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Royal visitor at Bobath Centre

The Duchess of Gloucester visited the Bobath Centre for Children with Cerebral Palsy in East End Road on Tuesday 8 March. The Duchess, who has been a patron of the children's charity since 1993, was taken on a tour by Christine Barber, Director of Therapy Services, and spent time observing therapists at work and chatting with children and their parents.



The Duchess of Gloucester met children, staff and parents at the Bobath Centre.. Photo courtesy Bobath Centre

She was later presented with a posy of flowers by Madison Haynes, aged seven, from Leigh-on-Sea, on behalf of the Centre. The Duchess last visited the Centre in 1993, when she attended the official opening of the charity's new premises after their move from Swiss

Cottage.

"We were delighted to welcome the Duchess to the Bobath Centre once again," said Jayne Pearce, Director of Administrative Services at the Centre. "Her Royal Highness has been a keen supporter so it was wonderful to be able to update her on our progress. We are proud to have her as our patron and hope she will visit again soon."

To find out more about ways you can support the Bobath Centre, visit www.bobath.org.uk or call the Fundraising Department on 020 8444 3355.

Startled by a rare visitor

By Sue Corson

Out of the corner of my eye, I caught sight of a grey-black flash darting from the fence to the ground in my garden in Market Place. I can readily recognise most of my feathered visitors but this was not something I had seen before.

I suspected that he might be quite a rare visitor so, while he happily fed on the ground under the suet balls, I consulted my bird bible and, sure enough, I found that I had a black redstart in the garden.

He has been coming back to feed daily since the end of January despite the resident robin's best efforts to deter him. I have my heart in my mouth as I watch the local cats stalking him as he sits openly on the fence, bobbing up and down as if to tease them and flying off when they get too close.

So far, he has not been joined by any female friends but I am optimistic that one might turn up, as a pair of blackcaps, another migrant bird, have also been seen in the garden in the past few weeks and the male has been singing beautifully. Who would have thought that in such a busy urban area we would be treated to such delights?



Old Barn should be 'open to everyone'

By John Lawrence

People of all ages joined in a street party to call for the Old Barn Community Centre to be open for everyone to use. The next stage in the campaign is to sign up active members who could help run the building on Tarling Road.

We've reported in previous issues that there was a change of management at the Old Barn last year. Subsequently, an after-school club was shut, many community groups moved out and the centre is now used mainly for a religious service on Sundays.

Step forward

Campaigners are asking all parents whose children attended the after-school club until June 2010 to come forward. They believe there may be the basis for a legal challenge if it can be proved there was no advance warning of the club's closure.

They also want volunteers to sign up to show Barnet Council that local people are prepared to help run the centre.

Ideas for the future

Dozens turned out to the street party on 13 March to enjoy music, food, face painting and fitness activities, all provided free. But it was no celebration. There was a feeling of anger that the community had effectively been shut out. "Childcare", "a youth club", "sports clubs" and "job training" were some of the ideas for how the centre could be used.

Pauline Moran, who worked at the Old Barn for 22 years until last year, said: "It should go back into the hands of a proper community organisation to be run as it was in the past. Without it, the young people round here have very little to do."

Will Hudson, who heads the Old Barn Action Group, said Muslim, Christian and non-religious groups alike wanted the centre to be open to all. "This was an active centre for more than 20 years," he said. "Now when people ask what's going on at the Old Barn, the answer is not a lot."

To contact the action group, telephone 07870 647284, email endofstrife@hotmail.co.uk or visit its Facebook page.

How do you think the Old Barn should be used? Write to us at the-archer.co.uk or *The Archer*, PO Box 3699, London N2 8JA.

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