

Michael Morpurgo OBE officially opens Archer Academy



Renowned author and former children's laureate Michael Morpurgo was the guest of honour at the official opening of the Archer Academy, East Finchley's new secondary school, on 21 November 2013.

Both students and staff were delighted to be visited by such a celebrated writer, and spent the weeks before his visit immersing themselves in his books. They also came up with a range of fundraising activities to raise money for his charity, Farms for City Children, as their way of saying thank you.

The author was greeted at the Archer Academy, by the school's book club, who chatted informally with him about his writing and his life. They were then joined by the rest of the school to listen to Michael reading from his collection of short stories, Of Lions and Unicorns.

After the reading, Michael took part in a lively Q&A session,

during which the students asked some well thought-out questions and received some insightful, often hilarious answers. Student Jake Emmerson said, "I got to ask a question! I asked him about his goals and he wisely told me goals are never reached, which I thought was very clever."

Staff and students then went outside the Beaumont Close building and were joined by governors and other invited guests to see Michael reveal the commemorative plaque and cut the ribbon.

To the delight of the watching students, Michael claimed he was unable to pull the cord on his own, and enlisted the help of Arsham Moti-Ghavanin, in recognition of the fact that Arsham had shaved his head to raise money for Michael's charity. Two other students, Alex Warwick and Markos Jethwa, were then roped in to help Michael

cut the ribbon and declare the school officially open.

The event was attended by a number of guests who had supported the school up to opening, including Mike Freer MP, Ian Threlfall from the Department for Education, Andrew Travers, Chief Executive of Barnet Council and councillors Alison Moore, Arjun Mittra and Andrew Harper. Headteachers from some of the local primary schools and other community members were also guests on the day.

Headteacher Mick Quigley summed up the view of the school on the occasion, saying: "I know I speak for everyone on the Archer Academy team when I say what an honour it has been for us to have such a well-loved author officiating at our opening ceremony.

The students have raised more than £750 for his charity so far, to show our appreciation for his visit, and the money is still coming in. It was a truly unforgettable day, and a real highlight of our first term at the Archer Academy."

And student Jake agreed, saying: "This has been a marvellous, momentous and memorable occasion and I feel privileged to have been part of it. It was very kind of Michael to come to our school. He was very funny and I think everyone will remember it forever."



A police warning

I am writing to warn of a fraud scam that is happening across London but is currently particularly affecting Barnet. I feel it is my duty to warn you of this scam and to reassure you we are taking these crimes very seriously and are working with other Boroughs and Specialist Units to apprehend the offenders.

The scam is particularly concerning as they are targeting the elderly and vulnerable and especially women. The criminals are calling victim portraying themselves as police officers from police stations in London, stating that you have been a victim of fraud and that they need your bank card as evidence. They ask for credit card and PIN numbers. They then tell the victim that they need the card as evidence and will send a courier to pick it up. In some cases they ask the victim to obtain cash from their bank or post office as they believe it is counterfeit. They then send

another courier to collect the cash as 'evidence'. They may also ask you to confirm who they say they are by calling 999 or Scotland Yard but this is part of the scam as they do not clear the telephone line and you are simply reconnected to them.

Important: Neither the Police nor the Banks would EVER ask for your credit card numbers over the phone. The police would NEVER send a courier round to collect evidence. If you receive a call from anyone claiming to be a police officer and you are suspicious then dial 999 or contact your local Neighbourhood Policing Team but allow at least 5 minutes for the line to clear or use a different phone.

There is further information available on the MET police website in the little book of big scams, www.met.police.uk/docs/little_book_scam.pdf.

ADRIAN USHER,
CHIEF SUPERINTENDENT
BARNET BOROUGH COMMANDER



A combination of quick action by vigilant neighbours and ill-advised parking led to the thwarting of a York stone robbery and the arrest of two would be thieves in Brim Hill in early November.

Neighbours spotted a white van parked on the grass and workmen lifting a pathway from a property. After some fearless and pointed questioning, and getting some unconvincing answers, the police were called. Either through inexperience or stupidity the thieves had not reckoned on the slippery nature of wet grass and found they could not make their escape. Even without the stone on board they were unable to push

the van free from its muddy trap before the police arrived and arrested them.

Thefts of York stone paving have become a more common occurrence in the Suburb recently with reports of thefts from elsewhere in Brim Hill, Meadway, Hill Rise, Spencer Drive, Holne Chase, Linnel Drive and the path from Hill Close to The Square. However in this case

we are able to report a failed theft that reminds us how important our neighbours can be to us.

Fortunately our Suburb is an urban area with a strong sense of community and fellowship, which benefits us all.

Congratulations to those whose concern and quick wits resulted in a positive outcome in this case.

TERRY BROOKS

Take the 20mph challenge

The Roads and Traffic Committee hears often from residents in favour of a 20mph speed limit across the Suburb.

Many RA members will be aware that during December Camden Council instigated just such a limit throughout that borough so residents of the Suburb, anxious for a similar limit, may now care to try the following experiment.

Travel from the 20mph limit's starting point at Spaniard's Gate via Whitestone Pond and Heath Street then down Fitzjohn's Avenue to its junction with Finchley Road where the 20mph limit ends (Finchley Road is TfL operated and therefore retains its 30mph limit). Drive around the Swiss Cottage roundabout and travel back to Spaniard's Gate the same way you came.

See if you can keep to the 20mph limit and if so whether you are able to do so without keeping your eyes on the speedometer rather than the road.

See if anyone else (including bus and taxi drivers) is observing the limit. See if you can complete the journey without being flashed, hooted or overtaken by infuriated motorists behind you who are

either not aware of the 20mph limit or who do not care about it.

I have made a dozen or so round trips since the limit was introduced and sticking rigidly to the absurdly inappropriate limit I have been overtaken by antagonised motorists on every occasion including twice at zebra crossings! This is a classic example of not thinking through a policy simply because it sounds like a good idea. I have no doubt that introducing 20mph limits in Camden will make the roads there less, rather than more, safe.

Those who think the Suburb's roads are unsafe should be concentrating on schemes which will make a genuine contribution to safety such as improved sight-lines at certain locations and the enforcement of junction parking regulations. 20mph limits would make no contribution whatsoever to safety on the Suburb's roads though overnight they would criminalise virtually all of the Suburb's car-owning residents. If you disagree at least take the above challenge before raising the matter with the Roads & Traffic Committee.

GARY SHAW
ratraffic@hgs.org.uk

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