



Sun reporter John Kaye. Photo by Femke van Iperen

The Sun sorts fact from fiction

By Femke van Iperen

An award-winning chief reporter of one of the most well-known and controversial British papers gave an inspiring and entertaining talk to sort fact from fiction in a charity event for the North London Hospice, an under-funded charity for terminally-ill patients.

Mr Kay, who has worked for *The Sun* newspaper for nearly 30 years, said, "We provide a comprehensive newspaper with a mixture of entertainment and information. Most of our readers are casual sales, so we have to compete hard."

Sensational but true

Despite popular belief, John Kay explained that *The Sun* is no different from other papers in its pursuit of stories. "Someone once phoned and told the news desk he was the Loch Ness Monster, covered in green slime. Today I've left my business card at the door in case of a hot story", he joked.

Others' criticisms were of the paper's truthfulness. Mr Kay said, "We strive more than anything for accuracy. We hate making mistakes; we pay for them heavily, like £1 million to Elton John. We try to get to the bottom of a story, to get every aspect of it."

About subject matter he commented that *The Sun*, like any other paper, has to conform to the Press Complaints Commission. "We are a commercial business, and we are a sensational newspaper but we don't make up

stories. There is nothing worse than a complaint. We have one golden rule: when asked to go away, we do. Unfortunately, many freelance journalists pretend to be from *The Sun*."

Overrated influence

According to *The Sun*, which changed to supporting Labour in 1997 to reflect the mood of the nation, newspapers' influence on public opinion and voting is overrated. "A paper devoted to ramming opinion down people's throats would not survive. The editorial columns are only read by a fifth of readers, who usually prefer sport and front page news."

Members of the audience commented "We should be grateful and not shoot the messenger." One, Joanne Holton, said that although she thought the level of jokes was too high, "It was a very thought-provoking evening, and an enjoyable event."

The North London Hospice Support Group's most recent talk on Vintage Clothes was held on 2 November, at the Fellowship House in Willfield Way.

Alan Bennett and the Bronte Sisters meet in East Finchley

By Femke van Iperen.

Since October, East Finchley has gained another writers' group. Every Wednesday a group of enthusiasts quit their solitary desks to meet in a local pub for open discussion of each other's work. The meetings have been successful so far, evenings often resulting in heated discussions, touching a variety of genres from poetry to fiction and horror.

The writers not only offer their own work for criticism, but also take on the role of critic as well. Most of the 'partners in crime' have published work before, but simply want to meet on a friendly, constructive basis.

Mutual support

One writer, Louise, has concentrated all her passionate efforts on poetry since childhood. She said, "For me it's a way of communicating and expressing myself". She joined the group to share work, but added modestly that the style of the others tends to be better than hers.

Ralph, who styles himself an 'amateur writing enthusiast', finds writers' meetings beneficial because they can provide empathy and reassurance for otherwise often isolated writers. He added, "I am fascinated by the way ordinary people write. Every famous person is an ordinary person who was once in a proper day-job, writing away, who found his or her



Writers' group organiser Lillian Chavert. Photo by Femke van Iperen

own voice."

Future plans

The organiser, Lillian Chavert, has been specialising in short fiction most of her life. A member of the Society of Women Writers and Journalists and other groups, she aimed for a small and personal group in the area that now numbers 12 people.

Depending on the success of the meetings, she has big plans for additional groups in the afternoon and at other times. The group welcomes any writers who want to join it in the *White Lion* every Wednesday at 6.30 pm. A regular showcase of their work is under development in *The Archer*. Watch this space.

Positive outlook for Osteoporosis

By Daphne Chamberlain

Osteoporosis - or brittle bone disease - is not confined to older women. Young women, particularly if they have suffered eating disorders, exercised too much, or have undergone an early menopause or hysterectomy, are also at risk. So too are some men.

Shining Bright

By John Dearing

Every year for the past few years, the East Finchley High Road has been lit up by a display of Christmas lights that is arguably the best in Barnet. This has been organised by Lawrie Chivers and Dino Loizou, who have put in a lot of work, not just to make the arrangements with the council and the company that installs them each year, but also by fundraising.

Lawrie and Dino leaflet all the shops in the High Road, and visit many of them. Shops that contribute can display a notice in the window to the effect that they are helping this good cause. Many private individuals also contribute.

Many hands make light work

Generally, the independent retailers are the best contributors to this initiative, and Lawrie and Dino are grateful to them for their support. Sadly, the bigger shops and the branches of bigger companies are not so forthcoming. It seems that the individual branch managers are not normally, personally authorised to promote their branches; indeed, some chains are positively against such activities.

An exception is McDonalds, who have contributed regularly, particularly when the lighting equipment was purchased outright.

For the traders and the residents of East Finchley, the Christmas display is a highlight of the year and makes the High Road a brighter and more cheerful place.

Hormone imbalance, long-term immobility, heavy drinking or smoking, low body weight, gastric surgery and some bowel diseases are all risk factors.

International Osteoporosis Day was all about helping sufferers from this disabling and distressing condition to help themselves.

The Green Man Community Centre at Strawberry Vale hosted a half-day event, where anyone affected by osteoporosis could receive expert help and guidance.

Song and dance

An unusual item was a short play, the brainchild of Barnet Accident Prevention Centre, which was performed by a professional cast. Telling the story of how concerned neighbours changed the life of a woman who had injured herself in a fall, it used dialogue, song and dance to put over many helpful tips. The advice was relevant for anyone in poor health or living alone.

Asmina Remtulla, Osteoporosis Nurse from Barnet Primary Care Trust, who works with East Finchley's Contact, emphasized that she is available to speak to groups or clubs, as well as giving individual help. She can be contacted on 020 8201 4770/4760.

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for more information contact 8446 3571

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