



The Fings we wrote

During his five years as editor of *THE ARCHER* between 1993 and 1998, Paul Savill oversaw 55 issues and scrutinised over one million words...Below we publish some of his favourite extracts from *THE ARCHER*'s most crucial year - Year One.

When The Archer limped into life in January 1993, no-one who saw the first edition could have foreseen that it would become the regular part of East Finchley life that it is today.

Issue 1 bore *THE ARCHER* name, big and bold, the same bowman and motto, as valid today as it was then: "Local news is our aim."

It was only A4 in size, two sided and there were no pictures. By the end of that year, however, *THE ARCHER* had blossomed to its present size of A3, was publishing eight to 12 pages every month. Headlines had plenty of punch, sometimes too much punch. Definitely, the headline of the year was "Beware of rampant mugging gang". As terrifying as this sounded, it turned out that some youths had snatched a handbag and a wallet near the station.

Full of carp

"Full of carp" was my favourite subheading and despite the sub-editor's oath that it was a misprint no-one believed him. Surprising really, because our spelling mistakes were winning us high popularity throughout N2.

That summer saw the first major *ARCHER* campaign to improve the visual state of the area's main crossroads. 'Barnet Council's attempt to improve the scenic quality of the central area of East Finchley High Road has resulted in an ugly patch of land dominated by pigeons and their droppings. Said 21-year-old Lisa Robson who works at nearby Budgen's: "The pigeons have taken over the area and many now call it Pigeon Corner."

Caught short

The best descriptive passage of the year was by Pat McManus. It was about her cycling holiday entitled "Caught short in the Hebrides".

"About half way along the road we were both beginning to feel extremely inconvenienced..."

"At last it got too much. At the appearance of a slight embankment the bikes were flung down on the side of the road and we made a scramble for it. 'Oh hell' I cried 'this will have to do' and down came the knickers with great relief.

"Imagine our dismay...when a convoy of vehicles appeared along the road...There we were crouching in the heather like two strange oversized birds on their nests..."

Animal magic

My favourite animal story of the year was by Cathy Young. "It was all the fault of the North London Hospice shop," she began.

This was where she purchased a Roto-stak, an elaborate hamster cage, which led to the purchase of two "male" hamsters, "who devoted their entire energy to fighting over the very noisy exercise wheel.

"Well, not quite all their energy...Within six weeks the two males had produced 14 babies which they lovingly introduced to the delights of the wheel..."

"Meanwhile, one of the babies escaped and was joined by two females...and have set up a colony under the floorboards if our dog's frantic scratching is anything to go by..."

First of many

In newspapers it is the first paragraph which counts above all and as editor I used to bang on about this. Indubitably, the best intro of the year was produced by John Dacam in his article on Chinese flu in N2.

"In December I had the flu. I caught it on Friday from the same person I usually catch it from over a few pints after work. I know it was him because two other people who were with us there went down with it at the same time."

Despite my bangings-on about the first paragraph, many of *THE ARCHER* writers still persisted in putting all the story in the final paragraph as the following one shows. I do not know who wrote it but it is a paragraph to end all paragraphs.

Based on a report by Barnet Health Agency about the health in its 20 wards, the story concluded:

"So there you have it, East Finchley is better off, but still poor and we are more likely to die than our neighbours, but we cost more to keep alive. So if you want to be better off and live longer, try moving down the road to the Garden Suburb."



An early Archer campaign for the return of the public toilets. Photo by David Tupman

Mike Bassett - Special deliverer

By Daphne Chamberlain

Mike Bassett has delivered nearly every issue of *THE ARCHER*, starting in the time of the single page editions. "It seems a long time ago," he remembers. "We didn't have set rounds. We were handed a bundle of papers, and told to get back in an hour and a half to have a drink. It was like a party."

In those historic days, East Finchley's new paper was delivered mainly to "the Village" area, but now Mike looks after his home territory, around Ossulton Way and Brim Hill. "People in this neck of the woods can feel a bit left out, but we're very enthusiastic."

Mike's particular enthusiasm is for local history. He has his own file of every back copy of *THE ARCHER*, and is currently researching 18th century newspapers in the Hampstead/Finchley area. (This is how he knows about a camel that was kept in Hampstead.)

He misses his chats with Mr Pryor from The Alexandria in Church Lane, who used to walk across fields to The Spaniards, and who once spoke to the famous Colonel Sanger, the murdered circus-owner of East End Road. He says, "I like to think that I've spoken to a man who spoke to a man who was born before Victoria became Queen"

My patch

Mike delivers 435 papers every month - more than any other deliverer. Surprisingly,

he reckons he can get them all done in about two-and-a-half hours. Over-zealous dogs seem to be much less of a problem now, though he has met two who were so excited by the sight of *THE ARCHER* that they instantly ate it.

He is wary of snap-down letterboxes, but his most unnerving moments have been when front doors open slowly and silently just as he is posting the paper through.

A more serious worry is the number of people who leave their doors open or their keys in the lock. Mike always tries to warn the householder, but other callers might well have different ideas.

"I'm lucky with my patch," he says. "It has some very pretty front gardens, particularly in the spring. I like to pick out the best ones. As a matter of fact, I've often thought that all the *ARCHER* deliverers could nominate the most attractive gardens or window-boxes on their rounds." Any offers?

My three years at the helm

By David Hobbs, Editor 1998-2001

They say journalism is power without responsibility; sometimes editing *THE ARCHER* felt like the opposite: responsibility without power. Taking over from Paul Savill was always going to be a tough job; the problem was I did not realise how tough until the first pile of copy landed at my feet and I got the first phone call from our production manager asking me what I wanted to put on the front page.

I took over just in time to report the demolition of Park Lodge and retired from the editor's chair at a time when the ever increasing number of housing developments was causing great concern. The development boom has seen almost every available patch of land grabbed by developers to the dismay of many local people.

That was not the only issue to run like a thread through my time as editor and parking problems and traffic congestion seem to have been ever present in *THE ARCHER*. The parking problem was subject to much debate as local traders felt that plans for a Controlled Parking Zone would destroy passing trade. Finally, in April this year, the CPZ came into being and generally improved things for just about everyone except the commuters who used to turn East Finchley into a car park.

My three years saw the start of a number of popular features including Geoff Garfield's cinema column, 'Dear Deirdre', the return of gardening thanks to Zena Robson and Daphne Chamberlain's 'East Finchley Families' which brings the history of the area to life. Paul Savill even got in on the act with his East Finchley People, a series on some of the more unusual activities of local residents.

In an area with a lot of families with young children, schools were always going to be an issue and Diana Cormack ensured that *THE ARCHER* had its finger on the pulse via her popular 'Young Archer' section.

There were several tragic events that affected East Finchley during my editorship including the murder of Carol Parsonage by her husband, Michael, the death of former *ARCHER* motoring

correspondent, Michael Kreisky, and members of his family in a plane crash in December 2000 and in June of this year the death of Pete Maslen, one of the founder members of the paper.

Now, as the 100th issue of *THE ARCHER* heads for the printers I can sit back, let Kevin Finn take the strain and end with a few words of thanks to all those who made my time as editor so worthwhile.

Without the writers there would be nothing to print, without John Dacam and Frances Loveday the articles would never get knocked into shape, without the production team of Alison Roberts and Paul Northam the paper would never get printed, without the distributors no one would get to read it and without Sue Holliday's financial acumen we would have gone bust long before we got this far.

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