



Bilingualism – a good thing?

Bilingualism means knowing and being able to use two languages. It has been estimated that more than half the world's population is bilingual. In the Suburb, while the majority of people speak English, 43% of school children in the Garden Suburb primary schools do not have English as their first language. Hebrew, Persian-Farsi and Polish are the most common languages spoken by Garden Suburb pupils (barnet.gov.uk).

There is a perception among some parents and teachers that growing up bilingual is not only fraught with challenges but could even be a risk to educational development. This perception needs to change as research conducted both in the UK (Cambridge) and in Canada (Toronto) indicated that the reverse holds true.

The research showed that bilingual children 'notice' better how language works and, as a result, outperform monolingual children in tasks linked to language awareness. For example, they can distinguish whether a sentence is grammatically correct from whether it is truthful. In one experiment, children were asked if the illogical sentence "Apples grow on noses" was grammatically correct. The monolingual children couldn't answer. They'd say: "That's silly", but the bilingual children would say, in their own words, "It's silly, but it's grammatically correct."

Bilingual children manifested a cognitive system, which allowed them to attend to important information and ignore the less important. The benefits go even further, as Dr Alexopoulou of Cambridge University department of Theoretical and Applied Linguistics explained: "Studies show that a bilingual child is better able to cope with tasks that involve attention, memory

and concentration. The mental gymnastics needed to constantly manage two or more linguistic systems increases cognitive flexibility and makes learning that much easier."

There is also some fear that children who are raised bilingual will mix their languages. In reality, they adapt to the situations they are in. If, for example, they are talking to a grandparent who does not speak the other language, they will always respond in the language the grandparent understands.

Parents who speak different languages should therefore encourage their children to speak both. They can do this by providing systematic exposure to both languages and by so doing they should be safe in the knowledge that knowing the language of one's parents is an important and essential component of children's cultural identity and sense of belonging.

There is one more reason to encourage bilingualism. A recent article in the journal of Neurology reported that bilingual patients with Alzheimer's had been diagnosed 4.3 years later and had reported the onset of symptoms 5.1 years later than the monolingual patients.

All of the above should indicate that there are two major reasons for people to pass their heritage language to their children. Firstly it connects children to their ancestors and secondly bilingualism is good for you. It makes brains stronger. Remember it is never too late to learn another language, only think of the advantages it would give you. The Holy Roman Emperor Charles V (1500-1558) famously said, "I speak in Latin to God, Italian to Women, French to Men, and German to my Horse."

MARIE-CHRISTINE O'CALLAGHAN

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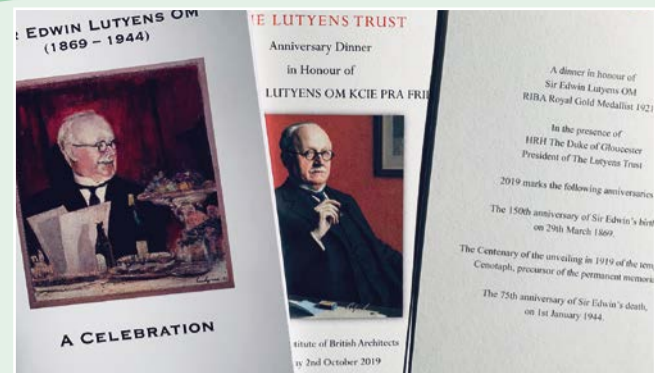
SUBURB ARCHIVES FROM THE ARCHIVES

Lutyens' anniversaries

Three anniversaries of Suburb architect Sir Edwin Lutyens were marked with a dinner at the Royal Institute of British Architects on October 2. Organised by The Lutyens Trust, the event marked the 150th anniversary of Sir Edwin's birth on 29 March 1869, the 75th anniversary of his death on 1 January 1944, and the centenary of the unveiling in 1919 of the temporary Cenotaph, precursor of the permanent memorial in Whitehall.

It took place in the presence of HRH The Duke of Gloucester who has recently become the President of the Trust. Guests were welcomed by great-nephew Martin Lutyens and addressed by author, broadcaster and cultural campaigner Loyd Grossman before a backdrop of slides showing examples of the architect's work including several from the Suburb. The Suburb was represented by HGS Trust's Life President, Dr Mervyn Miller, author of *Hampstead Garden Suburb: Arts & Crafts Utopia* (1992/2006), the Reverend Alan Walker, Vicar of St Jude's and HGS Archives Trustee, and Mrs Lucrezia Walker.

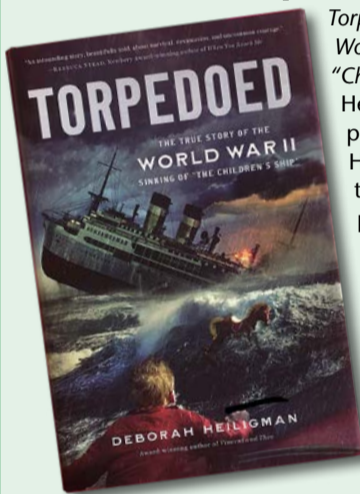
Edwin Lutyens was appointed Consulting Architect to Hampstead Garden Suburb in May 1908. He was commissioned with the task of designing the centrepiece: the churches and Institute on Central Square and the private houses around it. Because of his departure for New Delhi in 1912 many of the houses were completed by others to plans based on his original designs. St Jude's and the Free Church are two of only five churches designed by Lutyens and the only Grade 1 Listed buildings in the London Borough of Barnet.



