



“I sometimes wonder how I managed to survive”

By Daphne Chamberlain

Ruby Joseph is well known in East Finchley. You may have met her as the manager of East Finchley Advice Service or as one of the N2 Poets. She contacted The Archer, though, to talk about something very personal to her, called The Truth Project.

The project is part of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, giving support to victims when they tell the secret that has devastated their lives. Ruby herself was repeatedly raped from the age of five. Beaten, threatened with death if she told anyone, going through an abortion when she was just 14, she finally faced her abuser in court when she was in her 30s.

That case 30 years ago collapsed. A defence witness was a convicted paedophile; another attempted to discredit her in court because he was unable to face the abuse going on and wanted to keep it secret; and the prosecution were poorly briefed. However, an Appeal Court ruling in the case became a precedent and enabled other historical cases to go forward in the years since.

Staying silent

Many victims of abuse, even when they find the courage to speak up, have not been believed. People say: “Why didn’t they say something at the time?” Ruby asks: “Would a child, living in terror, speak up when they’ve been told they will be killed and buried, or sent to a children’s home to live on bread and water?”

Other children simply knew instinctively that so-called responsible adults would just look away. One victim has told The Truth Project that when the abuse was finally revealed to his father, the father said he had wondered if something like that was going on.



Ruby Joseph

Lasting damage

Homeless and adrift from the age of 15, Ruby struggled with the wrong kind of therapy, made destructive relationships, and put herself in danger. Damage in childhood continues into adult life.

“I really sometimes wonder how I managed to survive that,” she says.

Currently being treated

for uterine cancer, she is very positive about the outcome, but aware of her own mortality. She says: “My life would have been very different if this had not happened to me, but I am able, and have a duty, to do something now.”

How the Project works

From her own experience, she believes that The Truth Project will listen and support anyone who contacts them. It is based in Darlington, Liverpool, Cardiff and Exeter, but events are held around the country, including London. Facilities are provided, but anyone unable or unwilling to travel can engage with it by telephone, email or letter. Everyone is allowed one or two companions and given a support worker. The atmosphere is warm and sympathetic.

People must agree that some information may have to be passed to police, though it is unlikely that anyone would be forced to appear in court. Anonymity is guaranteed, though Ruby has no wish to remain anonymous herself. She campaigns to stop child abuse by highlighting it: “It’s not going to reduce and stop so long as it’s kept secret and kept quiet.”

Ruby found release in writing, and you can read more about her experiences and those of fellow survivors in an online BBC article at www.bbc.co.uk-47933281. Contact the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse on 0800 917 1000 or www.iicsa.org.uk.



It’s a howl: Imogen Colmans, Tilak Patel and Mary Musker in *Hound of the Baskervilles*

Sherlock as she’s never been seen

A zany production of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* with just three actors playing all 16 characters is coming to Upstairs at the Gatehouse in Highgate at the beginning of July.

It will be performed by newly created local amateur theatre group Mutley and Minques in the shape of friends Dave Barron, Mary Musker, Tilak Patel and Imogen Colmans.

They have already performed at the Manx Easter Festival of Plays and as part of the Barnet and District Drama Festival, and have been invited for selection for the British All Winners Festival.

Dave told *The Archer*: “We devised a crazy plan to tour the show for three months performing it in as many ways as we

could. So we’re doing it in huge theatres and tiny ones, indoors and outdoors, on a traditional stage and in traverse with the audience on both sides.”

Mary Musker, who plays Sherlock and nine other characters said: “Every show is different and that’s an amazing feeling.”

The Hound of the Baskervilles plays Upstairs at the Gatehouse from Thursday 4 to Sunday 7 July. Tickets are available from www.upstairsatthegatehouse.com or call 020 8340 3488.



Run for it: Amateur athletes set off at the start of Race the Neighbours in Cherry Tree Wood last year.

The race is on again

Tendons are being stretched and trainers laced up in readiness for this year’s Race the Neighbours challenge which pitches East Finchley and Muswell Hill runners against each other.

Record numbers of runners, up to 450, are expected to take part in the friendly 10K on Sunday 14 July, starting at 9.30am in Cherry Tree Wood, and taking a route

over to Alexandra Palace and back.

Registrations are open online and you can also sign up at the Race’s stall at the East Finchley Festival on Sunday 23 June.

Phoenix on screen

Fans of The Durrells TV series may have spotted our own Phoenix Cinema featuring in one of the closing episodes when Maud and Margo Durrell had a night at the pictures. Actors Maddie Holliday and Daisy Waterstone were filmed at the cinema last year.

Families who fight together

Former competitive boxer Martin Carroll has started a family Boxercise class in the Birchwood Centre, Muswell Hill.

Martin, as well as being a personal trainer at the MighteeFit gym in East Finchley, is also an amateur boxing coach at Islington boxing club in Archway, where he gives his

time to the youngsters for free. Martin says that some clients would bring their kids along to the club. “We would do a fun boxing session where both the parent and child were working out together. Over time I thought it would be a great idea to bring more families together in the community to learn about boxing while getting fit,” he

said. His classes are based around a parent and child working out together, from the ages of nine and up. It’s £10 per person and is held at the Birchwood Centre on Fortis Green, N10 3BG, every second Wednesday of the month from 6.45pm. To book your place call Martin on 07809 593 952.

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