



You never know who's reading THE ARCHER over your shoulder

Diana Cormack had the feeling she was being watched when she stopped off at the statue of the late comedian Eric Morecambe in the seaside town from which he took his name.

Over the fence

An occasional column from county road gardening gurus, Dan de-Lyon and Daisy Cheyne.

Daisy: You don't seem quite your sunny self today, Dan. Everything all right?

Dan: Well, to be honest, I'm feeling pretty poeey.

Daisy: Oh, Dan. Too much port wine and overripe pheasant, is it?

Dan: No, Daisy, not that. It's - how can I put it - excrement.

Daisy: Oh, so was it the prunes then?

Dan: No, it wasn't. It's those birds at Pigeons' Corner. One of these flying rats dropped a big doodah on me.

Daisy: Crikey, I hope you won't be coming down with hydrophobia. At your age it could be serious.

Dan: You see, Daisy, I popped to the High Road in search of an organic avocado and as I passed those feral pigeons having an alfresco picnic dropped by some idiot, they all flew up and lo and behold an incontinent bird christened my newly acquired linen jacket from the Hospice charity shop.

Daisy: And then what happened, Dan?

Dan: I returned home only to find a large freshly produced stool deposited on my front gate step by a local hound with no toilet training.

Daisy: And did you see the culprit, Dan? You know John Betjeman, who lived in Highgate, used to call them 'turd droppers'.

Dan: Yes, Daisy, I did know that. But my story gets worse. Having dealt with the offending whoopsy I retired to my garden arbour where Mrs de-Lyon pampered me with a calming tisane. No sooner had the first sip restored my yin and yang than my eye spotted a mysterious mound in the freshly laid bark garden.

Daisy: Oh, Dan! Surely not in the bark garden?

Dan: Yes, Daisy. It was a local moggie's tell tale visiting card, neatly raked up. On closer inspection, I do believe our feline visitor had had sardines for supper.

Daisy: I can now see why you are in a state, Dan. Oh, my doorbell's rung. That'll be my order for 20 bags of manure all the way from the Hertfordshire farm Mr Cheyne and I visited last week. Good for the roses, you know. Must dash.

Dan: Arghhh. Take me away. I am surrounded by stools and nincompoops. Take me away. I must go to Mandalay...

Restaurant

on film

A new film exploring the criminal underside of London features scenes shot in the sedate surroundings of Muswell Hill. *Jack Said* is a British film noir starring Danny Dyer, David O'Hara and, in a cameo role, snooker player Jimmy White.

Several scenes were shot in the Rendezvous Restaurant in Muswell Hill in May after the assistant producer, who is a local resident, identified it as a suitable place to film.

The movie tells the story of Jack, an undercover police officer who uses his friend to infiltrate a criminal gang, the double life he must lead and the sacrifices he must make. *Jack Said* was in cinemas in October and is out now on DVD and Blu-ray.

Hair salon

growing

After a busy first three months, the Jo Sutherland Hair Studio on East End Road is growing. It has recruited Adeline Leblanc to work with Ms Sutherland as its first permanent junior stylist to meet future demand, in time for Christmas. Ms Leblanc has worked for several up-market salons and also happens to speak excellent French.

The studio has been chosen by Matrix of the US to preview its latest colour product Dream Age, three months ahead of its national launch, and it now also offers clients a new range of planet-friendly, socially responsible products.

More

tiny tales

Some time ago we published a selection of your best tiny tales, told in 50 words or less. Well, the stories are still coming in so here's another collection. Thanks to everyone who has put pen to paper.

Quick fire

By John Boyd

The soldier heard the zip as the first bullet passed close.

He heard the crack as the next passed closer.

As the third entered his skull he was starting the thought: "Should..."

Lowering his weapon his enemy was finishing the thought: "...have moved quicker, mate."

The Last Supper

By Elizabeth Thomas

Sarah and Tom finished eating. "That's the last meal I'll ever cook for us," she announced.

"How come?" he asked. "Because I found out about your affair," snapped Sarah, "So I poisoned yours."

"But mine looked smaller," said Tom, "So when you were in the kitchen, I swapped plates."

Unaccounted

By Robert Winton

"The charity's accounts," said the chairman, "show a £250,000 deficit. Where's the treasurer?"

"I've just had a note from him from Brazil with a photo of the villa he's bought," said the secretary.

"When will he be back?" "All he said was: 'Thanks for everything'."

Snow

By John Alexander

Thirty hectares of virgin mountain snow shone brilliantly in the morning light.

Half a mile below, villagers and tourists gazed on its phenomenal beauty.

Half a mile below, they heard the crack and groan as it began moving.

Beauty became swift advancing menace.

They began to run. It soon arrived.

The Storm

Remembered

By John Boyd

Winter 1940, a violent storm.

Freezing waves crash over the young sailor clinging to the hatch he's struggling desperately to secure. If he fails the vessel sinks, all perish.

Summer 2008, a care home.

The old man ducks, grunts and clings on as yet another freezing wave thunders onto him.

SHORT STORY

Places I'll remember

Forty-five years ago in 1964, The Beatles set a record when they occupied the top five places in the US charts. This short story by Carola Groom recalls the Fab Four in their heyday.

When I see black-and-white footage of teenage girls chasing through the Liverpool streets, screaming, and falling on the Beatles' car just after the Fab Four have leaped inside and locked the doors - It's on every TV nostalgia fest; I get lots of chances - When I see it, I look at the faces. My eyes flick over as many as I can in the time, as if they are mugshots: not her, not her, nor her - oh, too late, oh well. I'm searching for Elaine O'Connor, and I've never found her. If the process were slow enough for words they might be: too fair, too dark, too thin, too fat, too short, too... Too earthbound. Too little glimmering. Too much that is not my Elaine.

There is a kind of collective likeness. You've seen those girls. Amateur versions

of teenagers yet to come; also versions, still, of their mothers. Each time, I notice some fresh detail of innocence. The scrubbed cheeks. The hand-knitted cardies.

Elaine tried to force her frizzy hair into the regulation helmet shape, rows of hairgrips framing her face. Rolled up the carpet, put on a stack of singles and danced. I sat in the corner, looking up.

On her walls, pictures of them torn from magazines. They were our boys, of us. They had made the universe to centre on our own city's streets. Every girl had to select a favourite, and be faithful to him unto death. Ringo was left to me. I was just the neighbour's kid Elaine minded sometimes so had last pick. But I did not understand

Elaine's choice. Why go for the one with the worst skin, the thinnest hair, the harshest voice, the smallest eyes, the cruellest look? (Yes, I knew nothing.)

She said she had run - been near the front, straining till she wept, and had to scream, *had to*, to deflect the piercing noise that was all around... had run and run and...

"I touched their car!"

Elaine's hand, held against the light. The rapture.

One day she slipped through a crack in the pavement, or in the universe. We played a version of hopscotch that depended, naturally, on guessing the titles of Beatles songs from chalked initials. PPM. SLY. LMD. Elaine waved, turned the corner and vanished. That's how I remember it. Her actual departure was a few years later, though still before the time of *Hey, Jude* and *All You Need Is Love*. Her husband (as the police accepted) "pushed against her" and she "tripped" and "banged her head on the grate". But that was all third hand.

I search through the faces in the crowd. She is much younger than my own children, and can't be far. Go on, I think. Go on, John. Open the car door a moment. Pull her in. Rescue her.

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