

THE THUNDERER

A.K.A. THE INMATES' GAZETTE

April 2008

Number 18

St Pancras Almshouses

RECENT NEWS

Wednesday March 26th was a memorable day for the St Pancras Almshouses community.

A large number of Residents, Managers and Trustees answered the call for a massive litter pick-up drive.

We were blessed by fair weather and sunshine and a jolly good time was had by all who participated.

This may be an annual event and will doubtless become a 'long standing tradition' over the course of the next two centuries.

The Grounds got a thorough Spring Cleaning and wonderful feelings of togetherness and pride were generated in the breasts of all participants who are all looking forward to next Spring.

THE NOTICE BOARD

THE LETTERS 'S. T. R.' COULD SAVE A LIFE!

Sometimes symptoms of a stroke are difficult to identify. Unfortunately, the lack of awareness spells disaster. The stroke victim may suffer severe brain damage when people nearby fail to recognize the symptoms of a stroke.

Now doctors say a bystander can recognize a stroke by asking three simple questions:

S* Ask the individual to SMILE

T* Ask the person to TALK and SPEAK A SIMPLE SENTENCE (coherently) (e.g. It is sunny out today)

R* Ask him or her to RAISE BOTH ARMS.

If she or he has trouble with ANY ONE of these tasks, call 999 immediately and describe the symptoms to the dispatcher.

NOTE; Another sign of a stroke is this: Ask the person to 'stick' out his or her tongue. If the tongue is 'crooked', if it goes to one side or the other, that is also an indication of a stroke.

Submitted by Jean Stone, Trustee

The Library has been repaired and redecorated and in future will henceforth be known as **THE LOUNGE AND READING ROOM**.

The Hall has also had some repairs and the works caused plenty of dust, dirt and disruption.

The Residents, especially the Scrabble players on Friday evenings (known in some quarters as The Scrabble Rabble) are truly grateful to Terry (6a) and her granddaughter and Michael 5b who valiantly undertook the task of cleaning up and replacing all the displaced artefacts to their appropriate positions.

LONDIS IS CLOSING

Sadly (for us) Ron and Kim and their children who have served us for the past 27 years are retiring or, perhaps more correctly, are moving on to the next phase of their lives. Their cheery presence will be sorely missed but we wish them God Speed and Happiness in their new life.

THE EDNA BROWN CINEMA CLUB

**Saturday evenings in the Hall at 7pm
(usually finishes by 8.30-8.45pm)**

Trustees and visitors welcome.

➤ **APRIL 5TH: CALENDAR GIRLS**

The true story of the Women's Institute in the village of Rylstone in Yorkshire. The husband of a member had died and the ladies decided to raise money for Leukaemia Research by selling an illustrated calendar instead of making jam and cakes for sale. The project was a runaway success and they have raised £1,300,000 to date and their goal is to reach 2 million pounds. Many of the greatest actresses star in this film including Helen Mirren and Julie Walters.

➤ **APRIL 12TH: THE LONELINESS OF THE LONG DISTANCE RUNNER 1960**

Starring Tom Courtenay and Michael Redgrave

➤ **APRIL 19TH: KES 1969**

The son of a miner sees a bleak future ahead of him. The only option for him is to 'go down the mine'. His life changes when he adopts a Kestrel (a small falcon) and starts to train it after reading books about falconry. Directed by Ken Loach

➤ **APRIL 26TH: CHARIOTS OF FIRE 1981**

True story of young men training for the 1924 Olympics. The title is taken from the hymn 'Jerusalem'. The film stars Sir John Gielgud, Nigel Havers and, strangely, Ruby Wax.

In the Merry Month of May we shall be screening 5 (five) recent BLOCKBUSTERS.

Amazing Grace. Wilberforce and the abolition of slavery.

Hairspray. Musical with John Travolta.

Elizabeth. The Golden Age with Kate Blanchet.

Juno. Best Screen Play at BAFTA and the Academy Awards.

The Great Debaters. Gripping human interest story.

Tibet – I Cry For You by Niema Ash
www.niemaash.com

It was 1986 and I was in China. It hadn't been easy getting into China. A foreigner could only enter China as part of an organized group, supervised by a Chinese guide. But through the traveller's grape vine I discovered I could obtain a student card certifying that "The bearer is a student in Taiwan studying Chinese". Since China considered Taiwan part of China, the card was an entry into China itself. It allowed me to move freely among the Chinese, to travel with them, to find out information not available to tourist groups.

