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THE ARCHER



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Chris Haslam and his best friend get to grips with his latest thriller.
Photo by Erini Rodis

Film of the book?

By Diana Cormack

When you hear Chris Haslam's life story, you can't help thinking it would make a good book or even a film. After a childhood in rural Norfolk, Chris's plans to become a Marine were shattered by a death-defying fall whilst scaling a Scottish mountain. This failed to dampen his spirit of adventure, however. Intriguing exploits in various countries (some of them none too safe) led to jobs ranging from firearms instructor to ski guide.

Chris, of Creighton Avenue, still roams the world, but now as a travel writer for the Sunday Times. He is also the author of two books, with a third on the way; rather like his family life, for Chris and his wife Natalie have a seven-year-old son, a two-year-old daughter and a recently born baby boy. Natalie herself was born in East Finchley and the family lives in the house where she was brought up.

Chris attributes being a writer to his own upbringing. With no television and

a houseful of books, he was an avid reader, tackling books well beyond his age range. He also wrote, first poetry and then short stories, winning prizes for both.

Chris told *THE ARCHER* that he likes old-fashioned adventure stories and his readers may see a reflection of that, but with a very modern twist. His first, *Twelve Step Fandango*, was published in 2003 and was the only British nomination in the Best Original Paperback category of the Edgar Allan Poe Awards in the USA. His second, *Alligator Strip*, appeared in June of this year.

Critic Matthew Lewin wrote that Chris has "that rare talent of being able to combine seriously funny stuff with a truly engrossing thriller." Both published books have the same anti-hero, but his new one is based on a true story of missing Spanish gold.

With his job allowing him to continue his travels, to write and to spend time with his family, Chris has no plans to change things. Film interest in *Twelve Step Fandango* has yet to come to fruition, but who knows what the future holds? Perhaps one day we will see his life story on the silver screen!

Poetry competition

Poetry might mean prizes, if you enter the Barnet Open Poetry Competition - but hurry, as the deadline is 15 November.

Barnet Borough Arts Council (BBAC) is offering £200 as the first prize for adult entrants, and £20 for juniors in two categories, 7-11 and 12-16 years. The poem can be on any subject but must not exceed 35 lines.

Adult entry costs £4 and junior entry £3. There is a £1 discount for Barnet residents. Entry forms are available from the library, from www.artsinbar.net.org.uk or by sending a SAE to BBAC c/o All Saints Arts Centre, 122 Oakleigh Road North, N20 9EZ.

From MOT to ART

By Diana Cormack

Instead of the inevitable block of flats which usually springs up on any piece of vacant land or property, the old MOT car workshop at 2a Fortis Green is set to bring a refreshing change to the East Finchley scene. At present the building is being renovated and upgraded in order to house an art gallery, scheduled for opening in March 2006.

The Noble Sage Art Gallery is the brainchild of local resident Jana Manuelpillai. Highly qualified and experienced in the art world both here and in the United States, Mr Manuelpillai hopes to make the gallery a centre for artistic talent emerging from or inspired by countries overseas. He told *THE ARCHER* that he would be travelling to places such as India and Sri Lanka to select paintings, sculpture and a variety of smaller exotic items, not only for the gallery but also for a small gift shop on the premises.

Jana's emphasis is on the merger of cultures from which new and beautiful styles to be appreciated by all can develop. He describes himself as "Sri Lankan, born in Walthamstow, brought up in Wembley, living in East Finchley, half Christian, half Hindu," and would like his gallery to reflect a similar range of hybrid culture through its art.

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Artsdepot winners

Congratulations to the winners of the artsdepot birthday competition from the September *Archer*.

Geets Joseph and Eveline Nicholas correctly answered that the artsdepot opened in October 2004. Both win Friends' memberships of the North Finchley arts centre.

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