



FEET STREET NEWS

JANUARY 1989



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IMPORTANT

• Whatever standard of runner you are; whatever
• your size, shape or gender, you're welcome at
• Burnham Joggers. The Committee would stress,
• however, that you must register as a member -
• even if you're disinclined to part with any money -
• as this is very important for insurance purposes.

Happy New Running.

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CHAIRMAN'S ADDRESS

So they are back, looking tanned, healthy and, in some cases, a lot taller. It was great to hear that they had missed Burnham Joggers and found it in good nick upon their return.

Looking after someone else's Rolls Royce is a big responsibility. On the one hand, it mustn't get damaged or scratched yet it must be used to keep it in good 'running' order. I can only say that I have driven it carefully and enjoyed lots of help in keeping it clean, polished and ticking over nicely. You might say I was the A.A. badge on the front.

Anne Clarke plays her part in Burnham Joggers. She joined us a few years back after treatment for a brain haemorrhage. We all realise she isn't quite right yet but she tries hard. Anne can be seen marshalling or helping at most of our events. She does a good job when she isn't giggling. Fluorescent green really suits her. At 45 she is already a glamorous Grandmother. Her special friends, like me, affectionately call her Granny Annie, but such a title does not reduce her activities. She enjoys cycling outings and has been seen in the Beeches as late as Midnight, pedalling along, yelling at the top of her voice. Geoffrey gets out of the chair now and again and comes along just to be sure Burnham Joggers are treating her right and of course we are. Stay with us, Anne.

During the last couple of months, Marion and Peter Bunker have both been quite ill. I'm sure readers will join me in wishing Ed & wife a healthier New Year.

Recently we have been in the fortunate position of having plenty of articles for Feet Street News. Please keep them coming, it makes production so much less of a headache. Your views, news, criticisms, poems, recipes and stories are all welcome. Don't forget! If you enter a race, Bill Corbishley wants to know how you did, no matter how far down the order you are. Ring him on Sunday evenings on Burnham 62128.

The strength of Burnham Joggers lies in its club nights. That's when you find out what is going on. You meet new friends and hobnob with old ones. It is also the best way to improve your running and to help others improve theirs. Come along and give a little. You'll get a great deal out of it. Ah yes, you remember it well. Easter will be coming up soon and as usual, help will be needed at the Fun Run and you might start thinking about which relay teams you want to be in. I wonder what chance I have of being in Jane Harrop's team? Can we get a winner for the Tugwood 10K? This will be a great chance to see the junior joggers in action. Will those Frenchies be back? Don't miss it.

Cliveden was put to bed for another year on December 27th. We ended up with a record field and a very successful race. Thank you for all the help. Put to bed? What a laugh. I'm already stuck into work for the 1989 run. Improvements can be made and have to be, if the race is to survive. Better maps, colour coded numbers, better advertising (including the right date) and maybe a change in the course are all being worked upon.

Hugo will be thinking hard now about the half marathon. This really is the big one to organise. Even trying to list all the jobs is a difficult task. Contacting people like the police, St. John's, the Scouts and the Beeches authorities is in hand already but that still leaves a mountain of work.

If you would like to become involved in the frustrations, irritations, enormous satisfaction, ups and downs and jubilation of race organisation, please let me know.

BOB LEWER

CLIVEDEN BOXING DAY BASH

RESULTS

1st	SPENCER LOWE	AGED 10	2m. 17s.
2nd	DAVID SMALL	AGED 8	2m. 19s.
3rd	SCOTT CARSON	AGED 7	2m. 30s.
4th	KATIE LOWE	AGED 8	3m. 02s.
5th	CAMILLA CURTIN	AGED 5	3m. 33s.

The half mile semi cross country course was quite dry this year. The race turned into a sprint and fast times were recorded. Spencer said afterwards that David was no walkover and that he is worried that so many ladies are now entering the race, bringing a threat to the male domination of the event. Or words to that effect.

Camilla Curtin ran well but would not comment on her performance. Was this a P.B.? Had Jane Harrop better up her mileage? Watch this space.