That's how I discovered the doors to Tibet, which had been closed to foreigners for centuries, had suddenly been opened to individual travellers. This was little short of miraculous. Lhasa was known as the "forbidden city", its secrets, its peoples, its way of life, shielded from the world, hidden within the formidable Himalayas. I made an instant decision to go.

I was with two friends, fellow travellers, and we were among the first Westerners allowed into Tibet by the Chinese occupiers, who, in need of foreign currency, experimented with an open door policy. The experiment didn't last long. Soon the doors were closed again and the Chinese adopted the same supervised group policy as in China in an attempt to conceal their treatment of Tibet and its people from the rest of the world. But for those brief months we had unrestricted access and we made the most of it.

When we were there, Lhasa was a Tibetan city. We hardly came into contact with the Chinese. We stayed in a Tibetan guest house, ate with Tibetans, travelled with them, visited their monasteries and their homes. What immediately struck me was how different the Tibetans were from the Chinese. Not only were their features different, their language different, their clothing different, their architecture different, but their sensibilities were different; their aspirations, their values were poles apart.

Whereas in China we had been regarded with suspicion, gawked at from a distance, in Tibet we were greeted with smiles, embraced, welcomed with a good-natured generosity that was fundamental to their existence, to their beliefs. Whereas the Chinese seemed dour, humourless, the Tibetans were always ready to laugh, to celebrate, to

have fun. The disparity in their life styles was evident even in simple comparisons, like their attitude to animals. In China animals were mistreated, abused. The markets were full of terrified animals waiting to be slaughtered. Cats in small cages mewed pathetically, chickens were hung by their legs, still alive. Bears, in bear farms, paced their cages half alive, insane from confinement, their bellies stuck with tubes tapping their organs for ingredients used in Chinese medicines (which could be produced artificially). I hardly saw a dog in China as dogs were eaten. It was a delight to find well cared-for dogs in Tibetan villages, Yaks, obviously looked after, proudly decorated with ribbons. Tibetans treat their animals with kindness and affection. It is part of their belief in compassion for all sentient beings.

The Lhasa I experienced was a city with a strong Tibetan identity. But not long afterwards came the Chinese take over by stealth, insidious, relentless. This time not with guns as in the 1950 Chinese invasion when China occupied Tibet, a historically independent country, but with people. Hundreds of thousands of Chinese were dispatched to Tibet in an attempt to colonize it, to extract its minerals, to denude its forests, to decimate its wildlife, to construct nuclear missile bases, to dump radioactive wastes. They flooded into Lhasa, reducing the Tibetan section of the city to 5%, making Tibetans a minority in their own city. They introduced “modernity”, bars, discos, casinos, prostitution, undermining the Tibetan identity; they ringed Lhasa with gun posts. They built a fun fair at the back of the magnificent Potala Palace, home of successive Dalai Lamas, the sacred centre for all Tibetans; they razed the Tibetan village at its base and replaced it with a Tianamen style concrete square, decorated with military

emblems, glaring lights and surveillance cameras, reducing the very symbol of Tibet to a quaint relic, an entertainment.

And, at present, the Chinese are outraged because the Dalai Lama accused them of cultural genocide. But that’s exactly what it is. They forget that as far back as 1960 the International Commission of Jurists concluded that the Chinese are guilty of genocide in Tibet, and when you kill the people you kill their culture.

In the recent turmoil, when Tibetans are protesting against Chinese occupation, protesting against the destruction of their culture, their way of life, the Chinese refuse to accept responsibility for what they have done in Tibet – they have looted and razed over 6000 monasteries, irreversibly destroyed Tibet’s fragile ecology, imprisoned hundreds of religious and political prisoners who languish in jails and forced labour camps, tortured and oppressed. Instead they blame the Dalai Lama, for the current uprising, for stirring up violence; daring to brand the most peaceful man on earth, the man awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, “A wolf in monk’s robes”, a subversive masterminding criminal plots. When in truth the Dalai Lama is so opposed to violence as to say he will resign as leader of his government in exile if the violence continues. On the other hand, the world is only too aware of China’s terrible human rights record. Only weeks ago, Steven Spielberg, the acclaimed film director, resigned as Olympics artistic advisor because of it

