



Letters to the editor...



The Smith family and friend Joan Gentle at the Lido in 1935

Memories from Australia

Dear Editor,

I often receive *THE ARCHER* via my cousin who lived in East Finchley and now is in Australia. My family lived in East Finchley, Church End and North Finchley.

It is interesting to read of some of my places mentioned. At one time Avenue House where as kids we played on the swings and giant-strides and we were convinced we could smell INK from Inky Stephens' house.

On another occasion Manorside School gave a display of eurythmics dancing and I recall we were in Greek costume, bare foot and pranced out from behind the trees to Miss Makin's piano.

The Lido was mentioned and I gather it was what we called the Olympic Baths. Hot holidays spent by the pools. First the baby pool where we young ones were given swimming lessons and then the fountain, sitting on the side enjoying the cool splash.

The 'Rough Lots' as we knew it was walked every day to and fro, noon and home time. Blackberry eating in summer, sliding on slippery ice in winter, not forgetting 'Rough Lot Liz': we had visions of a mysterious being living there. I read an article in which the London people would make their way to the Common to get away from the plague.

So, as you can see, a trip down Memory Lane from Australia, when I receive *THE ARCHER*.

Yours sincerely,
Eileen McKelligel, nee Smith
Cleveland, Australia

On the death of Margaret Thatcher

Dear Editor,

Following the deaths of my dearly loved wife Laura and of my great friend and ally Rudi Vis, who succeeded Margaret Thatcher as MP for Finchley, I am the last person who would wish to be uncharitable towards the bereaved. I therefore extend to the family of Margaret Thatcher and to her friends, political and personal, my sympathies over their loss. I have greatly appreciated similar support given to me in my own predicament.

I was born during the Second World War and grew up under the reforming government of Clement Attlee, the seminal reports of the Liberal William Beveridge and the gentle conservatism of Rab Butler and Harold Macmillan. In the immediate post-war period, we faced considerable austerity: ration books for food, hand-me-down clothes, patched jackets and trousers, with darned socks.

We were, however, given hope about what was to happen in society, a hope that materialised in great benefits for me personally and for others: direct help with education, health, housing and local services. I therefore wished such help to be maintained and extended to the next generation and that is why I chose and was chosen to be Margaret Thatcher's opponent.

Margaret Thatcher and I rarely met, but there were occasions in East Finchley when she had agreed to open a new development in housing or in another area of provision in Barnet. At these times, I was greatly impressed by her grasp of detail which extended down from her performance at Westminster to her knowledge of her own constituency.

Although I could only be described as a minor personage, she always knew my name and what I had been doing. She was always polite and civil towards me, despite the fact that she was well aware of my almost total opposition to the policies in which she was engaged.

The only time when she showed mild irritation towards me was at the declaration of the result in the Finchley constituency. The wilder elements of my support chose to chant at her: "Fascistscum". I shared her annoyance at this outburst. She was not a fascist nor was she scum.

Any matter that I raised with her received a full reply. However, in my view, Margaret Thatcher's policies were generally misguided and divisive. The effects of what she initiated can still be seen today, aided by subsequent timorous Conservative and Labour governments who chose to accept them: a greedy, rampant financial sector, lack of decent housing provision, nuclear proliferation overseas, messy and ineffective education systems, increasingly inadequate health services, complete annihilation of the manufacturing industries.

Nonetheless, Margaret Thatcher had qualities and abilities which all will do well to remember. Although hardly a feminist, she was the first and only woman to attain the rank of Prime Minister. She was forthright and concise in expressing her convictions and produced many memorable phrases that echo in people's memories. Through the forcefulness of her personality, she enhanced the reputation of Britain overseas. My opinion is that she was frequently wrong but a very strong leader of the country.

Yours faithfully,
John Davies, former EF Labour councillor and leader of the Labour Group on Barnet Council, Manor Park Road, N2.

Send your correspondence to: "Letters Page", The Archer, PO Box 3699, London N2 2DE or e-mail the-archer@lineone.net.

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Regrettable Ricky

Dear Editor,

I wonder if other readers were as saddened as I by the Ricky Savage piece in May's *ARCHER*. The author long ago forsook the whimsy of fairly harmless diatribes for less pleasant rants and overtly political statements. His latest unfunny effort at rewriting history is especially sad and regrettable.

There is nothing to be gained by countering his distorted and deliberately offensive little essay. One does not need to be a Thatcher admirer to be repelled by its tone and content.

It may be worth reminding 'Ricky' that there is a point beyond which his awkward mixture of crude 'satire' and extreme left-wing comment becomes self-defeating and simply embarrassingly bad.

It would be interesting if he (or she?) was brave enough to defend this latest outstandingly nasty piece in his/her own name, instead of hiding behind the Kalashnikov Kultur mask. But somehow I doubt it.

