

Behind the scenes at the museum

By Sheila Armstrong

Where would we be in the UK without volunteers? The National Trust, national museums, hospitals, and of course *THE ARCHER* are only a few of the organisations that greatly benefit from their help. Both the institution and the individual gain from the arrangement and there are a variety of ways of helping.

At the British Museum, for example, there are several hundred volunteers who help in many different ways: working in the different departments, cataloguing objects, giving "eye opener" tours to visitors and facilitating lectures.

East Finchley resident Gwen Kirstein has been a volunteer there for 25 years, recently receiving one of their awards. She told *THE ARCHER* jokingly that the award was probably given to her for stamina.

Gwen has been there since 1985, long before the museum's volunteer scheme was in existence, and even before that she used to visit the museum regularly with her young daughter.

Amongst other things, Gwen works in the Pre-history and Chinese departments with their Handling Collections. These are ancient objects from the collections that visitors can touch and ask about. They might include a million years old axe or a 3,000-year-old piece of Chinese jade.

If you are interested in volunteer work at the British Museum, visit www.britishmuseum.org.uk, or if you would like to explore volunteering more widely you can visit www.do-it.org.uk and type in your interests to find out where you can help out.

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Where are the pumpkins?

Around Halloween 2009, this stencil painting of two pumpkins appeared on the wall near the Noble Sage Gallery on Fortis Green, signed by the London-based street artist Pochoir, who also painted a 'GLC plaque' in Berlin and recently used this image as part of a redesign for the Adidas store in London.

Then in April this year the pumpkins suddenly vanished just as mysteriously, presumably under layers of whitewash that could be removed in a restoration. According to Councillor Alison Moore, a spokesperson from Barnet Council has stated that this work was not whitewashed by the Council's anti-graffiti squad.

If you are among those who would like to see them reinstated or have any further information, please go to the 'Bring back the Pochoir pumpkins' group on Facebook.

An October treat

By Diana Cormack

Here is a simple pumpkin soup recipe for Hallowe'en taken from my mother's World War II recipe book. Serves four.

Ingredients:

1 onion
2lbs / 900g pumpkin
Water to cover
1 oz/ 25g margarine
Salt and pepper
Milk as required
1 egg.

Method:

Chop up the onion. Peel the pumpkin, remove the seeds and slice. Place in a pan together with the onion and enough water to cover. Cook until tender, then strain. Return to the heat, adding the margarine and salt and pepper to taste. Add enough milk to make a nice creamy consistency and bring to the boil. When you feel it has cooked through enough, remove from the heat and add a well-beaten egg then serve.

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Autumn colours at the Pasture

By Linda Dolata

It has been an eventful summer at Long Lane Pasture, with several successful organised events, such as Wildflower Day and Butterfly Day. There have also been a couple of school visits; it's a great way for children to connect with their environment, in a restful and lovely place.

Meanwhile, each weekend brings a trickle of visitors, making good use of the meadow, a small haven of ancient hay meadow on our doorstep, with several ponds and a good range of habitats. Especially popular have been the blackberries, descendants of wartime allotment cultivars.

Glowing colours

Recent wildlife sightings have included slow-worms, voles, toads and frogs, and of course the exciting wasp spiders, so aptly named with their bright warning coloration. There will soon be other colours to enjoy in the leaves. Delicate golden birch hues, the toffee brown and ripening acorns of deciduous oak, lovely russets and crimson all herald the new season.

Look out for the 'Guelder rose', not a rose at all, but a species of Viburnum, and for the sparse but beautiful Spindle fruits, an impossible combination

of candyfloss pink and orange, which somehow looks lovely.

Fascinating fungi

Also not to be missed are the huge fruiting bodies of some of the fungi that spend most of the year under the soil as microscopic mycelia of hyphae (masses of tiny white threads). This year there are some splendid large examples as well as a whole range of smaller species.

I would urge anybody who has not seen the Pastures to come along one Saturday or Sunday, and have a look. If you pop in between 10am and 12noon on a Saturday, when the volunteers are around, we can show you where to look for the wasp spiders, for example.

Anybody can come along and help. There is also an unusual job for somebody special: going out in a canoe to clear the large pond of the ubiquitous pondweed, which threatens to choke it.

Judith Costa BSc HPC

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Briony Geekie has moved from the country to the town.

City life v country life

Briony Geekie recently joined Active Chiropractic Healthcare Clinics at 98 High Road after working in the rural north. Here, she describes how her city clients are shaping up against their countryside counterparts.

For the new associate chiropractor at Active Chiropractic Clinic, London is a little different from the sleepy town of Brigg in North Lincolnshire with its pig farmers. I am seeing far more office-based workers living the fast-paced life in this superb capital city.

With city living comes a sedentary, deskbound lifestyle which means a higher number of people with lower back pain walking through the clinic door. Low back pain can range in signs and symptoms from stiffness and mild aching to acute, raging pain with various symptoms affecting the legs and feet.

The commonly-used phrase "poor posture" refers to muscles shortening and their counterparts lengthening and weakening. In the case of lower back pain sufferers, the back muscles shorten and tighten, with the

abdominals lengthening and weakening.

A complication to poor posture and workplace ergonomics may eventually exacerbate spinal pain. If you recognise any of the symptoms described it is advisable to seek advice from a qualified health professional.

For the month of October I am offering 50% off the New Patient clinic admission fee and a chance to assess postural imbalances, spinal dysfunction and methods of treatment and offer advice on workplace set ups.

Briony is available to do free talks at any groups or businesses/organisations in the local area; for more information or bookings please contact Active Chiropractic Healthcare Clinics, 98 High Road, East Finchley, N2 9DY, tel: 020 8444 0666, e mail: info@activechiropractic.org.uk

KALASHNIKOV KULTUR

By Ricky Savage, the voice of social irresponsibility

Don't dump Stig

This is the age of cuts and the BBC has decided that the world is weird enough for cuts to boy's own television and that means Top Gear. Now that the Stig has been revealed to be someone no one had ever heard of, the Beeb has done the dishonest thing and sacked him. So who's next for the designer race suit and tinted visor? And what colour will they be?

We've had the original Black Stig, the White Stig and assorted American, German and African Stigs, so what we need now is a full-colour Stig.

The problem is where do you start? The Stig has to be someone whose life has become so pointless that their best hope of salvation is to become anonymous. So let's start with a new role for the man who saved the world. Yes, time for a superhero renowned for his suit of brownest brown. Step forward Brown Gordon. Time to don the full-face helmet, stop talking and become Brown Stig. So what if he can't drive, the boys aren't very good at driving either so no one will notice.

But what if brown is not your colour? Maybe it should be Blue Stig. And it doesn't need to be just one person. You can have caring, new father, all in it together Blue Stig, or hard line cut everything, trash the studio Blue Stig or even avuncular, cigar chomping, jazz loving Blue Stig. Jeremy would be so happy at finding himself surrounded by Dave, George and Ken. If we're lucky they'll all crash in a burning fireball so that Red Stig can rise from the ashes like a millipede.

The problem with such flights of sanity is the boys will miss out on someone who really needs to be wrapped up in tin foil and gagged. Time for the up market, Eton-educated, smooth-talking platinum blond Stig. Yes, it's time for bouncing, bonking Boris to find a new way to warp time just like he warps the language. Give the man who should shut up a job where he has to shut up. Better still, give the job to me. That way you could get out-to-lunch Stig, and I know that makes sense.