inspired by the 1861 diary of Palin's great-grandfather, an Oxford don who met two American ladies in the Swiss Alps, eventually married the younger one, despite a considerable age difference, and fathered seven children.

The film is gently paced, visually appealing and rich with period detail (cumbersome walking gear, Victorian furnishings, High Table dining).

'No car chases'

Director Tristram Powell, who joined Palin in discussion and reminiscence after the screening, noted that "the women drive the emotion; the men are stultified." He felt that the story had dictated the 1991 film's slow, even pace and agreed with chair Richard

Brooks, Arts Editor of The Sunday Times, that it couldn't be made today. As Palin said: "Nobody gets killed and there are no car chases."

During the three-way discussion and the audience's questions, Palin's early experiences of cinemagoing, his performances on film and TV and his respect for the writer's role ("the primary creative act") were touched on. He was courteous, engaging and, of course, often very funny. He was serious, however, when suggesting that film can captivate people in a way that TV and DVD can't. *American Friends* seemed to prove his point that evening but, for those who missed the event, there are plans for a DVD release in the UK.

School needs funds for watertight solution

By Briony Cartmell

Christ's College Finchley on East End Road, is experiencing some structural problems with its building and is launching a campaign to try and persuade Barnet Council to fix the roof. The 30-year-old building has been troubled with rainwater leaks since 1991.

The flat roofs, combined with a design flaw which resulted in rainwater being channelled internally through the walls, meant that, as the building expanded, leakage was exacerbated. The leaks are posing health and safety risks. Closing various areas of school in times of bad weather leads to congestion in corridors, and rotting floor tiles in classrooms create trip hazards.

The school's maintenance and repair budget is already overstretched. Work has been concentrated on repairing drains and an electrical blow-out. The Parents and Friends Association (PFA) communicated the problem to Barnet Council who acknowledged that the situation needed rectifying, with a complete rebuild of the school.

No funds in place

While this is the only effective

response, there are no committed funds in place for this, and plans could take years to materialise. Barnet Council said it will carry out a condition survey of all secondary schools in six months, but no guarantee of action will stem from this.

The PFA has launched a petition and is urging local residents to give their signature. Each one will further encourage the Council to contribute to the £150,000 needed to re-surface the roof.

Fiona Davidson, chair of the PFA, said: "Christ's College is a good school with many strengths, which in a way may be one of its problems. If it had lower levels of attainment, it might have received more attention."

Find out more about the petition at the school website www.ccfplus.com/school/

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Transformed: from left to right, photographers Karen Fraser, Myra Lawson, Peter Kyte and Francesca Albin had their works on show. Photo by John Lawrence

Glimpses into a changing world

A very special event by East Finchley Open Group gave visitors the chance to walk through four front doors and see glimpses of the world in different states of change. Sixteen photographers exhibited their work in the 'Trans/Form' show over the course of the last weekend in March.

Intriguing images hung on the walls of four houses in Church Lane, Beech Drive and Creighton Avenue. The unifying

theme was transformation.

Peter Kyte chose to interpret it through searing images of green, red and orange autumn

leaves, all taken along one road in Golders Green. Myra Lawson's photographs captured the reflections of buildings and sky morphed out of shape by the ripples on the Regents Canal.

Elsewhere, Adam Justice-Mills documented the last days of the shops on Lincoln Parade with some poignant images of the empty barber's shop, cut throat razors abandoned next to one of the sinks.

Scores of visitors toured the four venues over the course of three days. All the works were for sale. This is the first time the East Finchley Open group has run a show focusing solely on photographs, and with a unifying theme.

Textiles, sculptures, ceramics and other media will be on display when the EFO opens its doors again for its annual summer show on 3-4 and 10-11 July. More details at www.eastfinchleyopen.org.uk

Free exercise clubs

Triathlon and cycling chain Bike & Run is living up to its name by setting up a run club and a bike club to help people get fit and enjoy outdoor exercise. The free clubs have expert tuition for all beginners and are designed to gently inspire confidence in taking part in sport.

The Run Club is on Wednesdays from 6.30pm to give people time to get back from work and the Bike Club leaves each Saturday at 8.30am

Steve McKenzie, co-founder of Bike & Run, said: "While we sponsor an elite Bike & Run team, we realised that many beginners possibly lacked confidence or time to join a competitive club and so it made sense for us to extend

our advice into providing physical training that lived up to our shop name."

His co-founder Nick Pearce added: "We genuinely feel part of the community and wanted to actively provide a wellbeing resource that people could access 100% free of charge."

To register, visit the High Road store and fill out a simple health & safety form. The website is www.bikeandrun.co.uk.



Get fit with Bike & Run owners Nick Pearce, Sally-Anne Patch and Steve McKenzie. Photo by Ben Pochee.

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