BOB LEWER

BURNHAM JOGGERS

STAGGERED JOG, SUNDAY 8TH JANUARY '89

6 1/2 Miles

Annual comp.	Name	Time	M.P.M.	12 mos. Personal best	Per cent Comparison
30	KEVIN FALLON	36m 09s.*	5.78	5.97	+ 3.18
29	CHRISTINE SYMES	53m. 55s.*	8.63	8.90	+ 3.03
28	MARY WILSON	54m. 57s.	8.79	9.00	+ 2.33
27	ALAN WATSON	50m. 18s.*	8.05	8.23	+ 2.19
26	ROSS MUIR	37m. 56s.*	6.07	6.20	+ 2.10
25	PETER HUMBERSTONE	47m. 31s.	7.60	7.68	+ 1.04
24	CAROLYN SAMPSON	52m. 20s.	8.37	8.38	+ 0.12
23	MIKE MORGAN	43m. 55s.	7.03	7.00	- .43
22	HUGH BERGSTROM	42m. 46s.	6.84	6.81	- .44
21	JOHN DAVIES	39m. 17s.	6.29	6.22	- 1.13
20	PAUL DEAR	42m. 54s.	6.86	6.73	- 1.93
19	PETER RILEY	43m. 11s.	6.91	6.77	- 2.07
18	KEN CLILVERD	40m. 36s.	6.50	6.34	- 2.52
17	ENIO MORASSI	40m. 02s.	6.41	6.25	- 2.56
16	ERIC ABBOTT	49m. 37s.	7.94	7.72	- 2.85
15	TOM RYLANCE	39m. 10s.	6.27	6.06	- 3.47
14	STEVE FLATMAN	38m. 17s.	6.13	5.90	- 3.90
13	ALAN YEADON	39m. 57s.	6.39	6.14	- 4.07
12	BOB HARDMAN	42m. 04s.	6.73	6.42	- 4.83
11	SHEILA LEWER	55m. 16s.	8.84	8.39	- 5.36
10	DAVE HOPKINS	46m. 43s.	7.47	7.06	- 5.81
9	JOHN IRWIN	39m. 29s.	6.32	5.95	- 6.22
8	KEITH SCUDAMORE	36m. 49s.	5.89	5.46	- 7.88
7	BOB LEWER	47m. 02s.	7.53	6.86	- 9.77
6	PAT HATCH	61m. 22s.	9.82	8.45	-16.21
5	JOHN BRYANT	50m. 01s.	8.60	6.82	-17.30
4	BOB GREEN	43m. 36s.	6.98	5.87	-18.91
1	JOHN MONAGHAN	37m. 21s.	5.98	NO 12 MOS. COMPARISON	
1	CHRIS CAMERON	42m. 12s.	6.75	" " "	"
1	NIGEL WILD	47m. 24s.	7.58	" " "	"

1 1/2 Miles

MICHELLE WEBB	11m. 02s.	7.36	7.39	+ .41%
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* All time personal best.

Congratulations to Kevin Fallon for the best personal improvement in the Staggered Jog this month, for which he wins the Madeleine Brown Memorial Trophy. Congratulations also to Christine Symes, Alan Watson and Ross Muir for all-time personal bests.

Welcome to John Monaghan, Chris Cameron & Nigel Wild. Also great to see Bob and Sammy Green back among us after 6 months in New Zealand.

Many thanks to Nicky Lipscombe and Margaret Clilverd for help with timekeeping; also to Eric Abbott and Ralph Hatch for help with time-keeping and results calculation.

Next Staggered Jog Sunday, 29th January at Minniecroft Road Youth Centre. Registration from 10.15 a.m. and before 11.00 a.m. please.

RUSSELL BROWN

RUNNERSCOPE 1989

Aquarius (Jan 20 - Feb 18). Your competitive spirit will come to the fore next year. Injuries must not impede progress. Ignore all pain - run on and on. Set aside vast sums of money for massages, first aid kit, coaching, steroids, entry fees and hospital treatment.

Your Guru: Lyn Daniel. (Nothing wrong with her first aid kit - Ed).

Pisces (Feb 19 - Mar 20). Cross Country is for you in 1989. Pisces people have the hefty thighs, aggression and lack of real running talent associated with the sport. Invest in automatic washing machine, spikes, knuckle dusters and Karate lessons. Your Guru: Linda Toombs. (Nothing wrong with her thighs - Ed).

Aries (Mar 21 - Apr 19). Avoid all dirty people like Pisces. You have natural dignity and elegance and could easily get into ballroom dancing. Your liking for the macho image and clean air tends to attract you to running even though you have no bent. Run slowly, run short, pose and tell lies and you will be loved. Your Guru: Les Farrant. (Nothing wrong with his bent - Ed).

Taurus (Apr 20 - May 20). You are known for your second-hand shoes and a hatred of raffles, entry fees, bottle parties and subscriptions. Next year will be a great one if you concentrate on the social mile and the business meetings. Your Guru: Bob Hardman. (Who? - Ed).

