

# Suburb News in conversation with Terry Brooks

Incoming Suburb News co-editor, Marie-Christine O’Callaghan talks to out-going editor Terry Brooks

Terry Brooks was the editor of Suburb News for the last five years, but his association with Hampstead Garden Suburb dates back to 1963 when his parents bought a four-bedroom house with a garage and garden in Hampstead Way.

They had previously lived in a council flat where he remembered that the milk and the coal were delivered by horse and cart, and remarked “it is strange to think of changes in your own lifetime.” Terry was delighted by his family’s move to the Suburb when he was twelve as it meant he had his own bedroom. He must have really liked it considering that all the houses he went on to buy were in the Suburb.

He first went to school at The Hall in Swiss Cottage where the pink blazer was the cause of some consternation, but was then sent to his father’s old boarding school in Bristol where his mother

(who was Swiss) may have hoped that he would become an English gentleman. Terry did not enjoy the school, though he acknowledges that it provided him with a good education.

He left school at seventeen to work with Barclays International Banking in Trafalgar Square. Just over three years later, disliking the way the company tried to hold on to its employees with offers of cheap mortgages and loans, he left and tried his hand at various jobs including buying and selling clothes and driving a van.

In 1972, Terry and his girlfriend went on a road trip. They started in Canada with a Volkswagen van and went on to California and Mexico, exploring the Yucatan, and reaching the borders with Belize and Guatemala before ending up on the East coast of the USA. This was the time of the Vietnam war and of Watergate; these

events, together with living for a few months in California and Boston and his reading of ‘The Limits to Growth: A Report for the Club of Rome’s Project on the Predicament of Mankind’, politicised him.

Terry came back to England on the QE2 and took the train back to London. The very green landscape was in sharp contrast to the grand landscapes of America and made him feel “good to be back home.”

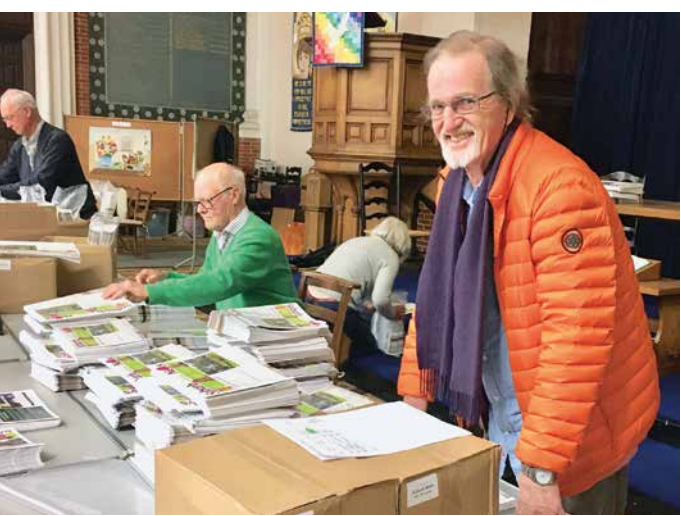
He returned in time to join his family for their usual summer holiday to Switzerland. As they drove through France, Terry realised that he felt European so in the Referendum on the European Community he ‘happily’ voted to remain in the EC.

Back home in London, he took a degree in Economics and Politics, which he achieved as an external student of London University.

With two friends he started

a motorcycle shop, which proved difficult to manage financially. Luckily, Jean Barraclough, who was his brother’s mother-in-law and the head of the English department at the then Adult Education Institute on the Suburb, asked him if he would help with a discussion group and, then, when a teacher failed to return from his holiday, Jean asked him if he would teach English to an intermediate group. Terry found the experience terrifying and the first term a nightmare - he had no training as a teacher - but as he got used to the work and when all his students passed their exams he started to enjoy teaching, eventually designing his own course on ‘British life and Institutions’.

Despite being busy with children, the motorcycle shop and teaching, Terry and his then wife found the time to set up the Wysing Arts Centre near Cambridge which is ‘a



SHELLEY-ANNE SALISBURY

contemporary arts residency centre and campus for artistic production, experimentation and learning’. The Centre recently celebrated its 30th birthday. Helen Cammock, who won the Turner prize in 2019 is the artist in residence. She shares the prize with the three other nominees, one of whom, Tai Shani, also had a residency and exhibition at Wysing. In fact, the Centre has had three other Turner winners, Elizabeth Price in 2012, Laure Prouvost in 2013 and Charlotte Prodger in 2018. Furthermore another three Wysing alumni have won the Paul Hamlyn Award for artists in 2019.

In 1988 Jean asked Terry if he would sit on the Resident Association Council and join one of the committees. Then, Richard Wakefield (the first editor and founder of Suburb News) suggested that Terry become the chairman of the publication committee. This led to Terry becoming the editor of Suburb News after Richard’s untimely death in 2014).

Terry enjoyed his five years as editor: “The sheer variety of

stuff that goes into the paper means you never know what comes next like the interview with a rabbit called Sausage.” Writing about hustings is what he enjoyed the most, writing about politics without being political about it. Editing Suburb News gave him “a real sense of achievement and the satisfying feeling of making a useful contribution to the community”, although he did add that it ‘played havoc’ with his skiing!

Terry discovered skiing in his twenties when he took his young family to Switzerland in the winter. His son and daughter learned to ski very easily but he originally found it frightening and painful. Eventually skiing became a passion, and Terry discovered ski touring, which is done off-piste in unmarked areas with a mountain guide.

Unfortunately, chronic breathing difficulty led to Terry deciding to retire from being the editor of Suburb News in order to take it easier and find the time to enjoy a little skiing, though he has promised to write the occasional article for the paper. **S**

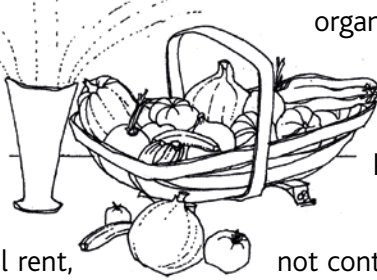


GEORGINA MALCOLM

## 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 are now available, and applications for plots are always welcome.

So if you’d like to know more, please contact the Trust office on 020 8455 1066 or mail@hgstrust.org.



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