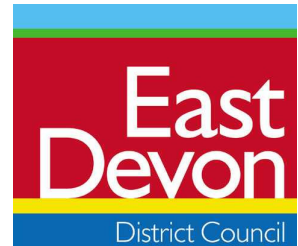


News Service

16 July 2007



OLD DEVON LANE IS ONE OF NATURE'S TIME CAPSULES

Primary School pupils celebrate their Great Trees

Pupils at West Hill Primary School have discovered a new village trail. And to celebrate, at this year's village fete they launched a leaflet with pictures and stories about their favourite trees around the village.

The leaflet was produced after the school spent a day finding out more about the trees in their grounds. The day was led by Great Trees of East Devon project co-ordinator Kate Tobin and each class from Year 2 to Year 6 spent half an hour exploring the school grounds and particularly the nature trail.

Kate said: "The school is really lucky to have an old Devon lane 'sealed up' in their grounds – a bit like a time capsule. It was the old lane to Perry's Farm, which was no longer needed when the farm was developed. It was closed off decades ago but you can still see the old Devon banks full of bluebells, red campion and stitchwort as well as mature trees which used to line the route." The children measured some of the trees to discover their age – some of the oaks are around 180 years old – and have been writing stories about them.

The idea for the project came from Barbara Wilson and Eileen Perkins, who are tree wardens for West Hill and members of the West Hill Residents' Association, who gave prizes of vouchers to the creators of some of the best stories and pictures. Barbara said: "West Hill has the title 'Woodland Village' due to its wonderful wooded landscape. We were very keen to involve the children in making a leaflet about the Great Trees of the village. People have really enjoyed seeing the leaflet and we hope it encourages everyone to look after the special character of our village."

Sue Nield, head teacher at the school, said: "The children have really enjoyed this project and they are very proud of the leaflet they have created. It's great to see their work in print."

Alice, in Year 5, drew a wonderful picture of the tree in the school grounds and wrote an extremely well-crafted poem entitled “Guardian Tree”, part of which is below:

*A guarding monument standing tall
Spreading shade for smaller creatures below
His leafy arms bearing the weight of memory
Holding a roof of scattered emeralds high
Making a room of gold and green light*

*As he grew older more trees grew
But ever so many fell at the saw
A road was built and so were banks
But no one gave a thought to the trees*

*More trees were felled, more houses grew
But bricks were used and wood was not
And people said “What beautiful things
We must preserve them and keep them alive”*

Olivia created a short and delicate poem called “Spellbound” about the same tree:

*Standing proud in the twilight gloom
It spreads its branches in the cold dark doom
A gentle breeze awakens the leaves
Which shuffle and rustle as the spider weaves
Its mystical web*

Oscar in Year 6 chose a lighter note with “Patrick Perry, a short history” - a story about how one of the trees in the grounds came to have a balloon caught in its branches.

“I’ve lived for 157 years. That may sound like a long time to you but it really isn’t. Well, not for a tree.... My worst years were the 70s. The music may have been good, but nobody has ever given me my own stereo....My best year was not long ago. 2004 – the village fete. Loads of children running around, playing games...the day was shaping out to become quite bad but then a small girl let go of a balloon. It headed towards me and I was terrified! It caught in my branches. It had a little smiling face. Now when something goes wrong, I ignore it because my balloon friend takes my mind off it. All I needed was a friend. “

For the full version of Oscar’s story and many more, you can visit the school website at www.west-hill-primary@devon.sch.uk

Until March 2008, Kate Tobin is available to work with schools in East Devon on similar projects. She would like to hear from anyone who is interested in finding out more.

ENDS

Photos attached:

- Alice’s line drawing of ‘The Guardian Tree’
- Zoe’s ink-blown tree which features on the front cover of the Great Trees of West Hill leaflet

For further information please contact:

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