



The Roaming Pen... Hungry in Kemptown?

So what is happening in Kemp Town now that spring has sprung and everyone is smiling again in the endless sunshine, yes I know it will probably be raining by the time that you read this but right now everything in the garden looks rosy!

In the back end of 2009 we, very quietly, welcomed the arrival of The Swan, a new bar/bistro in the building formerly occupied by the hideous "I Go Inn". Just over twelve months later we, just as quietly, said farewell to this aspiring dining venue in darkest Rock Street. Well what a difference a few weeks can make as we understand that this fine venue has been revamped, rethought, repainted and, hopefully, reopened in early April. Once again, very quietly as they don't want any publicity, we wish them well. The boys who took over the ailing Rock Inn just opposite The Swan seem to be going from strength to strength; they are now offering an excellent choice of decent pub grub, pies and real ale, just what the area needed.

There are many decent places to eat in this neck of the woods. At a very rough count there are no less than twelve restaurants between the top of Rock Street and the top of St James Street and in St James Street itself I stopped counting at twenty.

I do wonder, however, if there is enough custom to support them all. Opening a new venue is a very brave gamble indeed. Let's hope they avoid the 'fine dining' trap, my heart sinks when I hear that phrase, all it usually means is pointless 'refinement', snooty staff and an atmosphere designed to intimidate the customer. Kemp Town is famous for its individual and independent shops, long may they prosper, they need our support.

To greener matters, just a year ago I started to bore everyone with my tales of our allotment up on Whitehawk Hill, if we've learnt anything it's that digging the soil is very hard work, very hard work indeed – I was tempted to use stronger language. But a year later we can look with a degree of satisfaction of a well tilled and productive plot, but of course nature never stands still and so here we go again planting, weeding and even watering. It would, undoubtedly be easier and cheaper to buy our vegetables in the supermarket but we would lose the opportunity to look smugly at our friends saying "Oh of course we grow our

own, so much nicer don't you know" Well actually it is very satisfying to eat the stuff you have actually planted, nurtured, cherished and eventually harvested. Waging a losing war against the slugs and myriad other pests that are determined to get there first is a bit dispiriting but we will not be beaten.



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And so we plunge headlong once again into the Brighton Festival. I picked up the programme with my usual sense of dread and foreboding, what has happened to what was once a true eagerly awaited celebration of music, theatre and dance that everyone could enjoy. This year we have disappeared to Burma, I wonder why?

The free Burma campaign is a very deserving cause and there is no doubt that Aung San Suu Kyi is a remarkable and brave woman. She encourages us to celebrate great art and experience the inner peace that it brings, fine words indeed, but what is her connection with Brighton? There is none. I suspect and her involvement is simply a way of getting publicity for the festival. I looked in vain for something to grab my attention, as well as my wallet, and found almost nothing. Where is the Brighton connection with any of it, this year is the centenary of one of our leading playwrights, Terrence Rattigan who lived in the town, not mentioned anywhere.

The free exhibition of Mesopotamian Dramatugies, I'm sure will be very uplifting if I had any idea what it was and then we have the Evolution of Fearlessness, where we are invited to transcend our everyday lives and to connect with universal themes. Help, what does that mean? There are just a couple of major orchestras, nothing much of the way of theatre either, apart from Dominic West in Butley at the Royal, thankfully the children's parade has survived. The organisers will say that this is the most exciting and innovative festival ever, the PR team has gone into overdrive. Festivals have their own audiences and this year's is selling extremely well, so maybe I am missing something. There are several intriguing events but it is all very worthy but I am sorry to say that, in my humble opinion, the Brighton Festival is no longer for the ordinary folk of Brighton. But was it ever?

By the way - ad you noticed, those of you lucky enough to have a concessionary bus pass, that the time you can start using it is now 9.30, in line with the rest of the country, rather than 9.00. Just half an hour less, we will survive.

Have a very happy Easter, take it easy and eat all the chocolate you like.

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The stars are out - April 2011

★ ARIES: The Ram (21 Mar - 20 April)

Unusually for you Aries you have been at a bit of a low ebb lately, both financially and emotionally. It wouldn't hurt for you to let others take up the slack while you recharge your batteries and bank balance. Suitably refreshed, you will be able to take on the challenges the spring brings!

★ TAURUS: The Bull (21 April - 21 May)

Your reputation for loyalty and fairness will reap rewards at work this month as others show their appreciation. Expect some good news financially, especially around the weekends when things will all seem to come together at once. The letter S will have significance romantically.

★ GEMINI: The Twins (22 May - 21 June)

Don't jump to conclusions during this confusing time; be sure you REALLY know what people are trying to say. Mid-week is the best time for any important decisions as the weekends are going to be filled with opportunities for activity and you will want to go with your emotions then.

★ CANCER: The Crab (22 June - 22 July)

The full moon on the 18th will see you at your best or worst this month, it really is up to you to decide which. Make the right choice and this will be a fantastic period for you. Someone with the letter J in their name will be of considerable influence in your love-life, enjoy!

★ LEO: The Lion (23 July - 23 Aug)

Travel is well-starred this month Leo, as are relationships and your warm-hearted nature will see you making the most of both. An invitation this Easter could be the start of a whole new and rewarding relationship so, like the daffodil, turn your face to the sun and bask in the warmth!

★ VIRGO: The Virgin (24 Aug - 23 Sept)

Communications may be frustrated by events outside your control and this will leave you a bit frazzled. Take a breath, count to ten and try to be patient. Things will come together as they should, especially mid-week. This is a time of invitation and opportunity, make the most of it!

★ LIBRA: The Scales (24 Sept - 23 Oct)

So many great ideas flying around at this time, you will be in your element and feeling more positive than usual. This will be the moment to begin that brand new venture. With so much on your side, how can you fail? Celebrations are well-starred and Friday brings an unexpected invitation.

★ SCORPIO: The Scorpion (24 Oct - 23 Nov)

You are at your most seductive this month Scorpio but beware of sending out the wrong message. If you are not free then make that clear – or you will find yourself having to deal with the green-eyed monster! News arrives on a Tuesday that will change your plans for the better.

★ SAGITTARIUS: The Archer (24 Nov - 21 Dec)

You have a tendency to 'just roll the dice' and hope everything works out. Well not this month Sagittarian! Your gambles also affect others and they may not be so keen to risk everything just so you can avoid being realistic. Just for once let your head rule your...well, other parts! Someone with the initials S & L will cause you pause.

★ CAPRICORN: The Goat (22 Dec - 20 Jan)

This should be a fairly quiet period for Capricorn which will be a good thing as a number of opportunities may present themselves this month and you will be mentally read to take advantage of them. I don't need to tell you not to rush into decisions but a few right choices now will set you up for quite a time to come!

★ AQUARIUS: The Water-Bearer (21 Jan - 19 Feb)

Spring has sprung Aquarius and the old Easter bunny is surely hopping around you! You will feel at your best and most seductive and that fact will not be missed by those around you! Get out and smell the blossoms! A meeting mid-month will bring some new choices. Lucky day is Saturday

★ PISCES: The Fish (20 Feb - 20 Mar)

Your birthday last month probably wasn't as memorable as you would have liked Pisces but as one with an eye always on the future you will already be looking towards new horizons and opportunities. This is a good time for buying and selling, whether at a car boot sale or the Stock Market, you will be on top form. Make the most of it.

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