The Chinese attempt to destroy the Tibetan soul by destroying its national identity, its language, religion, culture, customs, its heritage, even its dress, has not succeeded. Their “re-education” policy has failed, their attempts to instil materialism as a paramount value in

Tibetan life, has failed. The Chinese claim that their occupation has benefited Tibetans by improving Tibet's infrastructure, in no way compensates for the cultural genocide it has inflicted. The Chinese fail to understand that materialism is not high on the Tibetan agenda as it is on the Chinese's. Repression only leads to more violence. Dialogue is the only means to understanding, to resolving the present crisis. The Dalai Lama wants dialogue, the Chinese refuse.

The plight of Tibetans has touched the hearts of a great many people. In 1997, the film "Seven Years In Tibet" was released. In 1998 "Kundun", Martin Scorsese's film, focussing on the Dalai Lama, was released despite intense Chinese pressure to block it. We need Tibet. Tibetans are crying out to the world for help. We can't afford to turn our backs on them.

Niema Ash is the author of "Touching Tibet".

GLAD TIDINGS!

The new Spin Dryer is ready and waiting for you in the Laundry Room.

Please use it gently and you will find that your laundry will dry more quickly.

I heard a thousand blended notes,
While in a grove I sate reclined,
In that sweet mood when pleasant thoughts

Bring sad thoughts to the mind.

To her fair works did Nature link
The human soul that through me ran;
And much it grieved my heart to think
What man has made of man.

Through primrose tufts, in that green bower,
The periwinkle trailed its wreaths;
And 'tis my faith that every flower
Enjoys the air it breathes.

The birds around me hopped and played,
Their thoughts I cannot measure:--
But the least motion which they made,
It seemed a thrill of pleasure.

The budding twigs spread out their fan,
To catch the breezy air;
And I must think, do all I can,
That there was a pleasure there.

If this belief from heaven be sent,
If such be Nature's holy plan,
Have I not reason to lament

What man has made of man?

William Wordsworth

(This was one of the readings at Trish Hillis' Funeral)

A SCRABBLE EVENING

The game ended earlier than usual. Dame Fortune had smiled evenly on the players so there was very little difference in the final scores. This left longer time to chat.

First there was conversation about matters in general. Then it developed into a serious discussion of world problems and how to solve them. Voices became animated with increasing emotion, due partly to the "strong drink" which was being passed around (Drury's choicest Tea to be precise)! "Human suffering", "Injustice" and "General Wellbeing of all living creatures": each subject came under scrutiny.

There was a general pause for breath. The silence was broken when a voice piped up with an air of gravity. "Are we sure that a carrot doesn't feel pain when pulled out of

the earth by its roots?" Three pairs of eyes turned to gaze on the speaker in sheer amazement!

Then the tea-maker drew a deep breath, cleared her throat, and recited the following:

Don't be cruel to a vegetable,
Always take its part.
Don't be cruel to a vegetable,
And remember that a cabbage has a heart.

And, if you please, don't split peas,
Though they may be tasty to the tongue.
And when you're eating brussel sprouts
REMEMBER
You're robbing a cabbage of its young.

A murmur of appreciation went around the table. All rose. "Good Nights" were exchanged. All agreed that it was good to disagree.

How could anyone call Scrabble "boring"?

T.Maker

The New Greeter

In the U.S.A. the largest chain of supermarkets is Walmart and it has a policy of having a Greeter at each store to welcome shoppers upon their arrival and there is also a policy of hiring Retired people who, otherwise, would have difficulty in finding work to supplement their pensions.

This is the story of one of them:-

A new retiree Greeter at Walmart just couldn't seem to get to work on time. Every day he was 5, 10, 15 minutes late. But he was a good worker, really sharp, so the boss was in a quandary about how to deal with him

Finally, one day he called him into the office for a talk. "Charley, I have to tell you, I like your work ethic, you do a bang up job, but your being late so often is quite bothersome."

"Yes, I know boss, and I'm working on it."

"Well good, you are a team player. That's what I like to hear. It's odd though, your coming in late. I know you've retired from the Air Force. What did they say if you came in late there ?"

"They said, "Good Morning General."

I FOUND a document among some papers the other day. It was typed on thin copy paper by my late Aunt, Isobel Underwood, and I surmise that she had been asked to write down some of her memories.