Guests at the anniversary dinner were given a Celebration booklet which included an article (from *Country Life* 1942) by the architect's son Robert Lutyens which explained the origins of the Cenotaph. Lutyens had designed a garden seat – "a massive affair consisting of an immense balk of timber supported on masonry" – for the Surrey garden of his collaborator Gertrude Jekyll. A friend remarked that it looked like a 'cenotaph', a (then) obscure term unknown to Lutyens which meant "a monument erected to a deceased person whose body is buried elsewhere." When, in 1919, Lloyd George asked him to design a catafalque for the anniversary of the Armistice, Lutyens immediately remembered the garden cenotaph and evolved a design, not as a catafalque, but as the empty tomb – the 'monument of millions buried elsewhere'. Interestingly, a wooden model (perhaps an original design) of the Cenotaph stood in the Free Church as part of a war memorial scheme until the 1930s.

The Archives Trust (suburbarchives.org) possesses several plans of actual and proposed schemes by Lutyens.

Torpedoed



Torpedoed: The True Story of the World War II Sinking of the "Children's Ship" by Deborah Heiligman has just been published by Godwin Books/Henry Holt in New York. It tells the story of the final trip of the passenger liner SS *City of Benares* which set sail in September 1940 from Liverpool for Canada with one hundred evacuee children on board. Many of the children came from the Harrow area, but one of their escorts was Michael Rennie, the son of the then vicar of St Jude's

Church, Hampstead Garden Suburb. Rennie was 23 and a recent graduate of Keble College, Oxford. A former pupil of Christ's Hospital and Gordonstoun (where he was close to the then Prince Philip of Greece), Michael was a keen sportsman and self-taught motor mechanic. As an undergraduate he invented and patented a device to immobilise cars and he was originally heading for a career in

engineering. However, he came to greatly admire the Anglo-Catholic 'slum priest' Father Basil Jellicoe, discovered his own vocation, and was about to commence theological training in Cambridge when the war broke out.

On the *Benares*, Michael, the youngest of the escorts, soon became a favourite with the children. He organised games of tennis and tug-of-war and taught them how to lasso deck chairs.

A few minutes after midnight on 18 September the *Benares* was torpedoed by the German submarine U-48. 258 passengers and crew (of 406) died, including 77 of the 90 evacuee children and six of their ten escorts. Michael Rennie repeatedly dived into the sea from lifeboat No.11 to rescue drowning children but died of exhaustion himself before the rescue ships arrived. He is memorialised in a mural in St Jude's church. Deborah Heiligman notes that the overwhelming majority of the crew were South Asian Muslims whose stories were not collected after the disaster.

Torpedoed tells the story of the *Benares* in a meticulously paced and handsomely designed volume illustrated with contemporary photos and documents as well as original drawings by Lawrence Lee. Heiligman writes for children. *Torpedoed* is aimed at 10-14 years olds but it is the most deeply-researched and complete account of the tragedy, and includes an index, detailed references and bibliography. The 80th anniversary of the sinking of the *Benares* will be marked with a special commission at Proms at St Jude's in 2020.

The Reverend Alan Walker

OBITUARY

Edda Tasiemka – the 'Human Google'

Edda Tasiemka who lived in Temple Fortune Lane died on March 30 this year. Although she lived relatively quietly in her latter years, her home was a destination for historians, writers and journalists because it contained what was probably the most extensive newspaper cuttings library in London. Every room (apart perhaps for the elegant sitting room) was filled with meticulously sorted and labelled files of clippings. Murder, bigamy, the Russian Revolution, Lord Lucan, the Beatles all had their folders and dossiers. Edda daily took her scissors to every national newspaper and many a magazine. As most newspapers disposed of their own clippings collections, and before scanned archives became readily available, her cross-referenced collection was an essential resource for researchers.

Edda Hoppe was born in Hamburg in 1922. Her father was a communist activist, but she was brought up solely by her mother in a left-wing milieu. She was excluded from her local school at the age of 11 for refusing to participate in Nazi youth organisations and had to travel to another in the city. This of course aroused the suspicions of the Gestapo who began a series of interrogations and apartment searches which culminated in her mother's arrest in 1938. Edda herself managed to train as a draughtswoman and survived the war in Hamburg. She then worked for the British Army of Occupation and in 1949 met Hans Tasiemka, a journalist who was working as an interpreter and reporting on war crimes trials. The later collection had its origins in the newspaper cuttings he stuffed into his pockets for preparing his articles.

Edda and Hans came to London and married at Hampstead Registry Office. They lived for a time in Finchley and in 1962

took the house on the Suburb. Edda worked as a correspondent for German magazines and TV while Hans (who died in 1979) came to concentrate on building up the archive and turning it into a commercial enterprise. A feature on the *Culture Show* in 2014 in which Lyn Barber introduced Alan Yentob to Edda (the 'Human Google') brought the Tasiemka collection to a wider audience. By then the internet had transformed information gathering but the value of access to material in its original printed form in providing context and perspective remained. Happily, the collection has now been transferred in its entirety to the London-based Hyman Archive, the world's largest collection of periodicals.

Edda Tasiemka had a great dislike of religion but was happy to offer the vicar a large glass of sherry on his visits and to talk at length about her life and adventures. A recording of a conversation with the Reverend Alan Walker – mainly about her childhood and youth in Nazi Germany – is held by the HGS Archives Trust.



The Hampstead Garden Suburb Archives Trust

exists to preserve the history and culture of the Suburb

Website: www.suburbarchives.com · Contact: 020 8455 8813 or 8455 2877 · Email: suburbarchives@gmail.com