

Doing something different



Last summer I felt the urge to do something different – I wanted a new challenge. When my sister Sarah suggested a 350km cycle ride across Ethiopia for the charity she works for, I hesitated. Like many, I pictured a parched landscape and images from the time of Live Aid but of course it is in many ways a different story as I was about to discover.

The charity was Maternity Worldwide, which works in developing countries to help save lives in childbirth. In Ethiopia the risk of death during pregnancy or childbirth can be as high as 1 in 7. We were raising money for a maternity unit in a town called Gimbie.

After 4 months' training, I and 14 other cyclists, as well as Sarah and her colleagues, landed in Addis Ababa in torrential rain. The city bustled with minivans ferrying people around, markets selling fresh produce and Chinese imports (stall holders shout 'medichine!' – meaning 'made in China', a selling feature), men shining shoes and people herding animals.

After a few days acclimatising (Addis is at 2400m), we were off. We drove out of town and unloaded our bikes, looking at the undulating, roughly sealed roads ahead. We headed west through the Oromia region, cycling around 60km a day through stunning lush landscapes dotted with Eucalyptus trees hiding Vervet monkeys. Sometimes we could almost have been at home, with cattle grazing on patchwork hillsides in the distance. The main cereal crop, Teff, grew everywhere, a long pale grass shining beautifully in the sunlight. It makes Injera, a large sour pancake on which meat and vegetables are served.

If we stopped a crowd would gather, even in remote areas. The children couldn't contain themselves, jumping up and down shouting 'you, you', or 'faranji' (foreigner). Some children told us that they would get up at dawn, walk for three hours to school and return in the afternoon to work on the land.

Once we cycled over a bridge where 20 or so naked boys were bathing in the water below; on seeing us they all ran screaming out of the water and up the hill towards us – quite a sight. The people we met on our travels were overwhelmingly friendly.

It was hard not to give money or food to people but handouts won't help a country that needs our trade, not aid. Astonishingly, a 1% increase in Africa's share of world trade would generate \$70 billion per year – five times more than what the continent now receives in aid.

After six days of cycling we finally arrived at Gimbie at sunset. Prayers were being broadcast from the mosque and we were greeted by people lining the streets.

The maternity unit was a few bare rooms with basic equipment. Disposable gowns and gloves are even washed and re-used. Pregnancy and childbirth is beset with problems because of the lack of facilities and many women do not receive any care at all. Hospital treatment has to be paid for and most cannot afford it. Maternity Worldwide has set up a scheme where village leaders are given vouchers to distribute to pregnant women to go to hospital and a new maternity building is being planned.

Having wanted to do some kind of personal challenge, I found a beautiful country which I would encourage anyone to visit. It was a privilege to be there. For more information on Maternity Worldwide, or to donate, see www.maternityworldwide.org or call 01273 682241.

LUCY HANDLEY

Lucy and her sister were brought up in Hampstead Way and attended the Garden Suburb Schools and Henrietta Barnett.



Eucalyptus trees of the Oromia region of Addis Ababa

Time warp as Victorians meet WWII evacuees

On 21st September 2006 Victorians and World War II evacuees mingled in the playground of Brookland Junior School! Year 4 pupils arrived dressed as urchins, chimney sweeps, flower sellers and gentry for their Victorian day, while Year 6 children turned up in the playground dressed as evacuees ready for their trip to the RAF Museum at Hendon.

History Co-ordinator, Jane Pendry explained, "This is the first time Year 4 have studied Victorians and we decided that a Victorian Day would help to inspire and engage the children. We were privileged to have history specialist Richard York visit the school. He brought the Victorian era to life with dramatic renditions of the workhouse, lively musical performances using original Victorian instruments, group singing, a dancing puppet and even a life-size ventriloquist's

doll. The doll, called Major Horton, made his debut appearance at the school and caused outrage with his reactionary views. The pupils were able to argue with the Major, whose unpalatable point of view – he believed educating children to be a preposterous idea – stimulated strong debate.

Meanwhile, our evacuees returned from an excellent day at the RAF Museum, where they experienced life in a WWII school room and learnt about the many privations during the war.

Miss Pendry said, "Dressing-up and acting in role enables children to better understand the lives of children from the past. It excites their interest and encourages them to undertake their own research. We particularly want to thank all the parents who helped their children research and make the brilliant period costumes."

Sharing the Harvest at Brookland Junior School

In October, Brookland Junior School's Year 4 pupils created a house and garden using small change and tins of food for Homeless Action in Barnet.

