



Life inside a Russian prison

By Nick Young
Images of life inside a Russian prison during a theatre festival organised by East Finchley resident Alex Dower (pictured below) were on show recently at the Phoenix Cinema.



After meeting the Russian theatrical director Kirill Sebrennikov, Alex was invited to direct the festival project at Prison Colony 29 at Perm in the Ural Mountains in 2009.

"I didn't think anything would come of it," he told THE ARCHER. "Apparently I am the first foreigner to be allowed to

to teach the prisoners an acting technique that he himself had learned at the School of Science of Acting.

One prisoner was able to utilise these techniques to overcome a nervous laugh at a subsequent parole hearing, and after his release he got a place at a local drama academy.

Alex found the prison staff very helpful. "They saw the beneficial effect it had," he said. "Afterwards, the prison's governor said that the project had achieved more with his men in two weeks than a team of five psychiatrists had achieved in five years."

Visual records

Alex was accompanied by two photographers who recorded the project: Sebastian Lister, a documentary and portrait photographer, and Sergey Ponomarev, an award-winning photographer who has worked in war zones around the world. "It was unbelievable," said Sebastian. "All of the prisoners were very friendly towards me."

A film crew has made a

documentary of the project, but it has been shown only on Russian television. Alex had planned a similar project at a women's prison near Moscow but his permission to work in prisons in Russia was withdrawn in 2012.

His company, Creating Freedom, is run from East Finchley and has been involved in projects in prisons, refugee camps and orphanages in Lebanon and Australia as well as Russia.

For more details about Creating Freedom, visit www.creatingfreedom.co.uk. Sebastian's photographs can be seen at www.lensculture.com/sebastian-lister.



Two of Sebastian Lister's photos.

work within a prison there."

Acting beats psychiatry

He planned to stage three adaptations of short stories, one of which was written by one of the prisoners. Working via a translator, Alex was able



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The Archer's John Dearing presents the cheque to Maureen Clemetson. Photo Mike Coles

Fun on the field

Some of the funds raised from the sale of The Archer tea towels over the last year have been used to buy play and sport equipment for the Monday Club. Our finance manager John Dearing handed over a cheque to the youth club's organiser Maureen Clemetson during an activities session on Martin Primary School playing fields.

Fun day

The Monday Club hosted its own family fun day in the summer. There was a stage where visitors were entertained by a youth dance group, solo singers and saxophone players.

Five-a-side football was played on the field at Martin Primary School and there was a

bouncy castle, again donated by The Archer using money raised from our tea towel sales.

Monday Club leader Maureen Clemetson said: "There was something for everyone and it all went well. With so much going on by the end of the day I was ready to go home and put my feet up!"

Venue for coffee & chat

The Coffee and Chat social mornings run by EFAB have now settled in a new venue, the Clissold Arms in Fortis Green, from 10.30am to midday on Mondays.

Regulars have been dropping in, and new faces are always welcome. Tea, coffee and biscuits are just £1 a head and EFAB Friends are on hand with local community information for all to share. More information at www.efab.org.uk.

School history

Education in East Finchley will be the theme for the Finchley Society's outreach meeting being held at Holy Trinity School, Eagans Close, at 8pm on Thursday 24 September.

You can hear about the oldest schools up to the present day with the opening of the new Archer Academy building. Speakers will be David Smith, Roger Chapman and Lucy Harrison. All welcome. Non members £2. Refreshments available.

Cooking skills sharing sessions

A new session to help those wanting to learn, or improve, basic cooking skills will be starting soon on Thursday afternoons. EFAB Friends with flair in the kitchen are working together to devise simple healthy recipes which can be prepared on a budget, and will demonstrate their recipe to a small group of learners, who can then eat together afterwards.

The sessions are planned to be on Thursdays from 4.45pm to 7.30pm at the Ann Owens Centre, Oak Lane, N2, and will have a small cost involved to cover ingredients. To register your interest in attending, please write to us@efab.org.uk



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