

# Suburb News *in conversation with...*

*... Jack Berkovi*

## Professor Margaret Harris talks to the founding chairman of HGS U3A

If you are one of the 500 or so local residents who are members of Hampstead Garden Suburb University of the Third Age (HGS U3A), the name 'Berkovi' will be familiar. You will know Daphne Berkovi as the friendly and efficient organiser of events. And you will know Jack Berkovi, Daphne's husband, as the quietly spoken Chairman of HGS U3A, fronting members' meetings and ensuring that business is conducted smoothly. But few people in the Suburb will be aware of how much more there is to Jack than his public persona at the helm of U3A.

Jack and Daphne moved to their Suburb cottage from their family home in Watford in 1999. They were both still working but wanted to reduce on commuting time and be closer to opportunities in London. They had no prior knowledge of the Suburb but they were drawn to its peacefulness and country-like features. Jack recognised from his professional experience of design, that the built environment here is quite exceptional.

Jack explained that his formative years were spent in South London. "After graduating in Mechanical Engineering, I joined the management team at Procter & Gamble. After that I worked for American multinationals, gaining business and problem-solving expertise. Jack explained that this led to senior project management and marketing positions, heading up multi-disciplinary teams. "I moved with the family for

several years to Luxembourg working for an American global corporation serving the construction sector – a world-wide role enabling me to work with people from a range of national backgrounds and to manage international businesses. On my return to the UK I worked in Marketing Consultancy and completed a Masters in European Marketing Management." Jack explained that he finished his career

working as Head of Brand & Client Care with accountants Grant Thornton UK. He augmented his wide experience in the business world by researching and publishing a book entitled "Effective Client Management in Professional Services" (Gower, 2014).

I asked Jack about life outside of work, and found that he is not a man whose life has been focused only on his career. He is an accomplished modern

jazz pianist who has twice taken the stage as a guest at Ronnie Scott's. He is a keen chess player who was Rotarian London Chess Champion for two years running; and he has created and marketed two games – one an educational maths game 'Nubble!' and the other 'City of London, the Board Game' which was sold to raise funds for the Lord Mayor's Charities. Jack also revealed that in his loft at home he has

designed and built a computer-controlled OO-gauge model railway, which his grandchildren enjoy when visiting.

Jack's numerous and varied skills and interests and his many professional and leisure-time achievements mean that it comes as a real surprise when he mentions quietly, and in passing, that he is coping with two chronic illnesses, and has been doing so for many years. In fact, much of the

groundwork for the launch of the HGS U3A was actually done by Jack on his mobile phone during his thrice-weekly dialysis sessions. Yet, he looks well and he feels well. Finally he added "I am delighting in the new relationships, opportunities and challenges which have opened up for me through my privileged Chairmanship of HGS U3A and look forward to its continual development on the Suburb." **S**



## Have you ever thought of taking on an allotment?

The Trust owns and maintains ten allotment sites around the Suburb, with each site kindly administered by an enthusiastic volunteer site secretary. Many of our sites are tucked away down hedge-lined twittens, surrounded by mature trees, or behind houses.

Plots are available from the Trust for a reasonable annual rent, and many allotmenters maintain close links with the Suburb Horticultural Society. The RA's Allotment Committee meets with the Trust a few times a year to ensure that the sites are being managed properly, and to help organise social

events and share the responsibilities that come with running successful allotment sites. There is a wealth of shared knowledge on hand amongst this community, and keeping an allotment can be a very rewarding pastime.

If you have ever considered taking on an allotment, why not contact the Trust to find out about availability? Vacant plots become available from time to time, and applications for plots are always welcome. So if you'd like to know more, please contact the Trust office by ringing 8455 1066 or email us at [mail@hgstrust.org](mailto:mail@hgstrust.org).



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