

Yesterday's Man

I first became aware of this phenomenon a few years ago. I was, at the time, serving on a committee at one of the Cambridge Colleges and thus a regular visitor at high table, where the fare was always fine and the wine was always finer.

Our responsibility as a committee was to re-house the remarkable, and priceless, college library. To enable us to raise the adequate funds to achieve this laudable ambition, we set forth upon a route of publicity that would assemble worthy opinion and weighty contributions.

To launch this great journey we held a drinks party for the great and the good at the National gallery in Trafalgar Square in London; this was to be followed by a presentation and then a dinner in Berkeley Square.

I arrived, very nearly on time, and was asked by a colleague if I would mind being the walker for a lady whose husband could not be there that evening. I gladly agreed and moments later my lady arrived, and with her at my side, we entered the fray.

The lady was Fionne Hague, the wife of William, the then leader of the Conservative party; a very attractive and intelligent woman and clearly a companion to allow me to impress one and all.

I glanced around the crowded room looking for a suitable target for my elevated status and the first person I saw was my daughter, a member of the world of PR and invited in her own right.

She turned and saw me, and my charming and famous companion, "Daddy" she said, I glowed. "Fionne" she said, "it's been ages, how are you?"

I realised that I no longer cut the same swathe as I used to; it was a salutary moment.

As the years have passed I have learned to live with the reality of being surpassed by today's people, especially one's own children.

So it was little surprise that I got a call to come to dinner and drinks on one of those huge gin palaces that inhabit the harbour of St Tropez at this time of year. The invitation came from a great friend of my daughter's, who now lives in New York.

I arrived at the appointed hour and swayed gently up the gangplank to be greeted by one familiar face and many others.

"Hi" said my gorgeous hostess, and turning to the assembled group she said, "This is Siobhan's dad"

I immediately knew where I stood, I was not really a person any more, or at least I was no longer me; I was my daughter's father.

I should not complain too much for it seemed to work wonders, instantly I had a glass of Krug pressed into my hands and found myself deep in conversation with an extremely pretty girl whom I could not take my eyes off.

She turned out to be one of the new young Hollywood stars called Anne Hathaway, (I made no comment upon her name) "your daughter is wonderful," she said. I nodded agreement.

I was asked if I would stay to dinner but I politely, and as it turned out, shrewdly declined.



Trencherman, surrounded as ever by his adoring dinner companions

The chef on board was new to the boat, and some would say, new to cooking; his first course, which I glimpsed with horror, was a sort of seafood stew with salami sliced thickly over the top. He was fired the same evening just before the cheese.

You may laugh, I must admit to a certain chuckle as I slid back down to the dock, however the snake returned to bite me in the fundament as I had to find places for these ten, rising to sixteen, people to eat in St Tropez on the busiest weekend in August.

One place I did not send them is 66.

There are very few occasions when I feel that what I want to eat is a hamburger and fries smothered with ketchup and washed down with an ice cold beer, but on that rare, perhaps once a year, occasion I go immediately to 66 on the new port in St Tropez and their home made hamburgers (200 gms or 300 gms) and well-fried fries, really hit the spot.

Eating well at a reasonable price in St Tropez can be a problem, but it is a problem to which I have an excellent solution.

Earlier this year, to a fanfare of trumpets, the Place des Lices became the site of a new restaurant, the chic and sexy Brasserie des Arts, from the people that brought us the Café de Paris on the Port.

The interior is très moderne and the menu is semi moderne and the prices are old fashioned expensive. The food is good but at that price one expects it.

Now! How about this? They are doing a set lunch for 14 €. Yes, 14 € for Entrée/Plat ou Plat/Dessert. Naturally, with my readers in mind, I rushed along and tried it out. The day I went I had excellent raviolis to start with and pan-fried Daurade as a main course. Politely served and delicious; unfortunately the wine list is not cheap although there is a reasonable cote de Provence at 26 €. Definitely worth a try, on market days it might be wise to book; 04 94 40 27 37.

I had to take a chum out to lunch a week ago so I asked my wife to book a table at a restaurant we visit quite often, the kind of place where everybody knows your name; she did so and I arrived with my chum and was shown to our table upon which sat a reserved sign with our surname on it; attached to it was a small yellow post-it note upon which was written 'mari de Evelyne'.

Tant pis.

Pip, pip,

Trencherman