



A friend to *The Archer* who loved to write

Our Archer colleague Neil McNaughton died last month from a brain tumour. We all remember him with huge fondness and can do no better than re-print the moving address that our writer Diana Cormack, a close friend of Neil and his wife Tina, gave at his funeral.

Many of us here today mourning Neil as a friend know that he had something special about him. Sometimes in a friendship there is an extra something which makes it a bit more special. With Neil and me it was *The Archer*.

Although much of their social life and activities centred around East Finchley, Tina and Neil made their lovely home in Friern Barnet. Then, nearly ten years ago,

Neil told me that he would like to contribute to our local paper.

Neil loved to write. However, the first piece he submitted was under the name of Milly McNaughton. Who was she? Milly was their young cocker spaniel and the amusing report was about a dog training course she had been on. She was adorable, but could have entered a competition for the naughtiest dog in the world. Although Tina and Neil were senior teachers capable of quelling a classroom with just one look, Milly could run rings round them and continued to do so for the rest of her life, providing them with much pleasure and fun.

Whatever Neil was asked to write about, he would invariably reply: "I'm on the case" and it wasn't long before he'd submit an excellent article. We were lucky to have him to cover the demise of the Hampstead Garden Suburb Institute and the birth of the Archer Academy, each with its own intricacies. Also, his



Always fun to be with: Neil McNaughton

knowledge of film covered many an occasion at the Phoenix Cinema. In fact it's difficult to think of a subject he didn't know something about.

Who would have thought that Neil was a friend of Leslie Cavendish, hairdresser to The Beatles, who happens to work in East Finchley? I'm sure they had great fun together writing his book *The Cutting Edge*, with Neil resisting many an opportunity to slip in a pun.

All the members of the *Archer* team were very fond of Neil. We are deeply saddened by his death, grateful for the work he put in and feel privileged to have known him.

Tina told me that the first thing she saw when Neil moved into the North London Hospice was the June edition of our paper. Though I've known Neil for over 25 years, I wasn't sure if he could hear or understand me when I last spoke to him there. So I told him who I was and that I was his friend from *The Archer*. He responded with just one word: 'writing'.

What lies beneath

In the dark days of winter, 90 adults and children planted a potato each in black sacks full of compost. In the height of summer they brought their crops to be weighed for the Grow a Potato competition run by Hampstead Garden Suburb Horticultural Society.

Judges used digital scales to find out who had the heaviest overall crop and who had the heaviest single potato during the society's summer show at the Free Church Hall, Northway, NW11.

In the children's competition, Sebastien Eames, aged three, tipped the scales at 933 grams and he also claimed the heaviest potato, weighing 145 grams. Adult first prize went to Anthony Hewstone, with a crop weighing 980 grams, but the heaviest potato prize was won by Jane Herbert, whose single potato weighed in at 102 grams.

Blooms and brass

The society's 286th flower show will take place on Saturday 8 September, when Grimsdyke Brass will be paying a return visit to play live music in the Free Church Hall garden.



Dirty work: Judges get down to the serious task of weighing potatoes.

Need some muscle?

Are you a charitable organisation or community project that needs some help? The runners at Goodgym Barnet are looking for physical tasks they can carry out during one of their weekly evening runs from the centre of East Finchley. Decorating, gardening, moving and shifting... anything will be considered. Phone Goodgym's Paul on 07768 353108 or Damian on 07525 357369.

Allotment open day

Gordon Road Allotments, off Dollis Road, Finchley, N3, will be holding an open day on Bank Holiday Monday 27 August from 1.30pm to 5pm as part of the National Garden Scheme. All money taken will go towards the scheme's charities.

Visitors will be able to explore a mix of traditional plots and raised beds, enjoy a talk on bees, sample homemade teas and buy vegetables, perennial flowers and honey. Entrance is £3.50, and free for children. Enquiries to finchleyhorticulturalsociety@gmail.com.

RICKY SAVAGE ...

"The voice of social irresponsibility"

Master of the barbie

The heatwave this summer has created ideal conditions for one particular species. Households across East Finchley have reported numerous sightings of Homo Stupido disappearing into his bedroom to cast aside his winter cardigan and emerge in his cooking shorts as the Master of the Barbie.

This reverse Superman sees it as his job, a proper man's job, and he relegates the rest of the family to salad duties. Trouble is, a 10-year-old Aussie could light a barbie and produce a range of perfectly cooked food in the time it takes Homo Stupido to read the instructions on a packet of firelighters.

To be fair, he knows what's required and very little can faze him. He lines up enough raw kangaroo, cow, pig and lamb to feed a family of 30. And that's without the chicken wings as appetisers, and the 24 pack of Fosters to wash it all down.

Then comes the grand moment of fire lighting. What a teenage Aussie can do in ten minutes takes nearly an hour. An hour the neighbours spend nervously watching and hoping that there is no repeat of last year's inferno. Not now, not when they've just had the fence repaired and the apple tree is showing signs of recovery.

Three hours later the first bits of dead animal are sizzling away, the salad is wilting in despair and the cat has run off with the wombat burgers. There is enough burnt meat to keep the foxes happy and Homo Stupido is halfway through a nervous breakdown. Only then does salvation arrive as someone pipes up "Why don't we ring for a takeaway?"

As my grandfather used to say: "If God had meant the English to do barbies, he'd never have given us pizza."

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Fr. Marius Mirt is happy to answer any enquiries:

email: marius.mirt@htef.org.uk

tel: 020 3565 4430

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