



Ski Sunday

When snow hit us on Sunday 5 February, some people wore their wellies while others slipped on their skis. We saw few people out and about with skis and poles on the day. Abi, photographed by Nick Young, said she had a "whizzy time" managing three shaky circuits of Cherry Tree Wood. "The skis were borrowed from my sister and the poles from my mum and I just had a go," she said. "It's been ten years since I last skied. I was like a kid again, it was an amazing day."

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A school for children with learning differences

Over the last few years we have become familiar with the term 'dyslexia' and, perhaps less so, with other terms such as dyspraxia and dyscalculia. But do we really know what all these terms mean?

It's a question posed by Denise Drinkwater, the founder and principal of Limespring School, a school for children with learning differences, which opened earlier this year in Park House, High Road.

Denise has worked as a specialist tutor supporting many children with a range of learning difficulties such as dyslexia and dyspraxia. She told *THE ARCHER*: "My interest in this field developed as my own children started school. I was perplexed and confused about what caused them to fall behind.

"Naturally, as a parent, you try to seek out the cause. A child falling behind at school is often related to dyslexic or dyspraxic difficulties. In essence, dyspraxia affects motor control and hence planning and co-ordination of tasks. Dyscalculia affects the ability to acquire arithmetical skills."

"But this is only the start", Denise continued. "Whilst it is good to understand why your child is a little different, then comes the realisation that there is no magic cure. And it is not a disorder; there is nothing wrong with your child. Very simply, the child learns in a different way."

Relearning key steps

So why set up the school? Denise believes that, on the whole, schools work very well for the majority of children who tend to learn in similar ways. For a significant minority of children, though, school can be a negative experience. Teachers do not have the time to differentiate due to the numbers of pupils in a class and a child's confidence can suffer.



Henry and Daniel analysing data from woods.
Photo by Erin Dowdell.

Limespring School has four classes of no more than eight children. It aims to revisit and retrain some of the key steps in their educational development within a specialist and therapeutic curriculum designed to meet the child's individual learning needs and differences, whilst developing their strengths.

For more information visit www.limespring-school.co.uk or telephone 020 8444 1387.

In the footsteps of Dickens

By Angela Anderson

"He went through Islington; strode up the hill at Highgate on which stands the stone in honour of Whittington; turned down to Highgate Hill, unsteady of purpose, and uncertain where to go; struck off to the right again, almost as soon as he began to descend it; and taking the foot-path across the fields, skirted Caen Wood, and so came on Hampstead Heath. Traversing the hollow by the Vale of Heath, he mounted the opposite bank, and crossing the road which joins the villages of Hampstead and Highgate, made along the remaining portion of the heath to the fields at North End, in one of which he laid himself down under a hedge, and slept."

This is a description of Bill Sykes's actions after he has killed Nancy in Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist*. Dickens knew London well and often walked around it, getting ideas for his characters and observing everything closely.

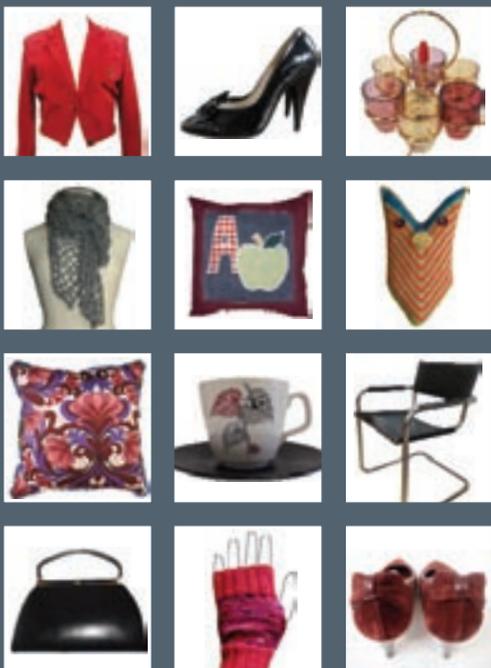
George Sala in a letter to the *Daily Telegraph*, June 1870, wrote of Dickens: "He was to be met rapidly skirting the grim brick wall of the prison at Coldbath-fields, or trudging along the Seven Sisters Road at Holloway, or bearing, under a steady press of sail, underneath Highgate Archway or pursuing the even tenor of his way up the Vauxhall Bridge Road."

The author had stayed in Highgate and *David Copperfield*, Dickens's favourite of his own books and generally regarded as autobiographical, contains this description. "It was dusk when the stage coach stopped with us at an old

brick house in Highgate on the summit of the hill... From the windows of my room I saw all London lying in the distance like a great vapour, with here and there some lights twinkling through it".

Celebrating Dickens

Many events are being held to celebrate the bi-centenary of his birth this year, one of them at Jacksons Lane in Archway Road. There in February White Rabbit presented a story telling night for grown ups called *Are You Sitting Comfortably? A Dickens Special*, including work by new writers inspired by him. I'm sure he would have approved.



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