



# ATH NEWS

Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> November



## Christmas Pantomime Cancelled

In a surprise announcement, the ATH entertainment team has cancelled its Christmas pantomime "Athexit." They cited allegations of bias amid the election climate as the reason why. "I honestly can't see what all the ding-dong is about," complained director Jo Bercoz. "This was all just a bit of fun, relating the story of Theresa, who is whisked away by a whirlwind to a fantasy world along with her entire House. She is joined on her epic journey to the Émeraude city by Boris the brainless Scarecrow, Jeremy the cowardly Lion and Jacob the heartless Tin Man. Some claim the designation of Nicola as the good witch of the North and Arlene as the wicked witch of the West indicates a political agenda, but we are constrained by geographical realities and the original story. Someone had to be the dog, and we are sorry that the character "Toto Farago" gave offence to a certain individual and his solicitors. We apologise for any unintended slight."

The team is desperately seeking alternative holiday entertainment, but time is passing and this could well prove a forlorn hunt despite one's best efforts.

## Chess Champ Floored by Czech Mate

Celebrations at the ATH chess club got slightly out of hand last week, resulting in hospitalisation of their top player, Ivan Knight. Czech-born Ivan, who was awarded a grandmaster title in 1997, admitted to our reporter "It's all a bit of a blur. I'd had one or two drinks and was playing a friendly game against my homely wife Domova. I was white and as a joke I had advanced my king to e5 on the 5<sup>th</sup> move when things started going wrong. She replied Qa5 mate and I was so surprised I fell over and fractured two ribs. I still can't work out how it happened."

## Reading on the Increase

Despite concerns over a decline in national literacy, a recent survey has indicated an upturn in the number of books being read each year. The greater availability of films may have contributed to this. For example, the sale of Jane Austen novels surged when "Pride and Prejudice" was released on the screen, although reports of a similar boom in textbooks on linear algebra following "The Matrix" are apocryphal, while baptisms may actually have

decreased as a result of "The Godfather". The numbers peak just before Xmas, with a similar peak in the New Year. It seems that dedicated outdoor types, such as the new Postmaster General, preface their travels by perusing a wide variety of novels.

## Subverting Swiss Security

Troubled by a string of thefts from numbered Swiss bank accounts, the gnomes of Zurich (no umlauts) have increased the size of their account numbers to lie between 40 and 80 digits to combat the thief. "This is mad," complained account holder, Baroness Bindie Diebin. "It will actually weaken security, as everyone will forget their number and will have to write it down. But I can reproduce mine whenever I need it. If you multiply mine by nine you get the same result as taking its last digit and moving it to the front. This isn't too bad, but I dare say one day they'll switch to letters and I'll have to remember XEIPRHDZLRJGUSHLUOQGTPNIZTILAMVCVHIUUTGLBOC."

## Tragic Death of Tennis Chairman

The West Hills tennis club was shocked when its chairman suffered a heart attack while delivering an after-dinner speech. His widow told our reporter who attended the event: "Sir Charles was going to talk about his personal code of which he was proud. He was always afraid of boring his audience, and I think he would have been delighted to think that this was one speech no one will ever forget. He will I'm sure be long remembered for his bridge skills."

## Goalkeeper to be Honoured

From the many to have passed away during the past year, the Armchair Sports Club has selected England goalkeeper Gordon Banks for its annual "Muddy Boots" award. Those of us old enough to recall the 1966 World Cup and the 1970 save of Rod Sill's header are delighted by this choice. A formal announcement may be expected on his birthday.

## Holiday Weather Forecast

The outlook for Xmas and the New Year is moderate but mildly muddy. Woodland walks will work well, though unusually heavy footwear may prove useful.