Gemini (May 21 - June 20). Your gentle, submissive, democratic, sensitive, warm and gentle ways are in danger of contamination. Stay away from Bob Lewer, run like a gazelle and write poetry for Feet Street News. Your Guru: Allan Hardy. (Poetry? - Ed).

Cancer (June 21 - Jul 22). 1989 is your year. Grasp it with both hands. You can win the London Marathon if you train hard, stay positive, stop sleeping around and wear the colours. Everyone wants to be like you. Your Guru: Dave Thomas. (Do you want to be like him? - Ed).

Leo (Jul 23 - Aug 22). Stop being petty and give up those filthy Leo habits. Mars, Jupiter and Kit Kat are ascending in June to make the One Mile dash all yours. Your Guru: Jane Harrop. (Nothing wrong with her filthy habits - Ed).

Virgo (Aug 23 - Sept 22). Time now to make up your mind. Either come or go. Stop taking over in other people's homes, get back on the reins. Start reminding everyone just who you are to enhance your self confidence. The race for you is the Bath Half (if you can get in). Your Guru: Bob Green. (Never mind Bath. Brasher says if you aren't back in time, he'll cancel London - Ed).

Libra (Sept 23 - Oct 22). You are the least talented of all runners. The stars indicate that there is no hope for you in 1989. Better to marshall all year than make a running exhibition of yourself. You are the group most prone to injury and you have no sense of humour. You tend to sweat a lot. Your Guru: Tom Ryance. (One man's sweat another man's after shave - Ed).

Sagittarius (Nov 22 - Dec 21). You need to set goals this year. Your inherent character weaknesses are holding you back. A 2 hr 45 marathon is not beyond you. GET ON WITH IT.
Your Guru: Chris Spurr. (Oh yes it is - way beyond me - Ed.
D.O.B. 10.12.46).

Scorpio (Oct 23 - Nov 21). You have a great capacity for considering other people's feelings and then insulting them. You love visiting people, thankfully briefly. Scorpions tend to be very early risers, uncaring of who else they may disturb. You could cream off some prizes if you float more and don't lose your bottle. You might find the winter difficult.
Your Guru: Peter Bunker. (And the summer and the spring and... - Ed).

Capricorn (Dec 22 - Jan 19). You are the fast livers and runners, bursting with enthusiasm and talent. You display great sportsmanship and you are always ready to coach others. Capricorns are all knowing, confident, born leaders. You are super_fit and strong. Nobody likes you.
99.5% of Burnham Joggers are Capricorns. (And this is 99.5% cobblers - Ed).

BOB LEWER

BUCKS CROSS COUNTRY CHAMPIONSHIPS

On Saturday 10th December the men's Championships were held on a fast, grassy and flat course at Aston Clinton.

In the Youths event, after a recent second place in the three counties Championships, Burnham's Ian Harper confirmed his promise by finishing in 1st place.

In the Senior Men's event young Mark Morgan was up with the early leaders but, still recovering from a bout of 'flu, he faded to finish in 21st spot.

Burnham's male veterans are always a force to be reckoned with and took the team prize with Bryan Heywood - 2nd vet in 26th place; Grahame Wheeler 3rd vet in 39th place; Don Nicholson in 76th place.

On Sunday the ladies Championship was held at Milton Keynes and Burnham's Jane Barrop proved unstoppable, finishing first in 22'24.

CHANGING ROOM

"I've found a foolproof way of getting into London".

"Come on, then".

"The sponsors are holding back 250 places for their shareholders. All you need do is invest in 500 shares and Rob's your relative. Good, eh?".

"Brilliant. And how much is this exercise in opportunism gonna set me back?".

"Six hundred and twelve pounds, fifty-five pence".

"Jesus - that's almost twenty-five quid a mile!".

"Look, we're talking foolproof, here. Foolproof is expensive".

"Foolproof, schmoolproof. For that money I could run the Staggered Jog 3,000 times".

"Now you're just being silly".

"Oh, I'm sorry, I didn't realise this was a serious suggestion".

"You couldn't live long enough to run the Staggered Jog 3,000 times.....Anyway, it's 3,062 and three quarters".

"Three-quarters?".

"Yeah, you'd be five pence shy of 3,063. That's assuming there's no price increase for the next two hundred and fifty-five years and four months, of course".

"Of course".

"Which I suppose there must be. After all, it's gone up 100% in ten years".

"So if it continued to double every ten years, how much would the entry fee be in - ".

