

TIME OUT

Amelia Earl

It all started after I moved to Clondalkin and became the proud owner of Max. Max is a mixture between a Jack Russell and several other breeds, but he is perfect as far as I



am concerned. There is no better medicine than your faithful "four extra legs".

Each morning we walk the short distance to our time out - we enter a world where sound is mostly only broken by nature. The scene is one of tranquillity. The setting is of calm, peace, hope, change,

growth and renewal. You enter into a land that's away from everyday hassles, fears, worries, noise, illness and man-made items. As I pass beneath the trees of welcome into an open space of greens and browns, the eye can see various shapes and types of trees. No two leaves are identical. I wonder just how much colour is out there? I walk along with my faithful friend beside me, leaving the benches, bushes, behind me, down the pathway to the crossway. Now I turn to the right, pass by the granite stone to mark the opening of the park, over the old bridge where the water ripples underneath. The mature trees give me shelter and a sense no one else is there. I am at one with myself. The light sparkles at me as the sound lifts the last of the darkness from my heart.

There they stand very proud as if scrubbed with bleach, the mother and father and three little ones, the first family of swans.



The variety of ducks you meet is quite breathtaking. Not only are they a lively bunch but their colouring is so varied from all shades of coffee-chocolate to the ones we all grew up with. D is for DUCK in our ABC books.

Passing these swans was at first very nerve-racking but now they appear to know us. Yes, I probably need the men in white coats: I talk to swans, ducks, birds, squirrels and hares, but I am making progress. Now they all just keep on at what they are doing or pretend to listen to me.

I then move into the new part of the park, much more open, passing the second family of swans, far less friendly, hostile actually and very scary. Up to the old ruins which are being converted into craft workshops, apartments and a restaurant for the council workers, who, I have to say, do a wonderful job maintaining the park. Around by what could have been the old garden, now laid out for fishing. You can meet up to twenty anglers there at a weekend, all happy as they sit back and wait. The bridges here are both old and new. The third family of swans lives up here.

This is Max's favourite spot, not mine. There are mice to chase, overfed mice at that. He has great fun trying to take down the side of the bank, but he is not yet sure when things pop out of the water, what they are. Everybody around this part is so friendly, time is not watched, care is taken of others, the real meaning of "back to nature".

Now we turn left, past where all the hares are living. I could stand there for hours if Max and my legs would let me, just watching these creatures. Their tails are so white, the ears upright and listening. They hop around without a care in the world. I can get near enough to see their eyes as they munch the grass. It is completely fascinating,

particularly now as all the families appear to have come together. Thirty or forty hares together is a sight worth seeing.



No matter how many times you see them, it's like the first time.

Now down past the rose garden where the colours are soothing and pleasant to the eye. We often sit under the next tree and rest before making for the last homeward stretch back to the reality of 2007.