Mrs J. R. Underwood. Aged 72

During the attacks by the V-1s and V-2s we were living in West Hampstead, having been bombed out of our home in Upper Norwood at the end of October 1940.

My recollection of the V-1 starts on the first night in June 1944, about a week after the Normandy invasion. We heard an explosion and I said to my husband "Sounds like a bomb but no siren". The Alert came a little later. But no sound of the siren again all night, although I rang the Wardens' post to which we were attached, part time, every now and then, and they had heard nothing and were still playing patience.

It seemed to us, when it was reported in the papers that " a pilotless plane had come down in East London" that the powers that be here had given some very useful

information to the enemy as to the whereabouts of the landing.

A sidelight on bombing during the following Sunday morning: a neighbour in the block of flats where we lived came downstairs on hearing a V-1 and said to me, "You know, I don't like these buzz bombs – I prefer the old fashioned type of bomb."

What a reflection on 20th century so-called civilization.

A few days later my husband had left for the city – we went from West Hampstead to St. Paul's by underground – when I heard a V-1 coming over and went, as instructed into our shelter (a room in our flat with reinforced steel ceiling and walls, and bunk beds) – and as soon as it had gone off looked out and saw the dust rising – it was very near Finchley Road station. I comforted myself with the thought that my husband would be in the train by then, so when I arrived at the office I said "We had a close one this morning." "Yes," he answered, "I know. I was on the platform at Finchley Road as I'd stopped on the way to order the coal. It was really funny to see everyone, myself included, suddenly fall flat on our faces." The train just coming in had to be taken out of service with damaged windows etc.

I spent a lot of time in our Gresham Street office running up and down the stairs; every time the siren on Guildhall

wailed out with its warning and the whistles from the look-outs on Guildhall roof sounded their danger warning, our foreman called to me to come down to the basement. In fact, the sirens sounded from district to district and often the alert and all clear could be heard at the same time, as one area cleared and another came in. Most confusing.

I think the V-1s were much more nerve-wracking than the V-2s – it was like listening to them coming nearer then going away, and then perhaps turning and coming round again and not knowing when and where they would go off, and whether the engine would cut out.

One night on duty between 23.00 and 05.00 hours I counted 33 V-1s and made a tick in the log for each one, and then decided I DIDN'T WANT TO COUNT ANY MORE. But still they came over.

The first V-2s arrived while we were having an early supper before going on C.D. duty and I said, half jokingly, "Perhaps they've started using rockets". Many a true word. One clear, starlit night we were coming home from a tour of duty, about 23.15 when looking up at the lovely sky I said, "Look, there's a shooting star" but as we watched the orange glow grew larger and larger and was coming down. "No," I said, "It must be a rocket" and came the distant flash and we counted until we heard the crash. "That must

be about Chelsea” – but actually it was the other side of the river, at Battersea.

Another morning I was talking on the telephone to a friend in Golders Green when she suddenly said “Did you hear that?” “No” I replied, then after a second or two “Yes” – just how long the sound took to travel the distance between us.

Another morning I was at home having new locks fitted to the front door – we had had a burglary in the middle of the afternoon. The locksmith and I were having a cup of coffee when what sounded like a very distant rocket went off. I said I thought it was probably on South London, which didn’t cheer up the locksmith very much, as he lived in Catford. Actually, when I got to the city, I found that it was the one that landed on Smithfield Market and caused a great many casualties. It had sounded much louder to us than in the city itself.

One afternoon I had just got home and was going into the main entrance to the flat when I felt as if someone had given me a great thump in the middle of my back and again I saw an orange flash – this V2 had come down in Iverson Road in West Hampstead, and although this is a thickly populated road, no-one was seriously hurt.

Another memorable occasion was one Sunday afternoon when we went with some of the family to a concert at the

Coliseum, where Ida Haendl was the soloist in the Tchaikovsky violin concerto. She was in the middle of the cadenza when a rocket went off which seemed to reverberate right round the theatre, but she never missed a single note. The ovation that she received at the end was tremendous, and so very well deserved.

I also remember one night when I said to my husband “Someone we know is in this” and he was a bit skeptical about my ‘intuitions’. But we heard very early next morning that his business partner and his wife were in hospital in Winchmore Hill after a rocket had badly damaged their home. The wife recovered, but her husband, who was over 70, developed pneumonia and died some time later, still in hospital.