"By June 2244, the entry fee would be £3,355.433 and twenty pence".

"Bloody hell - how will Russell carry the money round to the Five Bells? People will have to pay by cheque or credit card".

"Yeah, it's a sobering thought that, isn't it? And just consider the Sunday Times. Each team captain will have to collect the best part of fifty million quid. Denise will be living in a vault".

"Well, it'll stop people entering on the day. I mean, nobody will want to walk around Hyde Park with that sort of money in their pockets, will they?".

"No. So how's about it, then?".

"What?".

"The 500 shares. What do you think?".

"What do I think? I think in 255 years' time, Summerleaze will have turned the course into a theme park for day-tripping extra terrestrials and, anyway, we'll all be pushing up the gravel pits. I think you're insane, that's what I think!".

PETER BUNKER

BUGGER ALL HILLS!

Ah runs hills, me!! Where ah comes from we've got LOADS OF HILL, man! But since ah came doon South ah've found that you soft southern buggers avoid 'em! BUGGER ALL HILLS in races doon here! Ah likes the hills cos it gives me a chance to stop at the top an smoke me tabs! So ah joined this Chiltern Cross Country League lot cos some bright bugger said Chilterns was hills - an what happened? The only real hill ah saw was at Wycombe an d'you know what the soft southern buggers did? They walked us all the way up the bloody hill an started the race at the top!! Ah've ran in mud, water, snow, an rain but hills - most of em are flatter than a 3 day old glass of Newcastle Brown! BUGGER ALL HILLS! Ah never got into low cloud once!

Then there's that Cliveden Cross Country. Everybody was talkin about this Yew Tree Hill like it was real tough but when ah'd run up that steep path to the big oose an asked where the hill was them bloody soft southern spectators just fell about laughin! Now ah've just heard that they've taken the hill out of that Hogs Back Pace - what that Doctor Green bloke would call a hillectomy (that surprised you didn't it - jus cos ah comes from God's own country doesn't mean ah aint hedicated)! Well, what's the bloody world comin to?

Next we'll have a bloody EPC Hill mountain! At least ah can understand why Dover doesn't tip ten feet under the waves with all us northerners comin down ere for work. It's our hills up north that help balance the whole bloody country!

BUGGER ALL HILLS!

BUGGER ALL HILLS!

BILL CORBISLEY

(With apologies to Harry Enfield).

NEW YORK NEW YORK

It was 3 o'clock Saturday afternoon when the phone in the office started to ring. I heard my colleague pick up the receiver and shout across "It's for you, John, I think it's your wife".

I had just come on duty and just settled down to what I hoped would be a quiet afternoon. Thoughts raced through my mind, What crisis could have happened at home? - When you're married with four children your wife doesn't have the time to phone you at work to talk about the weather (ask Bob Green) so I guessed this had to be something important! "Yes, what's happened?" I said, meaning "tell me the worst". "You're going to New York for the Marathon" she said. "Do you remember entering a competition at the "Sweat Shop" in Teddington? They just phoned up to say you are the outright winner".

I did vaguely remember entering something in the distant past, but never in my wildest dreams did I think anything would come of it. I was still very sceptical of the whole thing so the following week drove down to the shop to confirm what Linda had said was true. What I had won was in fact 5 nights in New York (4 Star hotel) Pan Am flight out and back with tour of the city thrown in. I also had the option of doing the marathon if I wanted to. I hadn't intended to do another Marathon this year and long gone are the days when I would run Marathons just for the hell of it. Like a lot of runners at Burnham these days the novelty has worn off with me (apart from the London) but this was something special and I was determined to give it my best. It's surprising how quickly the months go by when you're in training for a marathon. November 6th was approaching very quickly - too quickly.

We all met at Heathrow at the Pan Am desk. There were thirty-five of us in the party. You couldn't miss us as most were dressed alike in jogging gear and trainers. By the time we were airborne we were all on first name terms and I could see it was going to be a good trip. Hugh Brasher (son of Chris) was in charge of the tour and he did a fine job catering to all our needs etc. during the tour. We were picked up at New York airport by coach and driven to our Hotel, a skyscraper in the centre of Manhattan. The accommodation was super although I didn't get a lot of sleep with the noise of the traffic all through the night. It's true what they say; New York never sleeps.

