

**KALASHNIKOV KULTUR**

By Ricky Savage, the voice of social irresponsibility

Elvis has left the building

Back in long-forgotten times when rock'n'roll had not been invented, some 'poor white trash' called Elvis Aaron Presley shambled into Sam Phillips' Sun Studios down in Memphis. When Phillips heard him sing he knew that he'd found what he was looking for, a white boy who sounded black. In segregated America that was something to shout about because this white boy could cross the colour line. That was in January 1954. By July he'd been hooked up with Scotty Moore and Bill Black and made his first record, Arthur 'Big Boy' Crudup's *That's All Right* and rock'n'roll was born.

Within a year he was causing riots, within two years his contract had been bought out by RCA, he'd got Colonel Tom Parker managing him and he'd become the most dangerous man in rock'n'roll. The hits came and kept on coming. Between then and March 1958 Elvis was the king. The records defined not just rock'n'roll but also a generation. From *Heartbreak Hotel* via *Blue Suede Shoes* to *Jailhouse Rock*, the snake hipped, leather jacketed kid from the wrong side of the tracks changed music.

Viva Las Vegas

Then it ended. On 24 March 1958 Elvis left the building and joined the army. After that he was never the same. When he came out it was not back to rock'n'roll, it was back to Hollywood. Of my ten worst films of all time at least six are Elvis movies from the 60s. This was not rock'n'roll, this was so bad it made Cliff Richard, Britain's cut-price version of Elvis seem classy.

And then, when he did return to live gigs it was in sequins. The king of rock'n'roll sang in a casino, in a white jump suit. He was fat, bloated and pointless. He died on 16 August 1977, just 30 days before Marc Bolan wrapped a mini round a tree - guess which death affected me most.

Now we have the strange world of the Elvis impersonator. Some fat bloke from Bolton done up like a chicken in tin foil grinding out the worst of the Las Vegas years when what we should have is the snake-hipped and dangerous Elvis of *Jailhouse Rock*. Like I said, Elvis left the building when he joined the army and nothing will change that; not even the 70th anniversary of his birth.

Watercress beds

Dear Editor

I have read with great interest the articles by Tony Roberts on your website on the history of East Finchley. I was born in 1955, moved to Hertford Road in 1957, and left in 1979 to live with my new wife in Finchley Central. I moved to Barnet in 1982 and Arkley in 1994, where I still reside.

I remember the Black Bess café and tea-rooms, the Merry Miller bakery (Clark's), and the dairy where McDonalds is now. I went to Holy Trinity and Alder schools, and we held our junior carol services in the old Congregational Hall.

My parents still live in Hertford Road, but have moved near the end, further away from the High Road. Our Sunday school teacher at All Saints in Durham Road lived at the bottom of Hertford Road on the south side - i.e. the odd numbers, diagonally opposite my parents' house.

She would have been 100 now, and she told us that my parents' house, which was built during World War One, stood where watercress beds were, and that she remembered them. I know the stream that runs through Coldfall Woods

Letters to The Editor

passes under those houses. Have you any information on this, please? Or on any of the other landmarks?

Regards,
Mark Littlefield.

Ann Bronkhorst adds:

Paddling for watercress references in local archives and maps has produced a few small bunches of information.

Where the statue of La Deliverance now stands, in the Regents Park Road area, there were watercress beds in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, recalled by local people in brief anecdotes. It seems a Mr Ginger owned the beds - or behaved as if he did. H.G. Gregory remembered [date unknown] "the adept manner in which he walked the plank across the beds to pick our cress at a penny a bunch." And two girls in the 1880s, whose parents had charge of watercress beds at Finchley, probably the same ones, were taken out of St. John's school, Whetstone, every summer term when the entire family moved to live at Church End for the watercress season.

Nearer home, two 1894 Ordnance Survey maps for Muswell Hill and East Finchley reveal large watercress beds on the north side of Mutton Brook in Dirthouse Wood, later renamed Cherry Tree Wood. Equivalent maps for 1911 show no sign of them. Presumably the land was drained - though people today walking across the grass after heavy rain might dispute this - and one more local food source disappeared.

