

Londoner's Diary

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Should one bend one's knees?

NO DOUBT the Duchess of Cornwall is more at home on the back of a horse rather than flapping her hands in the air, but Camilla Parker Bowles gamely joined in a class of Tai Chi during a visit to Chinatown to meet members of the British-Chinese community this morning. Camilla is not known for indulging in healthy pursuits but she did once reportedly turn to yoga to help her back pain and give up smoking. Later, Prince Charles attended The Pearl Awards, which celebrate Chinese achievements in the UK.

■ **LAST** week I noted that a new cul de sac in Brixton was named Major Close after the former PM, although Sir John Major seemed unaware of this. When I asked Lambeth council why it didn't call it John Major Close, a spokesman explained it has to follow guidelines from the London Fire Brigade. "The guidelines cover things such as street names not being too difficult to pronounce or not duplicating any similar names in the borough or in neighbouring boroughs," he said. "The guidelines call on us to preclude the use of two words in street names except in special cases." Now a Lambeth resident points out there are numerous special cases in the borough, such as Marcus Garvey Way, Bob Marley Way and Max Roach Park. But Lambeth is sticking to its guns. "We can't go around changing names," says the spokesman. "It's not like a blue plaque scheme. And we did tell John Major's office. They said he was 'most touched'."

■ **FORMER** chief of the intelligence services Sir Richard Dearlove was heckled by students when he lectured on "Intelligence and the Media — can we trust journalists with public security?" at the LSE last night. "I came here to talk about the subject of my talk. I'm not going to cover questions outside the ring of secrecy," he said. When a heckler cited the "Downing Street Memo" thought to have been written by Dearlove before the Iraqi invasion, a visibly bothered Dearlove replied: "I came here on my terms, not yours. If you want me to walk off the stage I will. Or we can press on."

■ **SPOTTED** at Sloane Square Tube station with a film crew was the unmistakable figure of historian Dan Snow, son of journalist Peter Snow. "I'm filming a show for the BBC on London's secret rivers," he explained. "We are standing below what used to be the Westbourne river which was once an important tributary of the Thames but as you can see is now merely reduced to a pipe." And with that the 28-year-old disappeared to catch a train. What a glamorous life.

■ **FRENCH** Ambassador Gerard Errera joked last night there are so many French people in London — 300,000 at the last count — they are taking over. "The Brits think they have bought the Dordogne," he said at the Francais of the Year Awards at Club Gaston, Smithfield. "Well, we have bought London." Club Gaston's chef Pascal Aussignac said he felt greater pride when winning an award for the best French fries in London than he did winning his Michelin star. Author Marc Levy won best artist and France's rugby captain Raphael Ibanez, a London Wasps player still licking his World Cup wounds, was best sportsman. "At least I've won something," quipped Ibanez.

The silent treatment...

OH DEAR. Have impending budget cuts at the BBC already begun to take their toll? Listeners to Radio 4 this morning were left frantically twiddling their knobs when transmission came to an abrupt end this morning — just before 11am, when Jenni Murray signed off *Woman's Hour* from Manchester. There followed a long deafening silence — around three minutes worth, a lifetime in radio — before normal service spluttered back into life with Kate Adie introducing *From Our Own Correspondent*. The 11 o'clock news bulletin was lost in the confusion, but the BBC offered no explanation or apology to those loyal listeners who had not



All quiet on the BBC front: Radio 4 presenters Jenni Murray and Kate Adie

switched to another station. "We're looking into the reason why it went wrong," a flustered BBC spokesman tells me.

■ **SHADOW** schools secretary Michael Gove on Gordon Brown's leadership: "The principle that Cabinet Government should mean that able representatives of different traditions and philosophies within a party are all represented at the top table — the principle that Attlee, Wilson and Callaghan all understood, the principle that even Margaret Thatcher stuck to, with Hurds and Patters as prominent at the end of her premiership as Pym and Gilmours were at the beginning — has been abandoned under Brown." Perhaps Brown has adopted Margaret Thatcher's catchphrase: "Is he one of us?" — and implemented it more rigorously.

Can we come and tell you about Demelza?

Ted Gladdish
Chief Executive

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