



## Memories of Wartime

By John Dearing

**Jim Williams lived in Leslie road from 1935 to 1961, for all of his childhood and more. His father was a policeman, based at Fortis Green station, and he well remembers the story during the war of the flying bomb that landed in the chicken run to the rear of the station, and the mess it made, with feathers (and much else) flying about!**

Jim first attended Martin school, and remembers when the Luftwaffe bombed the open space behind the TA centre; they heard the explosions and during lunch break, he and his young friends marched up the high road to see the bomb craters and smell the high explosive. The school had some brick-built air raid shelters of its own; there was also a large public underground shelter running parallel to the high road, stretching underneath the school field. Pupils instructed not to enter it promptly ignored this and it became a popular play area. It is gone now, probably dug up in the late 1940s.

### Shocks and survivals

Earlier in the war, a parachute mine flattened the High Road from just past the Methodist Church to the old Catholic Church near the Co-op on the corner of Kitchener Road. Two buildings that Jim remembers surviving were the old Methodist hall, in which there was a civic restaurant where one could get a good meal for 1/9d (about 9p) and The Black Bess Inn (apparently much loved by commercial travellers in those days) on the corner of Hertford Road opposite the garage.

The first wartime damage that Jim remembers happened to a house in Leslie Road. An unexploded ack-ack shell went through the front window and wrecked the room. Of course, if it had exploded then, it would have probably destroyed the



whole house! The most frightening was when a V2 rocket landed in Abbots Gardens. Jim was in the library at the time and remembers how the nearest window pane bowed in and then out with the shock of the explosion, without breaking. Most annoying was the ack-ack

train that was rolled up the line from the tube station sidings at night, firing all the time, making sleep very difficult.

Jim now lives in Leverstock Green and has enjoyed the memories of East Finchley that reading *THE ARCHER* has brought back.

## Poetic Success at Xipe Totec

### Keats House

By Daphne Chamberlain

**Like New York's Mayor Giuliani, East Finchley's Diana Bishop is relinquishing her office to general regret. Unlike Rudi, though, Diana has an extension.**

Comparisons end there. She is not becoming a Dame. Regular readers will remember that Diana has spent this summer and autumn as the first Poet-in-Residence at Keats House, Hampstead. Although it is not possible to stay on in that capacity, her poetry-writing workshops for adults have gone so well that she will be starting a new course in January.

As usual, women outnumbered men, but ages ranged "from the 20s to the elderly". The New Year sessions will be fortnightly, and limited to twelve participants. This is because there have sometimes been too many attending, which presented problems but was very gratifying.

### Excellent audiences

The other events at Keats House, including Diana's readings of her own work, drew excellent audiences, and she reported good times with the children.

She "enjoyed it all enormously", and London Metropolitan Archives, who administer Keats House, want to follow on the tradition they and she have begun.

Meanwhile, you can check *THE ARCHER*'s What's On for details of the new poetry-writing sessions, and also for a planned Christmas performance at Keats House. Alternatively, contact Keats House on 020 7435 2062.

By Anne Ballard (written at a Keats House poetry workshop)

The Aztec god of death is flayed alive and, cannibal, consumes his living heart. He understands that it is life that maims, death that renews.

Less wise, we living haunt our dead. In ignorance it is ourselves we mourn, and call them back, unfree, to succour us: we cannot let the dead be dead.

The Aztec god, he knows the need to let them go, which we deny, refusing to face his truth, that death is occupation enough to fill one life.

*(The Aztec flayed god; his priests wore the skins of sacrificial victims as a symbol of regeneration.)*

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## Heart and Soul

St Joseph's church, Highgate, was overflowing on a chilly October evening, with music-lovers eagerly anticipating beautiful singing in a perfect setting. We came for the first concert this season of the Crouch End Festival Chorus, a number of whose members actually come from East Finchley, to hear some deeply religious music by two of Britain's most popular, in every sense, composers - *The Hymn of Jesus* by Holst and Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius*.

### Childhood love of music

Holst, 'who was composing as soon as he could hold a pen' and Elgar who described himself, as a child 'bathing in the stream of music that always flowed through the house' worked at first as musicians, playing a great variety of instruments.

Both Elgar, when teaching the violin and as a band master and Holst, as musical director of St Paul's Girls School, working at Morley College and even organising music with soldiers in the First World War, communicated a huge enthusiasm and love of music to all with whom they came in contact.

The Hymn of Jesus, (the text taken from the Apocryphal Acts of St. John), with its surging mystical dancing rhythms and an angelic choir singing from the back of the church, wrapped us in a shimmering web of sound.

Soloists Victoria Simmonds, Michael Bundy and Hilton Marlton who took the role of Gerontius sang with clarity and beauty, enhanced by the vivid playing of the Hertfordshire Chamber Orchestra in Elgar's dream of a soul's journey after death.

### Beautiful "noise"

But in works of this scope, the piece stands or falls on the quality of the choir. And they were magnificent. The warmth, colour and drama of their singing ranging from the terrors of the demon chorus to the sublime visionary heights inspired and moved us.

The audience, both the knowledgeable and those of us who, in the alleged words of Sir Thomas Beecham, know nothing about music but just like the noise it makes, thoroughly enjoyed ourselves and look forward to the CEFC's next concert at the Barbican in January.

## KALASHNIKOV KULTUR

By Ricky Savage, the voice of social irresponsibility

### Tinsel time

Welcome to that time of year when overdrafts, waistlines, crowds, divorces and drunks increase to levels beyond human endurance. Welcome to the world of enforced jollity, novelty singles and merchandising opportunities. Welcome to everyone's favourite pagan knees-up. Welcome to a time of year I loathe. Welcome to Christmas. People say I'm mad for not finding Christmas wonderful, but I know the truth and it's not very pleasant...

#### Bah! Humbug!

Peace and goodwill to all men means nothing to the average punter unless it's wrapped round an advertising slogan. You know, something like 'give your kids peace and goodwill this Christmas with our new flame-grilled turkey'n'stuffing burger'. Anyway, a turkey's not just for Christmas, it's for most of January as well.

Then there's the thrill-a-minute world of Christmas cards. These can be divided into four types: tacky, cute, wacky and God-bothering. Taste? What's that? It's something you leave behind in November.

#### Kiddie grief

The cut-throat financial farce of present-buying comes next. Never mind batteries not supplied, mostly people buy presents on a brain not supplied basis. So granny gives you hankies and socks, your parents give you something 'useful' like a food processor, your partner gets inventive - inventive with the hints and brain-dead when it comes to your present - and children just give you grief. Naturally the worst kiddie grief comes once they've compared prices, labels and merchandising with their friends. And yes, there's always some little brat just down the road called Jeremy/Jocasta and his/her Dad/Mum gave her/him the new/complete/latest/most expensive (delete as appropriate) current youth essential and because you didn't they 'hate you' for the next 48 hours.

#### Escape from Alka-Seltzer

Then there's the food and drink phenomenon, and here lies the road to food-poisoning and intoxication. Home-cooked or restaurant of the month, it don't make no difference. You'll eat and drink too much, feel ill and have nothing left at the end except the empties - usually, bottles, boxes and packets of Alka-Seltzer.

Sadly there is no escape from this torment and with less than 25 shopping, eating, drinking and bankrupting days to Christmas it may be too late to escape. All you can do is select a belief system that lets you off indulging. Buddhism perhaps, or maybe a religion of your own making? Either way, tinsel time is here again and there's no escaping.