



## Cuckoo

By Daphne Chamberlain

*The cuckoo comes in April, He sings his song in May, In June he begins to stutter, And July he flies away. My grandfather, born and bred in Cambridgeshire, used to quote that to us every year.*

If he had lived near Wales, he might have drunk a toast to the "Welch-ambassador", whose appearance over the English border signalled the return of spring.

It's said that the villagers of Gotham, near Nottingham, in the Middle Ages wanted to put a hedge round a cuckoo so that it would always be spring. What they managed to do was to give a new meaning to the word "cuckoo".

### Good luck

Though my grandad enjoyed a pint, I don't think he told us about cuckoo-ale. This was what you drank if you heard the first cuckoo with money in your pockets, because it was supposed to guarantee you wouldn't be in want during the year. On the other hand, if you were in bed, you could expect bad luck. Possibly because a working

man lying in bed after sunrise would be ill, idle - or perhaps with another man's wife.

In that case, you might hear the sound of the cuckoo imitated by your neighbours as you approached, while for hundreds of years a deceived husband has been known as a cuckold.

To the Romans the cuckoo was the adulterous wife and her husband was called a hedge-sparrow.

Sparrows, of course, have always suffered from the cuckoo's habit of laying their eggs in other birds' nests. If my grandad had come from Sussex, he might have told us this rhyme: The cuckoo is a merry bird, she sings as she flies, She brings us good tidings, she tells us no lies, She dries up the dirt in the spring of the year, And sucks little birds' eggs to keep her voice clear.



## New threat to zebras

by A R Beza

**The Cherry Tree Woods zebras are facing their biggest threat since arriving in East Finchley. The threat is not from traffic or the local council, but from a large black cat.**

Local photographer, L. O. O'Flirpa, photographed the cat stalking the zebras outside Budgens. "I was astonished.

The zebras have become such a popular feature in East Finchley that the prospect of them being eaten by what looked like a

panther horrified me", he told *The Archer*. John Lyon of the local branch of the Big Cats Protection League thought that the cat was probably a young male panther in search of its own territory. "There have been panthers in Trent Park and on Hadley Common for several years, though I am surprised to see one so far south". He suspected that the young male had probably reached East Finchley by following the tube line from High Barnet.

The RSPCA told *THE ARCHER* that they were concerned and had deployed armed officers to protect the zebras. Their spokesman, Brian G. Raffae, said "With the zebras about to foal it is important that they are protected. After all, we don't want a repeat of what happened to the water buffalo on Totteridge Common after the tigers arrived".

### Cat in the adage

It is accepted that big cats are becoming an increasing problem, but as Dr A. Mup of London Zoo explained, "It is not the cats that are to blame for this, they are just doing what comes naturally". She thought that the best hope for animals like this panther was to tranquillise them and release them somewhere more suitable like Surrey.

Local residents are concerned. Mrs Jane Wilder-Beeste of Baronsmere Road said "I fear for my family. It is terrifying to think that one of my youngsters could be out roaming the woods and end up being eaten by a panther". She said that she was disgusted by the Council's lack of action and said that she had contacted the Highgate and District Foxhounds for help. Sebastian Reynard, the Master of Hounds, was confident that his pack could solve the problem, but were prevented from doing so by the attitude of the RSPCA.

*The Archer* hopes that combined action by London Zoo and the RSPCA will enable our zebras to continue to roam freely across East Finchley.

## Home Truths on Spring Cleaning

By Diana Cormack

**Did you know that there is an official National Spring Cleaning Week? When I made this amazing discovery last year it was already half over, but it took me by surprise because I'd have thought that this particular event would have been set in the Spring. In fact it was competing with Shrove Tuesday, Ash Wednesday and the start of Lent, so the calendar was quite crowded.**

Then I began to think that I must have read it wrongly. Perhaps it meant National *Spring* Cleaning Week, with the emphasis on those coiled up metal things? Or was it *National* Spring Cleaning Week, with the whole nation making an effort

to clean up the country?

As most people would prefer to stay indoors with the sort of weather we usually have at this time of year, that seemed an unlikely prospect.

So I took it to mean the obvious one and was able to put the whole idea out of my mind.

### Mother did know best

Well, almost, because the thought of all that housework reminded me of my grand-

mother who lived in a time without washing machines, vacuum cleaners and all the other labour-saving devices invented by men to make (mostly) women's lives less of a drudge.

I don't know what she would have made of all those machines, but I do know what she thought of her heavy workload. Long after her death I found a poem she had kept that I suspect she had cut out of the *Radio Times*. It says it all!

## A Psalm of Home Life

By Mary Knight

(For the other listeners who find the "Household Talks" oppressive)

Tell us not in mournful numbers  
How to keep our houses clean:  
When to leave and seek our slumbers,  
How to fill the hours between.  
Life is real! Life is earnest!  
Spotless homes are not its goal;  
Who dusts, and then to dust returneth,  
Leaves no rest for sole or soul.

Not enjoyment  
surely sorrow  
Is their destined end and way  
Who so plan that each tomorrow  
Is the same as yesterday.

Housework's long, and time is fleeting,  
Must our wives, though stout and brave,  
Go on bottling plums and beating  
Carpets to the very grave?

In the world's broad field of battle  
This seems a depressing strife.  
Be not like dumb driven cattle!  
Get some pleasure out of life!

## Barnet Five-O!

**Barnet's Jubilee Working Group is collecting material for a CD-ROM and booklet showing community life in Finchley, Hendon and Barnet over the last 50 years.**

They are interested in all aspects of life, including education, work, clubs and societies, leisure and religious activities, healthcare, celebrations and events.

### Contributions invited

The group would like to hear from you if you have photos or documents that could be included, or ideas for sections of the CD-ROM and booklet. Compilations from clubs, community groups or companies would be welcome, as would artwork, poetry or stories from schools and playgroups.

They undertake to return all items sent to them.

For further details, please contact Lisa Jerome on 020 8359 2893 on Thursdays or Fridays.

## Saint George

By Len Willcocks

**The Irish have St Patrick; the Welsh, St David and the Scots, St Andrew. Here in England we have St George, our patron saint whose day it is on 23 April.**

Little is known about St George, apart from the well-known legend of his battle with the dragon.

It is believed that he was a soldier in the Crusades, was martyred in Palestine and that his tomb is in Lydda in Palestine.

Like most national saints, his life is the stuff of legend.

So why not celebrate our saint's day and wear the red rose, symbol of England? How about a parade and celebration in Trafalgar Square?

### England and St George

April 23 is also the birthday of England's greatest playwright, William Shakespeare, born on St George's Day 1564 in Stratford-upon-Avon and, by a strange chance, dying on that same day, 23 April, in 1616. Every year in Stratford-upon-Avon this is a day of pageantry and celebration. The bells of the parish church ring out and flowers are laid on the bard's grave.

There is no doubt Shakespeare was proud to celebrate his feast day as in his play, *Henry V*, he shows how people were stirred by the bravery of their patron saint as they went into battle.

So, let's celebrate our national day. Ken Livingstone, over to you.