



# Joseph Connolly

A monthly diary of sundry observations, brief encounters and anecdotes, local and less so, foodie and otherwise

## The lady deserves a medal!

Her Majesty the Queen, God bless her...! In less than a week, she becomes this country's longest reigning monarch, which I daresay won't amuse Victoria one little bit. It is impossible for any of us – children and the decrepit alike – to conceive of a time when this still and tremendously reassuring presence did not form an immutable part of our lives and memories.

And she seems an awful lot jollier these days, doesn't she? More shenanigans next year for her 90th birthday – and still every day she continues to attend the most terribly tedious things, always immaculately dressed, and forever smiling. I would say she deserves a medal, but I daresay she's already got one or two of those, knocking about at home.

The Queen has never actually undergone the extraordinary pleasure of meeting me – largely because I'm always far too busy to ever get around to granting her an audience – but I have attended many functions where she has been dutifully present. Literary turn-outs, Windsor polo... but the most memorable must be a Buck House garden party a few summers back.

There I was in full morning dress with black top hat – and we scored a jackpot: not just the Queen but Prince Philip and Prince Charles with Camilla. Who should not, of course, be styled the Duchess of Cornwall, but the Princess of Wales: you marry the Prince of Wales, you become the Princess, end of chat.

And when Charles – for whom I have a great deal of time – eventually accedes to the throne, possibly around the time when he's about to celebrate his 90th birthday, then Camilla must be



■ The Queen and Prince Philip at cross purposes on this occasion

Picture: Press Association

Queen, for precisely the same reason. This is obvious: no debate.

It is strange that the public seems to think that the Blessed Saint Diana owns in perpetuity the title Princess of Wales. Many still adore and beatify her, while others consider her a vain, vacuous, self-serving, manipulative, neurotic, illiterate and egomaniacal harlot who could occasionally verge upon the deranged. I shall not state my personal view.

I have seen so many royals cavorting at some do or other – Prince Edward, who always looks as if he is about to faint. The bossy Princess Royal. Prince Andrew,

the original Mr Angry, always rushing about in a palpable fury, and possessing all the aura of a quantity surveyor much given to snacking. His daughters, the goggle-eyed Hollywood starlets ... and of course dear Fergie, who still I see gaily putting it away in all the best restaurants.

But it is Diana who lingers in the memory. Once, in Dunhill in Jermyn Street, Lord Linley was hosting a reception to launch his stunningly beautiful cigar humidors, each in the form of a stately home.

A shattering explosion of flashbulbs in the street informed

us that Diana had arrived: women, in particular, practically went wild. She shone and sparkled in a hundred grand's worth of clothes and jewellery – no beauty, but when she lowered her eyelids and unleashed the smile, all before her were captivated.

Linley was showing her a humidior, but she had eyes only for a stack of Dunhill cashmere sweaters stacked alongside, which she was stroking sensually. The eyes of PRs were working like windscreen wipers. The following morning, one of each colour was despatched to Kensington Palace, gratis. Just as she knew they



## Joan and Ivy in the top league

I had dinner last week at the newly revamped and rather wonderful Ivy restaurant – with Ken Pyne, the brilliant cartoonist who adorns this paper's letters pages. The reason we could so easily afford to be there is that the Ham&High pays us both quite staggeringly colossal amounts of money – oh my God, if only you knew how much! It makes whatever Amazon is paying Jeremy Clarkson look like mere petty cash. The Ivy is back to its buzzy best: the CEO of Cartier, Richard Eyre, some huge rapper, apparently, dripping in gold... zillionaire Ivan Massow leaving with a doggy bag. The chef Mark Hix at the next table urging me to try the chocolate fondant – one of his own recipes from when he was head chef here, before going on to form his own extremely successful chain. And at the next table, the great Joan Collins, looking spectacular, of course... At a Hatchards authors' party once I complimented her on her dazzling presence, and she whispered "Ah – but you should have seen me three hours ago, darling: that's how long it takes to create Joan Collins". It is a fine creation, and ought to be Grade I listed.

## Who cares about apathy?

Another restaurant I was in lately was in Shoreditch – one of the awful bits of London recently declared cool (by the hipsters) and desirable (by the estate agents). Restaurant was poor – I was reviewing it for Another Newspaper, so for the sake of argument, let us call it the Daily Telegraph.

The area is given to extraordinarily accomplished and colourful graffiti. Or is it graffiti? It's all so very studied and planned. I remember with fondness rather more spontaneous demonstrations, such as the huge white and wonky letters that were plastered across the entire gable end of a house in Notting Hill: 'APATHY IS KILLING THIS COUNTRY!'. Beneath which, someone had added: 'Who cares ...?'

## With a name like Cumberbatch, you're going nowhere young man...

Are you keeping up with all the Benedict Cumberbatch mania?

I know his father Tim quite well – and he recalls, with wide and frightened eyes, the occasion when he was mobbed in New York by the self-styled Cumberbatches when word got out that he was Ben's dad.

Tim – also an actor – further remembers that when he was starting out, his agent had insisted that he change his surname.

"Because Tim," he explained, "in this industry, you ain't going to get nowhere fast with the bloody name Cumberbatch..."



■ Benedict Cumberbatch, a fellow of most excellent fancy, no doubt

Picture: Johan Persson

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