On our first day we did a six-hour tour of the city, taking in the official marathon route and stopping off at various places of interest on the way. The sight-seeing continued during our stay, and although very exciting, was extremely tiring and not really the right preparation for the race which was to follow on the Sunday. On top of that each morning we would all meet in the foyer of our Hotel for a jog to Central Park before breakfast. The Saturday before the Marathon we went to the breakfast run outside the United Nations Building. We stood side by side with runners from 186 nationalities beneath our respective flags. It was something I shall always remember. The weather was wet and cool. Could it possibly hold out until tomorrow?

I awoke early Sunday morning to find brilliant sunshine streaming through my 15th floor window Oh NO!!!! the weather had gone

from one extreme to the other, not a cloud in the sky. The race was to start at 1045 but we had to be on the other side of the Verazzano Bridge by 0930 before they closed it to traffic, so it meant an early start. As we lined up at the start, the temperature was approaching 70 degs. Funnily enough the runner next to me thought the conditions were perfect, but he did happen to come from Costa Rica! Approaching 19 miles I was on for a respectable sub 3hr marathon when I realised things were not as they should be. My legs had started to stiffen up and I seemed to be getting uncomfortably hot. At 22 miles I was forced to stop with both my legs locked up with cramp. Eventually I managed to get going but it was a case of survival and I managed to jog and walk to the finishing line. (Almost a PW 3 hr-23 min).

We all crowded into Hugh's bedroom that evening where he had drinks laid on for us and where we could bore each other with our individual dramas, just like I'm doing now to you wake up! Anyway Steve Jones had won for Wales, so there! and that made me feel a little better .. not a lot .. He had prepared properly and had come down from the mountains of Colorado where he had been for his high altitude training. We had done ours the day before, climbing to the top inside the Statue of Liberty. The following day, with a slight hangover, we bought the newspaper giving the results. 24,000 had been crazy enough to start the race and I had come in 3100th with only 800 managing to break the 3 hrs barrier. (I began to feel better).

We flew home that night back to London to go our different ways, exchanged phone numbers and made rash promises to enter various events next year. All in all it was an excellent holiday and I'd go back like a shot next year given the chance. I might even consider paying next time!

JOHN DAVIES

STAGGERED JOG '88 - THE TOP 20

	Best 6 Runs	No. of Runs	Pts Ytd
1. MORASSI Enio	229	8	270
2. HART Heather	209	7	232
3. STEWART Jill	200	8	221
4. BENNETT Colin	199	6	199
5. HATCH Ralph	197	8	228
6. DANIEL Lyn	196	7	197
7. RILEY Chris	185	8	204
8. DAVEY Eddie	178	8	200
9. DUMLEP Henry	177	6	177
10. HATCH Pat	170	6	170
11. MCCORD Kenneth	169	8	200
12. HOUSTON Ivan	157	7	158
13. McQUEEN Phil	156	6	156
14. CURTIN Frances	155	5	155
15. LIPSCOMPE Nick	155	5	155
17. FORD Dave	154	5	154
18. FARET Yvette	152	6	152
19. BERGSTROM Hugh	151	9	198
20. SAMPSON Maurice	150	6	150

He's back then! Once the lardie had landed at Heathrow and customs were convinced the stethoscope wasn't an explosive device, there was no stopping him. Within forty-eight hours he was seen whizzing around the village answering house calls and finding people "Things To Do". Watch out feat-draggers, your time may well be up. In the meantime, anybody interested in buying a police box - v.g.c., low mileage, one previous owner - should call Burnham 2210 and speak with a North Island accent.

As the Chairman has mentioned, I've been ill. Food poisoning or gastric flu or gastro-enter-whateit - It didn't get a definite description. I hardly ate for what seemed like weeks and lost the best part of a stone. The latter was a great cause of consternation to my friends. Not because they were worried by my sunken cheeks and prominent ribs, but because they automatically assumed I just had to be running well as a result of the weight loss. (Runners live in perennial fear that one of their group is about to improve out of sight). Try as I may I couldn't convince them that I felt weak, depleted, that in a month I hadn't managed to run the number of miles I normally manage in a week.

Well, there's no need for them to worry as the weight is creeping back on: with my eating history there was never any question that it would. And running is slow, laborious and not at all enjoyable. At such times I revert to what has worked for me in the past. Whereas some people try to race back to fitness or run three times a week, I plod on slowly and regularly, waiting for the tide to turn. It's a question of discovering what works for oneself. Of course, a time will come when nothing will work, but that's another matter altogether. For the time being I'll concentrate on the weight loss.