Yours faithfully,
Gladys Goldnut,
Kenver Avenue, N12.

Turret mystery

Dear Editor

I wonder if any of your readers could answer a question for me. I was in my car at the bottom of Brent Street, Hendon, waiting to cross the North Circular Road going towards Golders Green, when I noticed a turret on my left alongside Dollis Brook. I have looked on the internet for more information but haven't come up with any answers as to what it actually is. Does anyone know?

Yours faithfully,
Jennie Novis,
Address supplied.

Cannabis factory in Brackenbury Road

By Janet Maitland

A large cannabis factory has been operating from a residential property in Brackenbury Road. Police acting on local intelligence entered the building with a search warrant on 11 April and discovered more than sixty cannabis plants growing under dozens of powerful lights.

"We found cash and state of the art equipment as well as the plants, plus several thousand pounds worth of cannabis already prepared to go," said Sergeant Matt Clee from East Finchley Safer Neighbourhood Team.

A man in his thirties has been bailed pending charges.

Phoenix in June

By Carina Volkes, Phoenix Cinema manager
Traditionally summer can be a tough time for an art-house cinema, with blockbusters taking up screen space and big-name awards films saved for the end of the year. However, the Phoenix audience is in luck this year with some wonderful releases, special Q&As with directors, and spectacular live events.

Sparky French romantic-comedy *Populaire* (from 7 June) has been billed as *The Artist* meets *Mad Men*, and with its stylish 50s office setting and quirky charm it's easy to see why.

Just three months after the release of his self-proclaimed final film, Steven Soderbergh is back from 'retirement' with *Behind the Candelabra* (from 14 June), a glittery biopic of Liberace (played with gusto by Michael Douglas) and his younger lover, Scott (Matt Damon).

Before Midnight (from 21 June) picks up Jesse (Ethan Hawke) and Celine's (Julie Delpy) story, two decades on from their first romantic encounter in Vienna in *Before Sunset*.

June sees the start of another superb season of six operas from Glyndebourne with *Ariadne auf Naxos* on 4 June, and *Falstaff* on 23 June. On 27 June (and 1 July) there's a rare chance to see behind the scenes of the ambitious Edvard Munch exhibition in Norway with *Exhibition: Munch 150*. From 14 June, we are hosting an extended run of encores of *NT: The Audience*, featuring Helen Mirren's award-winning turn as Queen Elizabeth II.

Find out the story behind the movie with two chances to talk to directors in June. On 11 June, Marcus Markou joins us to discuss the making of his self-financed comedy *Papadopoulos & Sons*. Opera fans rejoice, as Tony Britten joins us for a Q&A following *Benjamin Britten: Peace and Conflict* on 30 June.

The Odd Couple triumph

Review by Daphne Chamberlain

Many of us will always associate Neil Simon's *The Odd Couple* with the classic Hollywood film, but how many of us knew that he also wrote a female version? Well, he did, and the Guild Players brought it to Finchley at the end of April.

Congratulations to them. The success of a play like this depends on the interplay of the characters, and all the actors established definite and different personalities. An evening of *Trivial Pursuit* ends in the hostess offering a room in her apartment to one of her friends, who has just left her husband. Of course, both quickly discover they have got more than they bargained for. The highlight, which turned the audience's

chuckles into guffaws, is the entrance of two very un-PC Spanish Romeos from upstairs.

The script is not one of Neil Simon's absolute best, but is still funny and perceptive. The cast did it full justice, though one or two of the *Trivial Pursuit* players needed a little more voice projection at times. That's only a tiny criticism though. It was a really enjoyable production, which deserved a larger audience than when I saw it on the Saturday afternoon.

Do watch out for the Guild Players, a long-standing drama group who rehearse and perform at the Methodist Church in Ballards Lane, N3. For more information about them, see www.guildplayers.org.uk.

Pride in the House

The deadline for gay and lesbian artists to submit work for the 12th Pride in the House Art Competition is 8 July.

The work of two to four artists will be chosen for a group exhibition which will run at Lauderdale House in Highgate from 7-18 August. An overall winner will then be offered a solo exhibition later in the year. Pride in the House grew out of the first Mardi Gras Arts Festival celebrating gay and lesbian artistic talent held at Lauderdale House in 2002. Find out more at www.lauderdalehouse.org.uk

Man collapses

The ambulance service was called to attend to a man who had collapsed on the pavement outside the Poseidon fish restaurant in the High Road at about 8am on Sunday 28 April.

The man became aggressive when the crew tried to help him so they called the police. Police closed the High Road in both directions and attended the scene until the man calmed down. He was taken to a central London hospital and discharged later that day.