



Happy Birthday

By Sue Holliday

“Happy birthday, dear Lawrie, happy birthday to you” were the words that rang around the Constitutional Club on the evening of 4 September.



Lawrie Chivers celebrates his 65th birthday with partner Jane.
Photo by Bettie Cude

Lawrie had invited a large number of friends to help him celebrate the milestone that was his 65th birthday. As he said to me, “I just love a party.”

Our MP, Rudi Vis, gave a speech to welcome us all and to praise Lawrie for all of his good works in the community. Then the party really began with dancing and singing. A lot of the music was from the 60s, 70s and even the 50s, and all evening the dance floor was full of people really enjoying themselves; I left at about midnight and they were still dancing.

We were lucky with the weather and those who wanted a quieter evening sat in the garden or the marquee and enjoyed conversations with friends.

Lawrie and his partner Jane had also organised a buffet fit for a king.

Jane presented Lawrie with a very large cake (but not with 65 candles), and Lawrie thanked the steward of the club for all the effort behind the scenes that made this evening so successful, and presented each of the bar staff with a bouquet of flowers. Such a lovely touch, I thought. But that is Lawrie Chivers – a kind and thoughtful man.

Once again, Lawrie, many happy returns!

Any reader who feels strongly about any matter is invited to use this “Soapbox” column.

Please note that opinions expressed are those of the writer alone.



Pavement disrepair

By Garth Morton of Church Lane N2

The condition of pavement repair in East Finchley is bad and seems to be getting worse. Today, utility companies along with everyman and his dog seem to be digging up our roads and pavements. When it comes to returning them to an acceptable condition, however, it seems that pavements are the poor relations of the roads getting scant care and no attention.

In this litigious society, it seems foolish that those responsible for the maintenance of public footpaths should leave themselves open to damages claims from people who suffer injury through trips and falls. Perhaps it is more cost effective, when the price of paying such damages is balanced against the financial burden of keeping our streets in proper condition, to let our pavements lie in this poor state of repair.

It would seem counter productive, in an age when every politician from Number 10 down is encouraging us to drive less and walk more, to force the pedestrian to negotiate such badly broken pavements. Surely this state of affairs gives a truer reflection of the seriousness with which politicians take the pedestrian in relation to the car driver. As soon as we step out of our cars, we become second-class citizens. That’s all right, you might say, as we drive most places and walk only short distances. This, however, is the problem and part of the reason we are becoming an obese nation living in an ever more polluted environment.

An even more pressing concern resulting from the state of our pavements is that those with mobility problems and the elderly may be seriously restricted in their movements, if only because they fear the possible consequences of a fall. This might be especially so in winter, when it may be impossible for some people to find a sure footing on uneven ground, especially with ice under foot. The demographics of our population shows an increasing percentage of elderly people, therefore we would be wise to address these concerns.

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By Ricky Savage, the voice of social irresponsibility

A question of class

Well, it looks as if it’s about to happen at last. The wild-eyed legislators have voted to ban hunting with dogs. So, unless we get a serious U-turn, from July 2006 your average fox will be able to sleep in peace without worrying about packs of mad dogs ripping him to shreds. All the animal lobbyists are celebrating victory after nearly 80 years. And me? Well, I’m not celebrating for the foxes, because it isn’t about foxes, it’s about class.

Hunting has a long tradition amongst our ruling classes. The Normans gave us the New Forest, not for trees and birds, but as somewhere the king could hunt. Medieval gamekeepers could kill poachers without worrying about the consequences because poachers were poor and kings, lords and barons were both rich and in charge. Most of the country wasn’t for the people; it was for the elite to hunt on. They saw it as sport and training for war, not as a means of putting meat on the table. Over the years these ancestors of today’s Countryside Alliance managed to drive bears, wolves and wild boar to extinction. Nice one? I don’t think so.

Unspeakable

Once they got their hands on firearms and an empire, these clowns set about extending the concept of slaughter as sport to lions, tigers and anything else large or small and furry in the name of empire and ‘the British way of life’. Back home they picked on the poor old fox. Same bunch, public school educated toffs who held the rest of us in contempt, on horseback pursuing the uneatable in the name of fun.

Now, it’s our turn. Time to tell them that they can’t claim that they have ‘democratic rights’ to ride roughshod across the country behind a pack of hounds. It is our turn to remind them that the idea behind democracy is that what the majority want, the majority gets. Most people find the idea of killing anything for fun disgusting so why should the hunting brigade be allowed to continue doing it? Besides, I love it when the ruling classes have to face the modern world. Most of us don’t really like them or what they do, any more than the peasants they drove off the land, in order to hunt poor, unsuspecting creatures, liked it back in 1066.

A true tale for Hallowe’en

By Diana Cormack

Twenty years ago, when my daughter was a baby, we had a family holiday in Brittany. There were fourteen of us. Both adults and children spent an enjoyable week in a converted manor situated well off the beaten track, surrounded by beautiful countryside. On our last night together we decided to take a stroll through the narrow lanes that criss-crossed the area.

Unlike British farmers, the Bretons still allowed their hedges to grow high upon grassy banks crowded with sweet-scented flowers. Though I could no longer see them, their smell filled the night-time air. As I slowly breathed in and out, enjoying their fragrance, I seemed to have taken a step back in time. There I was on one of my childhood holidays in Wales, running back over the fields trying to get to my grandparents’ cottage before it got dark.

A dawn visitor

My grandmother was particularly fond of me. Everyone said that I was her double, not only in looks but in mood as well. She would have loved to see me get married and have children before she died, but it was not to be. As I pushed my daughter’s

buggy back towards the manor I wished so much that my adored grandma had lived to see her. How proud she would have been to know that my only child bore her name.

I woke early the next morning. A light breeze was playing with the curtains. Gradually I became aware of a familiar smell, one that made me feel calm, loved and secure. Then I realised that it was the scent particular to my grandmother. I felt her presence so strongly, but I did not look, I just lay and enjoyed her being there until I drifted back to sleep.

Gone

When I awoke in the full light of day, she had gone. But I knew the reason for her visit. She had come to take a look at her great granddaughter who lay sleeping in her cot at the other side of the room.