

IN BRIEF

Swimmers in gala triumph

CROYDON: Disabled swimmers from the borough triumphed at a recent gala.

Competitors from Croydon took home gold in both the boys' and girls' competitions at this year's Balfour Beatty London Youth Games swimming gala.

Every member of the ten-strong squad finished the day with a medal after competing among a field of 150 swimmers from 21 London boroughs at the annual event in Beckenham.

Team manager Pearl Sethna, the council's sports development officer and borough team organiser, said: "It was a brilliant performance. Both teams did really well and shone throughout."

Croydon's individual gold medallists included Jessica Storey, 12, from Smitham Primary; Luke Cooper, 16, from Benscham Manor; Jessica Harris, 13, from St Andrews School; and Ben Brady, 15, from South Norwood.

Google win

CROYDON: Four IT students from Croydon College earned themselves internships at the UK Google office in London.

Lee Bolger, from Google, visited the college last month and set up a competition for IT Level 2 students, with the opportunity to visit their London office by creating a Google Sports logo in one week.

One of the winners, Hajra Malik, said: "I found the competition and the visit to their offices very interesting."

Talented teenager sets her sights on being the town's poet laureate



TAKING A STANZA: Sinead Buckingham is trying to counter negative stereotypes of Croydon with a series of poems. One was inspired by East Croydon Station

Student with a talent for verse thinks Croydon could do worse

By **Georgie Keate**
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A STUDENT inspired by landmarks around the town hopes to become the poet laureate of Croydon.

Sinead Buckingham, an 18-year-old former pupil of Coloma Convent Girls' School in Shirley, said some of her fondest memories involve Croydon – a place she feels gets a bad press and no representation in literature.

"I went to school here and all my friends are from Croydon so really all the best things I can remember happened here – whether it was picnics in the summer in Queen's Gardens or going out to the Green Dragon," she said.

Sentimental

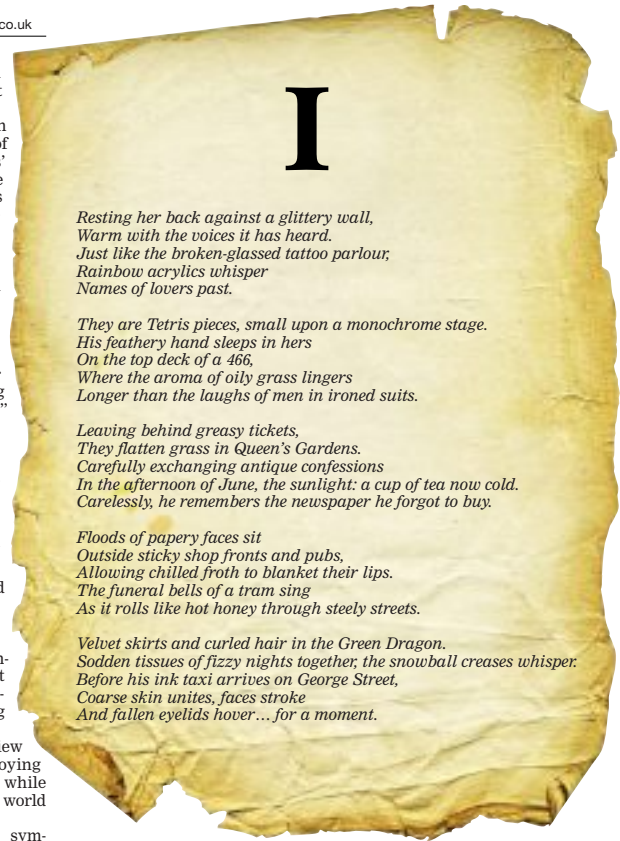
"We did some creative writing at university and were asked to pick a sentimental place. I wanted to choose Croydon because of that and also, when I googled it, I couldn't find anyone who had written about it. So I wanted to be the first."

Sinead, who lives in Bromley and studies English at Exeter University, has written three poems featuring different parts of Croydon.

The first is from the view point of a young person enjoying what the town has to offer while also watching the adult world around them.

"The 'rainbow acrylics' symbolise the graffiti around Croydon and the 'monochrome stage' is all the office blocks and people in black in white for work," explained Sinead.

"Then there are the memories of hanging out in Queen's Gardens and those summer evenings



I
*Resting her back against a glittery wall,
Warm with the voices it has heard.
Just like the broken-glassed tattoo parlour,
Rainbow acrylics whisper
Names of lovers past.*

*They are Tetris pieces, small upon a monochrome stage.
His feathery hand sleeps in hers
On the top deck of a 466,
Where the aroma of oily grass lingers
Longer than the laughs of men in ironed suits.*

*Leaving behind greasy tickets,
They flatten grass in Queen's Gardens.
Carefully exchanging antique confessions
In the afternoon of June, the sunlight: a cup of tea now cold.
Carelessly, he remembers the newspaper he forgot to buy.*

*Floods of papery faces sit
Outside sticky shop fronts and pubs,
Allowing chilled froth to blanket their lips.
The funeral bells of a tram sing
As it rolls like hot honey through steely streets.*

*Velvet skirts and curled hair in the Green Dragon.
Sodden tissues of fizzy nights together, the snowball creases whisper.
Before his ink taxi arrives on George Street,
Coarse skin unites, faces stroke
And fallen eyelids hover... for a moment.*

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when everyone is happy and spilling out of pubs, all the hustle and bustle."

The second poem is from

an older person's perspective. The subject walks through Croydon and notices the changes around them.

Sinead said: "This one is about being older and seeing younger people around you like the 'hooded teenagers', and the 'words he does not know'".

Troubled

"I wrote the third poem from the perspective of a young schoolgirl with a troubled family life who escapes from East Croydon station.

"That's important because it shows the possibility of movement and potential in Croydon, even if everything is not good."

Croydon Council is currently encouraging aspiring young poets to apply for the Young Poet Laureate for London by submitting their work via email at spoke@spreadtheword.org.uk or visiting www.spreadtheword.org.uk.

The winner will be announced on National Poetry Day, which is October 3.

PROUD LITERARY HERITAGE

LAST June there were red faces at Croydon Council after the authority falsely claimed Lord Byron was a local lad.

In the failed bid to win city status, the council included the poet in its "50 notable people".

However, the Croydon Natural History and Scientific Society were quick to point out Byron only ever made it as far south as Dulwich.

Nevertheless, Croydon has boasted other famous authors: Sherlock Holmes author Sir Arthur Conan Doyle lived in Norwood.

D.H. Lawrence, who wrote Lady Chatterley's Lover, taught at Davidson Road School in Croydon while embarking on a writing career.

The French novelist Emile Zola lived at The Queen's Hotel in Church Road, Upper Norwood, between 1898 and 1899.

Cicely Mary Barker, author and illustrator of the Flower Fairies series of books, was born in Croydon.

Croydon is also the setting of two poems written by former Poet Laureate Sir John Betjeman, Croydon and Love In A Valley.

Many of the Sherlock Holmes books feature the town.

Agatha Christie uses Croydon Airport in Death In The Clouds and Freeman Willis Crofts wrote a detective novel called The 12.30 From Croydon.

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