

## Postman Pat and friends deliver



■ Cerys Caffery high-fives the music mad Zingzillas



■ Cerys takes a slow boat through the Night Garden

**F**IRST, Thomas the Tank Engine steamed into Drayton Manor. Then Peppa Pig and her family trotted off to Paultons Park in Hampshire.

Now, Postman Pat, Igglepiggle, Tree Fu Tom and Mike the Knight, among others, have set up home together at CBeebies Land at Staffordshire's Alton Towers.

Opened in May, the attraction features characters from many of the BBC's favourite children's programmes and my three-year-old daughter Cerys couldn't wait to visit.

We followed Mr Tumble's spotty bag trail in the Something Special Sensory Garden and we had a peek inside Charlie and Lola's bedroom. Then we learned all about the five senses with hands-on experiments in Nina's Science Lab and tested our mettle in Tree Fu Tom's Training Camp (an adventure playground).

Unfortunately, Mr Bloom was on "holiday" so some cloned female versions (complete with Northern accents) were looking after his nursery when we visited.

Cerys and the other tiddlers fed the hungry compostarium then met the veggies, including Sebastian the singing aubergine who did what he does best.

As for the rides, the wait times on the afternoon of our visit were all under 10 minutes so Cerys was almost able to jump straight back on after they'd come to a halt.

She enjoyed the Numtums Number-Go-Round and was excited to take the steering wheel of Postman Pat's delivery van as it tooted around Greendale.

A slow boat ride took us into the Night



■ The Postman Pat and Tree Top Adventure rides are delighting children at CBeebies Land

Garden where we floated past Makka Pakka, the Haahoos and the Tomliboos (who are as weird as they sound!).

Our favourite was the Tree Top Adventure ride which gave Cerys an aerial view of much of CBeebies Land.

The only attraction that got a thumbs down was Justin's House Pie-O-Matic Factory, where sponge balls are blasted out of pressurised guns.

It seemed more suited to a stag party and while Cerys managed to dodge the balls I can vouch that they sting when they hit you full in the face.

An open air arena at the heart of CBeebies Land is the venue for rolling 15-minute shows where children can sing and dance with their favourite primates, The Zingzillas, and learn to "be a knight and do it right" with Mike The Knight.

They posed for pictures with Cerys after the shows. Night Garden's Igglepiggle and Upsy Daisy also turned up but it seemed Postman Pat, Tree Fu Tom and the rest were camera shy. Shame that.

The arena is also a good place for a picnic. There were circus entertainers and plenty more to keep young ones entertained in between shows.

But it was the incredibly helpful and enthusiastic staff who impressed me most. The little things they did went a long way to making our visit so memorable – from offering to take a family photo to the parting gift of a CBeebies badge for Cerys.

They were even a match for Mickey's lot at Disneyland Paris, which we visited last year – and that's something I never expected to write about a British theme park.

Adrian Caffery visits the new CBeebies Land at Alton Towers



### Entry prices and ways to save

▶ CBeebies Land forms part of Alton Towers, Britain's foremost white-knuckle ride theme park – which means entry tickets are not cheap. But canny mums and dads can make big savings if they play their cards right. Tickets on the gate or booked the day before cost a whopping £49.20 for adults, £43.20 for children and £24.60 for seniors. A family ticket costs £42.60 per person (max two adults). However, tickets booked online at least seven days in advance are 25 per cent cheaper – £36.90 for adults, £32.40 for children, £18.45 for seniors and £31.95 per person for a family ticket. Bizarrely, four to 11-year-olds are classed as adults. Under-fours go free. You can save even more if you are visiting with a child aged under four by purchasing a Parents and Toddlers ticket seven days in advance. With this ticket, entry prices drop to £31.05 for every visitor, both adults and children. That's still not the cheapest day out you'll ever have – but there's a way to make your money go much further. For an extra £6 per paying adult or child (again, when booked seven days in advance) you can return to the theme park the next day. This makes sense because Alton Towers has many more attractions besides CBeebies Land that are suitable for young children and their little legs will never be able to tackle the sprawling site in one day. So, with a Parents and Toddlers ticket, this works out at £37.05 per day for two days at the theme park for a mum, dad and one or more children aged under four. You can buy next day return tickets at the exits but the price rises to £9. Also at the exits you can choose to return on any other day for £15 per person. Alton Towers, north of Uttoxeter, is open until November 9. See [www.altontowers.com](http://www.altontowers.com)

## TOP 5 FOR FAMILY FUN



■ Bicycle Basket Bazaar forms part of Summer in Southside

### 1 SUMMER in Southside, Birmingham. Next three Saturdays.

Thirty companies featuring more than 100 local, national and international artists will transform the city's Southside district around Hurst Street and The Arcadian.

There will be everything from drama and dance to circus and street theatre, from music and hip hop to aerial artistry.

Today, Eye Candy is joining forces with POD Projects to host a Bicycle Basket Bazaar.

It involves a unique array of retailers each presenting their art and wares in bicycle-baskets, panniers and around their cycles.

Think of it as an art fair meets a car boot sale, only more compact and kinder to the environment.

Among the many exhibitors will be Suitcase Sounds, featuring retro suitcases with speakers that you can plug your phone straight into, and Lov Li's cards.

The Custard Factory's Working Clasp will be showing off laser-cut jewellery and Endfile is an artist working in electronic and textile-based contemporary art.

Full line-up details at: [www.birminghamhippodrome.com/liveandlocal](http://www.birminghamhippodrome.com/liveandlocal)

### 2 STAFFORDSHIRE Hoard, Gallery 16, Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery.

The stunning exhibition in its current form ends on August 24. A dedicated new gallery will open from mid-October.

