

Policeman Pete is star of show at Diggle Primary

THE LONG arm of the law descended on Diggle Primary School as 'Policeman Pete' was the star of a special pantomime performed there for pupils.

The show was based on books by Denshaw-based author Barbara Hegab, who started writing the adventures of the Diggle-based copper as a diary for her own children.

The former nurse was also inspired by the tragic deaths of PCs Nicola Hughes, from Diggle, and Fiona Bone who were killed in 2012 in a gun and grenade attack by Dale Cregan.

The latest of Barbara's 16 books aim to highlight the role of the police in the local community and their importance in helping to create a safe environment.

This message was acted out in a specially prepared, interactive pantomime for around 80 children from Diggle Primary School's nursery, reception, Year 1 and Year 2 classes.

It was performed by a group from Greenfield-based Funky Fitness and Fun, which is run by Carita Smith and provides activities for adults with additional needs.

Special guest Cllr Pam Byrne, chair of Saddleworth Parish Council, read the short 'Policeman Pete and the cheeky magpie' to intrigued pupils before they enjoyed the pantomime.

And PC Lee Cullen was also on hand to

tell pupils about his role in the Saddleworth policing team, helping to care for residents and the local area.

Barbara said: "Funky Fitness have loved my books right from the beginning and I have visited them a couple of times to read to them and tell them about the stories."

"They have got a little group who all want to be actors so they asked if it would be ok to use my books and I was delighted."

"They acted it out at the recent Saddleworth Literary Festival, where it went down really well, and also at a couple of other places."

"Following on from that, it was Cllr Byrne's suggestion to try to get it into schools to help raise police awareness among children in a fun way."

"Diggle Primary have held book launches for me in the past and have been so supportive so I came straight to them and they loved the idea."

● Find out more about the books online: www.policemanpetebooks.co.uk and they are available to purchase from Amazon and Waterstones.

● Meanwhile, the police and their colleagues from HM Prison service have been visiting local primary schools to deliver their 'Actions have Consequences' sessions. The sessions aim to explain the role of the police in the community, finding out about dangers and how to keep safe.



Author Barbara Hegab (centre left) and Cllr Pam Byrne with Funky Fitness and Fun members, PC Lee Cullen and Diggle Primary School pupils ahead of the performance

From a desktop to a dry stone wall

AIMEE BELMORE, Saddleworth Independent Editor, got hands on to try out an ancient tradition...

"It will be really relaxing and calming," promised John as we set off on our drive to Norden... to build a dry stone wall.

Those were probably some of the last words that I would associate with the idea of digging and laying foundations, building the right structure and topping it with coping stones.

Especially not when the temperature was -1 degrees and it felt like we were up and about before everyone else in the world!

But, five hours later I had to admit I was converted and John had been right all along.

I was joining John Matthews, a talented filmmaker from Dobcross and also a qualified dry stone waller, for the unique experience to get a flavour of an ancient tradition.

"It dates back to medieval times," explained John. But even today, dry stone walls are a common sight as field boundary markers across Saddleworth and Yorkshire – so I was intrigued.

Accompanied by John's dog Buzz, we trudged through the field to the spot of wall he had saved for me.

This was the conclusion of his four-month job to repair the walls around the field and I had the honour of helping with the final section.

After a brief lesson explaining the basics, we got stuck in. Wrapped up in a woolly jumper, thick coat, scarf and gloves I could barely move but soon the layers were coming off as the manual work got our blood pumping.

Sure, it was hard work taking down the stones that had made up the wall for almost 150 years.

Sure, it was hard work digging out the foundations and finding stones big enough to form a new, solid base.



Aimee getting hands on to lay a foundation stone and (below) the stages of building the wall



Sure, it was hard rolling – not lifting – the heavy stones back into place to begin re-building the structure, stacking them tightly so no mortar is needed.

It wasn't quite so hard filling all the gaps with the small, broken-up 'hearting' to keep the air and elements out.

As we worked hard, the rest of the world seemed to fall away around us, out there in the calm, empty field. The hum of traffic buzzed gently in the background but soon I couldn't hear it. My ears were just filled with the sound of peace and quiet, and my own rhythmic, soothing breathing.

Then as we placed the coping stones on the top and secured them, I had an overwhelming sense of achievement, of having done something quite unique and special.

So, am I thinking of a career change? No. But would I recommend it to others to try Definitely!

John said: "Drystone walling is like going back in time, to a period that was slower, less stressed, more in tune with nature and the pace of the natural world."

"I meditate regularly, and I noticed when building a wall that this ancient craft can in fact be a form of meditation in itself as you build a wall and you feel very relaxed as a result."

● If you would like to join John Matthews on one of his dry stone walling courses call him on 0161 234 0099 or e-mail: john@big-pic.co.uk, marking the e-mail DRYSTONE

Also visit his Facebook page @ dogwithbone or website www.drystonewallingcourses.co.uk

Course costs £195 for two days' tuition but £175 per person if 2 or more book together.

Village news

Toddlers

ALL ARE welcome to a Mothers, Babies and Toddlers group every Thursday morning from 9.30am-11.30am at Christ Church Friezland. Dads welcome as well. School term-time only.

Dobcross Coffee

ENJOY COFFEE and tasty snacks at Dobcross Band Club Coffee Shop on the first Saturday of every month to raise funds for the club.

The volunteers serve up a mouth-watering array including bacon butties, beans on toast, cakes, and drinks.

The next coffee shop is on December 3 from 10am-12noon.

Canal clean-up

HELP STREET Scene Greenfield spruce up the area's canal towpaths to revive some of Saddleworth's most-loved walking places.

Volunteers are cleaning debris, cutting back vegetation and resurfacing areas with stone as well as repainting lock gates along the Huddersfield Narrow Canal.

Equipment will be provided but please wear suitable clothing and boots, and you may wish to bring a drink and snack.

The next dates are Saturday December 10, Saturday January 7 and Tuesday January 17.

For more information contact Gill McCulley on 01457 870364. Meeting points and times are subject to change so please check before each event.

Did you work out the answers for the quiz on p36?

1. 53 2. 240 3. 007 4. 518 5. 90 6. 1001 7. 22 8. 1912 9. 500

And did you guess the mystery building on p23? It's the former Horse and Jockey pub at Standedge Cutting

ONE LUCKY reader can win a 50 per cent discount on a dry stone walling course courtesy of Dog with a Bone!

The two-day course usually costs £175 each for 2 people, but our winner and a friend can enjoy the course for only £75 each.

To enter, simply answer this question: what is the name of John's dog?

Email your answer to aimee@saddind.co.uk or write to: Dry Stone Walling competition, Saddleworth Independent, Units 3-4, 45 High Street, Uppermill, Saddleworth, OL3 6HS.

The first correct entry drawn after the closing date of Friday, January 6, 2017 wins the discounted course for two. Needs to be redeemed before March 2017.