All of Year 4 at Brookland Junior School took part in a special Harvest assembly and their own money-raising event to help local charity, Homeless Action in Barnet. During the assembly they sang 'Food Glorious Food' from the musical 'Oliver' with great enthusiasm and 'The Streets of London' with appropriate pathos. Some children read out poems they had written about harvest time. The work of Homeless Action in Barnet was explained to the whole school and pupils were then invited to take part in the fund-raising initiative.

That morning, children from each class laid down spare loose change to create the picture. Year 4 Group Leader, Shirley

Bates, who organised the event explained, "Year 4 pupils have supported Homeless Action in Barnet at harvest time for many years. Making the house and garden out of money was a fun way for the children to raise funds for the charity."

The pupils learnt about the local Barnet-based charity with a talk from David Dean, a volunteer from the charity, who addressed pupils at the beginning of term. HeadTeacher, Heather Blackmore added, "Our link with Homeless Action in Barnet supports our pupils' studies on citizenship. They understand that there are many local people who may not be as fortunate as themselves and develop empathy and understand through this project. The fact that it is a local charity gives the children real motivation to raise funds and make a difference to the local community."

JANE PENDRY

Highs and lows in 2006

The year 2006 has probably been one where our weather has been most talked about and written about ever. The hosepipe ban and the many, sometimes wierd suggestions on how to improve our efforts to conserve water have led to some hilarity as well as annoyance. But, in the end, what really happened to our water supply?

Total rainfall for 2006 was certainly below average but not by very much. The just under 28 inches that fell was less than the 27 year mean of 30 inches but was only ¼ inch less than the norm for the 1980s. During the 1990s, the average total rose to 30 inches but it was the exceptionally high totals of the first three years of the millenium that pulled the 2000s mean to 31¾ inches. It might be that a return to the values of the 1980s is what we should come to expect as a long run trend.

As with any other year, 2006 had its highs and lows as far as precipitation was concerned. For the first seven months of the year, rainfall, at 12¼ inches was well below the average 16 inches. June, in particular, had only ¾ inch. This was when water companies were talking about possible standpipes in the roads and our gardens were mostly suffering from lack of water. Even May, which was hailed in

the media as the answer to all our problems, had only 3 inches compared with the normal of 2¼ inches on the Suburb.

In August things began to improve with 2½ inches and, in September, 3.4 inches was a third more than usual. October saw less rain than usual but November saw more. So the two month total of 6¾ inches was only a little more than normal. December's figure was average.

Overall then, the very low rainfall of 2005 was not repeated but there was undoubtedly a lack of water. This was due to a dry winter and spring leaving groundwater levels low. The autumn rainfall of 2006 should prevent a repeat of this. At the start of January, we are well on the way to equalling last year's entire November to March total.

We live in a garden suburb and there is no denying that this year's rain has led to some fascinating garden oddities. While some plants and shrubs were lost due to the early drought, the autumn rain, along with exceptionally mild temperatures, led to wonderful flowerings of roses, primroses, hebes, evening primroses and many others. The raspberries barely grew at all but the chives seemed to manage better than usual to always produce shoots.

DIANA IWI

landscaping
design
patios
planting
drives

020 8209 0194

maintenance
turfing
watering systems
fencing
lighting

www.berrysgardens.com

Caring for the Suburb for 20 years

LUCA'S LANDSCAPE GARDENING

Decking Paving Irrigation Brickwork
Turfing Planting Lighting Pruning Fencing

Hampstead Garden Suburb Recommended Tradesman
Free estimates **07971574388** References available

Are you having Problems with your Computer?

Let me see if I can help...
Restore your PC to good health

- PC not working as you expect it to?
- Virus Trouble - Lost or damaged files?
- Hardware Failures e.g. Hard Drive?
- Security Checkup & Backups

In your Home or Office
• No Call Out Charge • Reasonable Rates •

Robert King
Computer Support Services
020 8950 9131
Email: Help@ProblemsWithMyPC.co.uk

Learn how to use your PC...
Be confident and happy using your PC with Computer "Driving Lessons"

ENGLISH
Why settle for less?

- Top grade, experienced teachers •
- Friendly, small classes •

Approved Teacher Training Centre
FREE CLASSES 2-4!
for our registered students
WP and Computer Training

GOLDERS GREEN COLLEGE
and School of English
www.englishlanguagecollege.co.uk

11 Golders Green Road, NW11 8DE
Tel: 020 8905 5467
Email: booking@englishlanguagecollege.co.uk

Accredited by the
BRITISH COUNCIL