### 3 KING Richard III Visitor Centre: Dynasty, Death and Discovery. Leicester.

Two years after the discovery of his remains in a Leicester car park in August 2012, a new visitor centre has just opened to enable people of all ages to learn more about the monarch.

The centre uses new technology to bring to life the story of the last Plantagenet king, from his rise to power to brutal death and beyond.

See the life of Richard III in a new light thanks to exhibits including a remarkable facial reconstruction using stereolithography and a replica of his skeleton.

The interactive three-part experience includes: Dynasty – Richard's life and rise to power in medieval England, Death – the Battle of Bosworth and his ultimate demise, and Discovery – the cutting edge science and analysis that lead to his eventual rediscovery and identification.

Visitors to the centre can see where Richard III, the last English king to die in battle, was buried more than 500 years ago.

The grave is now at the centre of a glass-floored contemplative space. His final resting place will be Leicester Cathedral, just 100 steps from the centre, where his reinterment will take place in spring 2015.

The centre is located in the former Alderman Newton's School at the heart of the city's Cathedral Quarter, Leicester.

It was commissioned by Leicester City Council and is run by an independent trust made up of experts in business, finance, and heritage and visitor attractions.

Tickets can be purchased from [www.krii.com](http://www.krii.com) with prices starting at £4.75 for children (four to 15 years), £7.95 for adults and £21.50 for a family (two adults, two children).

Twitter: @kriiicentre

### 4 FINDING Vivian Maier (12A). The Electric Cinema til Thursday.

New York born nanny Vivian Maier secretly took 100,000 photographs of people and street scenes.

Shot mostly in Chicago and New York City, this documentary film reveals why her archive is now regarded as one of the most fascinating illustrations of American life from the second half of the 20th century.

Book: [www.theelectric.co.uk](http://www.theelectric.co.uk)

### 5 SUMMER Bandstand Concert – Carousel Circus, Tamworth Castle Pleasure Grounds. Today, 1pm-4pm.

Take a picnic basket down to the castle grounds for a lazy afternoon of music.

For an earlier guided walking tour of Tamworth from 11am-12.30pm, report in good time to Tamworth Information Centre, Corporation Street, B79 7DN.

## WALK IN THE PARK

### GRAHAM YOUNG VISITS VALLEY PARKWAY, BOURNVILLE

I DON'T know about you, but I took it as a personal insult when one or more vandals torched Northfield Manor House at the end of last month.

The Jacobean-style building was the home of George and Elizabeth Cadbury from 1894. George, the son of chocolate firm founder John Cadbury died in 1922, but Elizabeth continued to live at the house until she died, aged 93, in 1951.

The property was renamed as Northfield Manor House and converted into a halls of residence with additional wings added.

But the University of Birmingham relinquished it in 2007 because of the

amount of work needed.

Perhaps if the council could have done more to safeguard the property it would still be waiting for new purchasers Banner Homes to redevelop it.

For a different kind of history, on the other side of the

Bristol Road South is this lovely park set around a purpose-built lake that's home to the 87-year-old Bournville Model Yacht And Power Boat Club.

Bournville Model Yachting Club was originally founded in the early 1900s at the nearby Rowheath Park, but by 1926 George Cadbury had commissioned an area of marshland to be reclaimed.

Today, the Bournville Village Trust site has a concrete pool of even depth and geese and ducks seem to enjoy moving across the open water as much as people love sailing their model boats there.

The nature of the houses at the far end of the pool to Bournville Lane (B30 1QS), make it look like a model



■ You go your way, I'll go mine: model fun in Bournville's Valley Parkway.

Pictures: Graham Young

village interpretation of Lake Geneva by Montreux.

Weather permitting, the Model Yachting section meets weekly throughout the year, practising from 9.30am-12

.30pm on Wednesdays and at the same time on Sundays for racing.

The Power Boat section at Bournville meets throughout the year on Sunday afternoons

from 2pm and on Thursday mornings from 9.30am.

Members may apply to join the national Model Yachting Association. Details: [www.bournville-mypb-club.org.uk](http://www.bournville-mypb-club.org.uk)

## URBAN WALK

### START: Waterside, Stratford CV37 6BA

#### MOHINI HOWARD

I INDULGED a recent Monday off with a rail trip to Stratford-upon-Avon. Whilst there, I developed this short route to take in some of the charms of this historical town, so close to our big city. First, a stop at the Black Swan for a drink and some lunch. It was my day off after all! A bracing walk on a windy day then restored some peace and serenity into my week. It felt good to get away, even if it was just a half an hour away.

1. From The Black Swan, turn right, cross and enter river bank garden.  
2. Turn right, passing the Courtyard Theatre.  
3. Continue along, ascend wooden steps, through the doorway in the wall into the churchyard of the Holy Trinity, final resting place of William Shakespeare.  
4. Walk around and exit via front gates, then go along and turn right to enter riverside via large wooden gates.  
5. Passing toilets, continue past the Brass Rubbing Centre again and exit at the Courtyard Theatre, turning right to continue past the Black Swan again.  
6. Continue and take time to look around the RSC on your right, admiring buildings old and new.  
7. Continue to the marina area, passing shops and restaurants.  
8. Turn right to enter a square with two metal swans.  
9. Cross the River Avon via a network of old and new bridges and follow this around to the right and then left past the bandstand and to the ferry crossing area.  
10. Either cross here by paying for a ferry boat ride across (if open) to the start, or retrace steps back to the start.  
DURATION 45-60 minutes.



■ Tamworth Castle Pleasure Grounds and bandstand.