



Cats and birds in perfect harmony

By Caroline Broome

It's pretty amazing to have your garden accepted for the National Gardens Scheme but it's something else seeing it on national television.

Chatting to a fellow gardener at the 2011 NGS Yellow Book London launch in March, I discovered she was a journalist researching for the new Alan Titchmarsh ITV1 show *Love Your Garden*. Her brief was to find amateur gardeners who have gone to special lengths to find ways of enjoying wildlife in their gardens despite the presence of domestic pets.

Our solution is our Catatorium, a wire-framed enclosure surrounding the pergola on our patio in which our six cats can enjoy the sights and smells of their outdoor jungle, enabling the birds and wildlife to enjoy the garden beyond safely: prey and predator living side by side in harmony.

The whole process of filming, which took place in May, lasted from 9am to 4.30pm, resulting in three glorious minutes on prime time TV. It was fascinating to watch the producer setting up numerous camera angles, filming out of sequence with repeated takes from different viewpoints, clearly working to a very precise brief in her mind's eye.

Feline stars

While the garden looked fab, and I even managed to present myself reasonably intelligibly to wildlife presenter Charlotte

Uhlenbroek, the real stars of the show were our two Devon Rex cats Jitterbug and Radar, who took part in a less-than-controlled experiment to test three so-called cat deterrents.

Jitterbug, when faced with pelleted lion dung, far from being frightened away by the prospect of a large predator on her patch, merely sniffed at it nonchalantly before moving on to dindins. Radar, who is blind and so has a heightened sense of hearing, wandered straight past the sonic sensor without a moment's hesitation.

So the age-old solution of a cat collar with bell may well be the best option.

Veteran grants extended

The Big Lottery Fund has announced that it has extended its Heroes Return 2 programme by a further 12 months. The new closing date for applications is 31 January 2012. This is to ensure that Second World War veterans, male or female, will have more time to apply for grants to cover travel and accommodation expenses, enabling them to travel to places across the world where they served.

The grants range from £150 to £5,500 depending on the numbers taking part (e.g. veteran, spouse and carer) and the destination. They are also available to the widows and widowers of veterans and to those who fought alongside British Forces in World War 2 and are resident in the UK and the Republic of Ireland.

Since 2004 over 50,000 people have made commemorative trips with funding and grants totalling over £24 million. To learn more about the scheme or find out if you are eligible ring the application helpline on 0845 0000 121 or email general.enquiries@biglotteryfund.org.uk



The Mayor of Barnet, Councillor Lisa Rutter, touring community stalls at The Institute Open Day.

Power of five at The Institute

By Daphne Chamberlain

Last month, The Institute at East Finchley celebrated 5 years in its impressive purpose-built Arts Centre, and showed off the work of some of its 5,000-plus students.

The Open Day on 25 June featured demonstrations and hands-on activities, from bridge and bookbinding to picture framing and furniture restoration. Balancing the cookery demonstrations were displays of Pilates and belly-dancing, while student musicians kept the atmosphere lively.

Guests going on to the Principal's reception enjoyed a strawberries, cream and champagne tea. No need to feel guilty about tucking in though, as Principal Joy Solomon declared, "Our currency is pleasure: learning, teaching, and enhancing lives".

Barnet's Mayor, Cllr Lisa Rutter, said she was impressed when she visited last year, but even more so this year. The reception included the presentation of a portrait painted by Miriam Waterman to one of the Institute's patrons, Meenhal Mehta, who had selected it herself. Miriam has just finished

the foundation art course at The Institute, and this was her first commission.

Recently, craft classes at The Institute have benefited from gifts of stained glass, portrait frames and fabrics. Anyone wishing to contribute similar gifts should contact The Institute.

Enrolment

Many people will be familiar with the red brick building at 11 High Road, but the main reception area is now housed in the Arts Centre. This is immediately opposite the Causeway exit at the back of East Finchley station; drivers can access it from The Bishops Avenue.

Enrolment time is edging ever closer, and the prospectus and application forms are available from The Institute, the library, and by downloading from www.gsi.ac.uk. For further information, check the website or call 0845 871 4141.

KALASHNIKOV KULTUR

By Ricky Savage, the voice of social irresponsibility

The News of the Screws: Screwed

So 168 years of gossip, rumours and fake sheikhs has ended in just the way it should: with a scandal. Proof that the lunatics have taken over the asylum and decided to burn it down. Yes, the weirdness has taken over and the News of the World has closed.

Right from the first issue in October 1843, this particular newspaper has been about scandal. All human life was there in its sordid complexity as the paper set out on its mission to find the dirt and spread it widely.

Back when getting a divorce was harder than winning the lottery, the News of the World had grubby little men outside divorce courts looking for the seedy details to serve up on Sunday. It worked. By 1912 it was flogging two million copies and reached the dizzy heights of 8.4 million in 1950. The News of the Screws was the place to read about the weird, the wild and the psychotic.

At its peak the paper went further and bought the inside stories of killers like Neville Heath, John Christie and John George Haigh. They paid for interviews, paid the defence lawyers and even gave cash to the killers' families. The gutter press? No, this was right down in the sewer.

Things didn't improve in the 1960s. They bought the inside story of the Profumo affair and they turned up with their chequebooks at the same time as the police when the Rolling Stones got busted. Inspector Knacker got his collar and his cash. A nice little earner all round or sleaze? You decide...

When Rupert Murdoch bought the rag, things didn't get better. Campaigning journalism? Printing topless sunbathing photos of Princess Diana or being so far up your own ego that paediatricians instead of paedophiles get beaten up by your meathead readers? Nice work.

The final straw wasn't just hacking Milly Dowler's phone, it was hacking the phones of terrorist victims, the families of dead servicemen and Milly Dowler.

And now it's gone, what would I put on its gravestone? I'd turn to a former deputy editor who said that the role of the paper was to dig up things on people it could then use to destroy them. It's almost enough to make me ashamed to be a journalist.

Shelagh Milligan

The Finchley Society reported with sorrow the death on 10 June of Shelagh Milligan, widow of the society's late patron Spike Milligan.

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