I think the problem folk have here is the common one of comparing like with like, or falling to. It seems a reasonable assumption to say we'd all run faster if we weighed less. But losing weight whilst continuing to consume enough fuel to sustain a training regime has to be a lengthy process. If you were to lose say, ten pounds, between the January and November Staggered Jogs whilst continuing to train at the same level as previously my guess is that your performance would be enhanced. (I am talking here of runners of some years' experience not those who have only been running for a short time and whose bodies are still adjusting). If, however, you lose the ten pounds between January and February as a result of illness or some kind of crash diet no such improvement would occur. In other words fitness, however you choose to define it, cannot be acquired or improved overnight. The factors in the fitness equation are various and variable. Weight plays a part, as do sleep, life-style, work, diet, stress, even attitude. But the single most important factor - which cannot be stressed enough - is training. By all means shed a few pounds, pump some iron, recite mantras over breakfast if you want - but don't forget it's the running that counts for most. I think everybody knows this. I think, too, that some are tempted by alternatives because the knowledge sits uneasily. Sorry, where fitness is concerned there are absolutely no short cuts.

Recently, Tom Rylance expressed the opinion that we all spend too much time watching TV. When I told him, "I don't," he seemed impressed. No need. I don't watch it, or watch very little, because, in the main, I'm not interested. The quiz games leave me cold; the art ones make me cringe; I have big problems with the sports presentation and I'll go to my grave not understanding how folk can get through those awful soaps. I can only think it's some kind of addiction. However ...

R 1

I've never been sure what was meant by the Theatre of the Absurd. I've just naturally assumed it was something like my life; forever shot through with contradiction, tinged by absurdity. So me, who dislikes television, who deeply distrusts the messages it sends, who knows it's forever selling something, be it a product or a view or something I can't identify - me, I live in a house where it's impossible to move more than a few yards without falling over a TV set. A house where TV is God, where sets play to themselves in empty rooms, where simultaneously programmes are watched and recorded for future viewing. So, sometimes, I get hijacked. Like at Christmas whilst I was ill. When I spent the time travelling from sitting room to toilet, alternating between the box and the bog. Very apt.

You remember Christmas, it's the time of inertia and indulgence. The time when guests arrive, stuff themselves to bursting point with rich food and drink, collapse in a heap in front of the box and then wake up in time to go home saying, "well, thanks for a lovely time." It's a time when the TV exacts its revenge. It knows my defences are down, that I can't escape, and it's absolutely merciless.

Well, I'll say one thing for it, it never fails to provoke me. I'm sure my responses aren't the desired ones. Is it just me has this problem, doesn't anybody else notice? There were two things got to me this year. Firstly, the conflicting messages over alcohol. On the one hand messages from the Ministry urging people not to drink and drive, on the other, adverts telling viewers they can do absolutely anything if they drink the right lager, including surfing down the Queen's highway and into the saloon bar of the local boozier. No wonder people get screwed up.

Secondly, the celebrity cult. I live in the constant hope that it's peaked and must soon trough! But all the indications are to the contrary. I watched the Dame Edna Show. Familiar format: he/she on stage inviting comments from the audience whom he/she subsequently insulted. The difference being that, on this occasion, the audience was comprised of celebrities who laughed at absolutely everything the Dame said. What are we to make of this? Is Barry Humphries funnier because the audience are household names? Do celebrities laugh better than the rest of us? Is laughter itself more valid or worthwhile because we see long, lingering shots of celebrities indulging in it? I've written to the TV Company and asked for some light to be thrown on this but as yet haven't received a reply. Perhaps, it's a secret.

And then there was Cliff Richard - well, there had to be really - inviting us to join the congregation of some church or other for a Christmas service. Hymns, carols, Christmas songs - you know the kind of thing. So in we go and yes, you've guessed it, the Important Ones have move on from Dame Edna and are now standing in the aisles, songbooks at the ready. Here, there seemed no doubt about the message, not to me anyway. The God Slot is a bore and won't hold the punters' interest for long so we'll zap it up with some faces for them to recognise. If I were a Christian or even a little bit of a believer I think I'd feel highly insulted at this. As it was, where this viewer was concerned, it was a complete failure. No number of showbiz personnel could induce me to sit through a Church service. Worse still, my usual interest in Dame Edna was deflected and ultimately defeated by close-ups of Bob Hoskins playing with his beard and Esther Rantzen playing to the camera.

Time to dismount from hobby horse. Before I go, though, a warning. It can always get worse. If you don't believe me go and invest in a satellite dish and expose yourself to the Emperor of Low Taste's very own channel. Not satisfied with having declaimed standards in the newspaper industry he's now seeking pastures new. It's enough to convert you to Cliff Richard.

Peter Bunker