Submitted by David 4a

QUIZ

This is a quiz for people who know everything! I found out in a hurry that I didn’t. These are not trick questions. They are straight questions with straight answers.

1. Name the one sport in which neither the spectators nor the participants know the score or the leader until the contest ends.
2. What famous North American landmark is constantly moving backwards?
3. Of all vegetables, only two can live to produce on their own for several growing seasons. All other vegetables must be replanted every year. What are the only two perennial vegetables?
4. What fruit has its seeds on the outside?
5. In many Off Licenses, you can buy Pear Brandy, with a real Pear inside the bottle. The pear is whole and ripe, and the bottle is genuine; it hasn't been cut in any way. How did the pear get inside the bottle?
6. Only three words in standard English begin with the letters "dw" and they are all common words. Name two of them.
7. There are 14 punctuation marks in English grammar. Can you name at least half of them?
8. Name the only vegetable or fruit that is never sold frozen, tinned, processed, cooked, or in any other form except fresh.
9. Name six or more things that you can wear on your feet beginning with the letter "S".

Answers can be found somewhere else in this edition.

DON'T CHEAT!!!! DON'T LOOK NOW!!!

Try to write down the answers to each question.

THE WEATHER FORECAST

It was already late fall and the Indians on a remote reservation in South Dakota asked their Chief if the coming winter was going to be cold or mild.

Since he was a Chief in a modern society he had never been taught the old secrets. When he looked at the sky he couldn't tell what the winter was going to be like.

Nevertheless, to be on the safe side, he told his tribe that the winter was indeed going to be cold and that members of the village should collect firewood to be prepared.

But, being a practical leader, after several days he got an idea. He went to the phone booth, called the National Weather Service and asked, “Is the coming winter going to be cold?”

It looks like this winter is going to be quite cold,” the meteorologist at the Weather Bureau responded.

So the chief went back to his people and told them to collect even more firewood in order to be prepared.

A week later he called the National Weather Service again. “Does it still like it’s going to be a cold winter?”

“Yes,” the man at the National Weather Service again replied, it’s going to be a very cold winter.”

The chief again went back to his people and ordered them to collect every scrap of firewood they could find.

Two weeks later the chief called the National Weather Service again. “Are you absolutely sure that the winter is going to be very cold?”

“Absolutely,” the man replied.

It’s looking more and more like it is going to be one of the coldest winters we’ve ever seen”.

“How can you be so sure?” the chief asked.

The Weatherman replied, “The Indians are collecting firewood like crazy.”

ANSWERS TO QUIZ

1. The one sport in which neither the spectators nor the participants know the score or the leader until the contest ends—**BOXING.**
2. North American landmark constantly moving backward-- **NIAGARA FALLS** (The rim is worn down about two and a half feet each year because of the millions of gallons of water that rush over every minute.
3. Only two vegetables that can live to produce on their own for several growing seasons—**ASPARAGUS AND RHUBARB**
4. The fruit with the seeds outside—**STRAWBERRY.**
5. How did the pear get inside the brandy bottle? It grew inside the bottle—(**THE BOTTLES ARE**

PLACED OVER PEAR BUDS WHEN THEY ARE SMALL AND ARE WIRED IN PLACE ON THE TREE. THE BOTTLE IS LEFT IN PLACE FOR THE ENTIRE GROWING SEASON. When the pears are ripe they are snipped off at the stems.

6. Three words in English starting with dw: **_DWARF, DWELL and DWINDLE.**
7. Fourteen punctuation marks in English grammar—**FULL STOP, COMMA, COLON, SEMICOLON, DASH, HYPHEN, APOSTROPHE, QUESTION MARK, EXCLAMATION MARK, QUOTATION MARKS, BRACKETS, PARENTHESIS, BRACES AND ELLIPSES.**
8. The only vegetable or fruit never sold frozen, tinned, processed, cooked or in any other form but fresh—**LETTUCE.**
9. Six or more things you can wear on your feet beginning with “S”.—**SHOES, SOCKS, SANDALS, SNEAKERS (usa), SLIPPERS, SKIS, SKATES, SNOWSHOES, STOCKINGS, STILTS.**

How many did you get right?