



Mary Loomes at her 100th birthday party.

Happy 100th, Mary!

Mary Loomes, a regular member of the congregation at East Finchley Baptist Church, was 100 years old on Christmas Day. Friends and family threw a party at the church on the first weekend in January.

Mary was born, and grew up, in Poplar. Her family survived the Zeppelin bombing raids on the East End in the First World War by taking refuge in the Blackwall Tunnel. In the Second World War she remembers hiding under tables because she was fed up with going to the air raid shelter.

Throughout her adult life,

Mary has been a keen worker for London City Mission. In her younger days she had a very melodious voice and was an accomplished piano player.

She married Charles Loomes in 1941 and the couple had moved to East Finchley by the time they celebrated their diamond wedding anniversary in 2001.

New fertility support group

For people who experience difficulties conceiving, peer support is very important which is why a fertility support group is starting in East Finchley.

It is organised by Muriel Bouvier, a cognitive hypnotherapist with a particular interest in fertility, pregnancy and birth.

The group meets every second Tuesday of the month between 7pm and 8.30pm with the aim of offering mutual support to members and a place to exchange ideas and new findings in a non-judgemental way.

Open to men and women, attending the meetings is free

of charge. For more information, contact Muriel through her website www.PregnancyMatters.co.uk or by phone on 020 8374 4468.

A real winter warmer

Here is a recipe idea courtesy of Liz Alcock, president of Finchley WI, to get you through the winter. Loaded with vitamins and minerals, this uses up your leftover veg and also freezes well. Trawl local markets and stalls for knock-down produce and follow this heartening recipe.

Garden

Soup

The ingredients are flexible and you can adjust anything. Just use what is to hand.

Minimum quantities: (all washed and roughly chopped – don't bother to peel)

- 3 carrots
- 2 onions
- 2 sticks celery
- 2 cloves garlic
- Half a butternut squash
- Three potatoes (or a handful of pasta thrown in five mins from the end)
- 1.5 pts chicken / beef stock
- 2 star anise
- Black pepper

Method

Fry the celery and onion and carrots with star anise gently until the onions are soft. Remove star anise. Add remainder of ingredients. Bring to the boil then reduce barely simmering. Cook until all veg are tender. Whizz with a hand blender and serve in warmed bowls or mugs. Want to be fancy? Use scooped out mini-cottage loaves and top with a grating of hard cheese. Happy winter!

RICKY SAVAGE ...

"The voice of social irresponsibility"

Red carpet, raging ego

There's nothing like being lost in a film, that sense of darkness in daylight, daylight at midnight, watching the flickering image on the silver screen. There's nothing else this side of heavy duty narcotics that can transform your world from the humdrum to the Technicolor and it doesn't matter what the film is, they can all do it. It might be a modern classic, a blockbuster, a forgotten masterpiece or just plain trash.

From Bogart to Bond, from Some Like it Hot to Ice Cold in Alex, from Star Trek to Star Wars, or maybe even from King Kong to Paddington Bear, the thrill is still the same. Lights, camera, action, popcorn, welcome to that world of fantasy, the other world, a dream world. And then there's the Oscars.

Yes folks, it's time for the ritual humiliation, red carpet fashion show and tears as the world turns its attention to the self-centred home of the movies and the stars who are, those who will be and those who have no hope.

The whole thing was started back in 1927 by Louis B Meyer as a dinner in a flash hotel. Two years later they came up with the awards. The statuette was designed by Cedric Gibbons. Made of pure gold-plated britannium, it got its nickname in 1936 either because it looked like someone's uncle or the rear of Bette Davis's husband. Either way, it's the time Hollywood honours its own ego.

The winners aren't always the best, they're just the ones the Academy voted for. This year's crop includes two Brit flicks, something about jazz and torture, a glorified home movie, and the inevitable chunk of American patriotism about a sniper. The winner will be the one the Academy members dislike the least. And seeing as they are mostly white men with an average age of 63 it will probably be as predictable as a black tuxedo.

On the red carpet the women will be in borrowed jewellery and high fashion, all glitter, smiles and cleavage. The speeches will be dull as everyone thanks their mom, the director, their makeup artist and everyone who voted for them in that cloyingly humble way that only Hollywood can manage. As Robert Redford said it's 'an awful lot of extravagance for nothing'.

Who sent the first Valentine card?

By Diana Cormack

The first Valentine card is credited to the Duke of Orleans, who was imprisoned in the Tower of London after the battle of Agincourt in 1415.

It was for his wife in France. He must have made it himself, but did he start the tradition of the sender's identity being secret? Who knows, but by Victorian times this tradition was firmly upheld, with home-made cards being delivered secretly, often by hand, postage being so expensive. Huge, elaborate creations replaced the custom of gentlemen buying expensive Valentine's Day presents for ladies. However, instead of sentimental verses, some of these lovely cards hid a

message inside which could be extremely personal, really rude or very cruel. No wonder they were anonymous!

One nineteen year old American was so impressed by an English Valentine card she received from business associates of her father that it led to her becoming "The Mother of the American Valentine". Esther Howland (1828 – 1904) set up her own production line after leaving college. She used friends to make the cards and her brother to sell them when he was out promoting their father's book and stationery business. They were a huge success.

Six hundred years after the first Valentine card, millions are sent all over the world, ranking second only to Christmas cards in their sales.

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