The National Neurological Hospital Photo by Erini Rodis

A Horror of Doing Nothing

By Ann Bronkhorst

Whatever the future holds for the Neurological Hospital site, one local man will not forget the original building and its grounds.

A pencil sketch on his living room wall, drawn especially for voluntary worker Eddie Dyer by an artist patient, shows a late 19th-century house with a steep pitched roof and some fine stained-glass windows. Eddie remembers an ancient mulberry tree, cedars and the crimson Virginia creeper in autumn. Patients, often wheel-chair-bound, enjoyed the terrace and the garden.

A lost idyll? Yes, but for Eddie the story continues. In 1994 he began visiting a relative in the rehabilitation unit and on retirement decided to continue as a volunteer. "I have a horror of doing nothing," he says. Three times a week he would turn up to chat to each patient, draw them out a bit and get them laughing.

There's practical help, too, such as shopping or even tracking down *The Farmer's Weekly* for a patient. When the rehabilitation unit moved south to Queen's Square, Eddie simply went on with his work. It's further to travel but he doesn't mind. For a decade Eddie has befriended strangers, listened to their life-experiences and brought them news. With no special training he finds ways of communicating even with patients with no English or with little, apparently, to live for.

Eddie Dyer is surprisingly unsentimental about the demise of the old Hospital building; years ago he could see there wasn't enough manpower to maintain the grounds and the building was becoming steadily shabbier. Perhaps the closure of the unit on that site was inevitable. For him its significance is in what it achieves, wherever it's situated, and he intends to go on making his contribution.

12 Things You Didn't Know About…

Each month *The Archer* profiles an eminent member of the community with 12 quick fire questions.

This month it is the turn of William Man, proprietor of the Mandarin Restaurant.

1 **Name:** William Man.
2 **Date Of Birth:** 25 August 1963.
3 **Chinese New Year?** Rabbit.
4 **Can you elaborate?** Intelligent and calm, peace loving with impeccable manners. With creative thoughts, but sometimes too moody and indifferent.
5 **Occupation:** Restaurateur and full time undergraduate university student.
6 **How long have you been at Mandarin?** 25 years.
7 **Favourite in house dish?** Pot Noodle, washed down with a bottle of Chinese Tsing beer.
8 **Main passion outside of work?** Travelling.
9 **What is your best physical feature**? My nose. It is identical to Jackie Chan's.
10 **And the worst?** My nose. Customers keep mistaking me for Jackie Chan.
11 **England World Cup Wins-** 1966 or 2003? Has to be 1966- because we beat the Germans.
12 **Your house is on fire and you can only save one possession- what is it?** My tennis rackets. They have enabled me to inflict total domination over my fellow [albeit geriatric] club members. I wouldn't want the small matter of a house fire to jeopardise that.

Remembering D Day

6 June 2004 is the 60th anniversary of D Day.

► Were you there?
► Were you in the army?
► Were you at home?
► Were you at school?

If you or anyone you know has any memories of D Day, please contact *The Archer* at the usual address.

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