Devastated

Dear Editor

I am devastated by the Asian earthquake disaster. I cannot imagine how those beautiful countries have changed since I was last there. I spent the last two winters in India, mostly in Madras and the East Coast where I drew and painted the colourful landscapes and people. From there I travelled to Kerala with my paints, making friends and filling sketchbooks. In former years I wintered in Indonesia and Thailand, and it is tragic to think that the villages I stayed in, and the people who were so friendly, have vanished or are experiencing the absolute horror of the aftermath.

My travels have culminated in a wealth of watercolours and oils. I want to give something back to those countries that gave me such pleasure, and the only way I can see is to offer up my paintings for sale.

Fund-raising sale

I am exhibiting this work in my studio and invite visitors to purchase at very reasonable prices, paintings and prints.

ALL sales go to relief funds, cheques made payable to the charity of your choice.

Those interested can phone me on 020 8346 7011.

Mari l'Anson
The Grove, N3

Mari l'Anson lived in Leslie Road for many years. Recently her paintings have been exhibited at Chorak and The Phoenix cinema.

Split ends

Dear Editor,

In the January 2005 edition of *THE ARCHER*, in the Advertising Feature "Treat Yourself for 2005", the article mentioned "We specialise in organic colouring which is extremely good for the hair as there is no peroxide and no ammonia" When I contacted Isabel Douglas Health & Beauty Centre, I was informed that "there is a low amount of peroxide used" which is inconsistent information.

Yours faithfully

Name and address withheld

Isabel Douglas replies "I use Permanent Hair Color by Color Herbe for Hair, who guarantee that it contains no peroxide and no ammonia. If the person concerned wishes to contact me directly, I can arrange a free consultation."

Send your correspondence to: "Letters Page", *The Archer*, PO Box 3699, London N2 8JA or e-mail the-archer@lineone.net.

OBITUARY**Norman Burgess, 1922 -2004**

By Daphne Chamberlain
Norman Burgess was the former Chair, archivist and publicist of The Finchley Society; supporter of Avenue House, the Stephens Collection and College Farm; founder-member of the Octavia Hill Trust and Barnet Cyclists; backstage man and actor with the Finchley Methodist Church Guild Players; Liberal Councillor and Chair of the Education Committee for Finchley in the early 1960s; stalwart member of the Old Fincunians; former Superintendent of East Finchley Methodist Sunday School; teacher at Manorside, Deputy Head of Frith Manor, and Headmaster of Wessex Gardens School.



Norman and Betty Burgess at the Bothy, Avenue House, 2004.

He also made his mark outside Finchley, being a steward at the Albert Hall, and working on the donations desk of the Globe Theatre until a month before he died.

Inspiration and energy

Even on a first meeting you were aware of his tremendous energy, determination, and insistence on having every detail correct.

He didn't believe in the kid glove approach (though private conversation revealed a reflective side), and didn't

mind becoming a hands-on campaigner either. In the last year of his life he helped clean Finchley County School's unique war memorial for its commemorative photo. He and his fellow Old Fincunians lost their battle to preserve it, but did persuade Barratts to install another memorial outside their new development.

The Stephens collection, the museum in Avenue House to the ink magnate, is flourishing. In fact, the BBC plans to present a radio play about Stephens later this year.

Norman also inspired the Finchley Society Archives in Avenue House, which hold a great store of local history, and his fund of knowledge was appreciated by Barnet Cyclists when he led their local history rides. They remember him too

at evening events "in his red silk waistcoat and musical tie, spreading good cheer and joie de vivre".

Tireless campaigner

Born in East End Road, he attended Holy Trinity primary school before winning a scholarship to Finchley County, and, rejected for military service, he spent World War 2 touring the country for Simms, the East Finchley factory, talking on tank construction.

Norman's funeral eulogy included a quote from the Guild Players that "when Norman built a set, it stayed built". Perhaps this sums up his fight to preserve the things he valued, particularly in Finchley.

Our sympathies go to Betty Burgess, their three children, four grandchildren and one great-grandson.

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