

## Anyone for... topiary?

JUDY MARCUS

Topiary is the ancient art of clipping trees and shrubs into ornamental shapes, dating back to Roman times. The shape created can be a simple geometric design or lifelike and recognisable.

With its profusion of hedges, the Suburb naturally lends itself to topiary. You may have come across a large bird-shaped hedge sculpture standing proudly on the corner of Southway and Bigwood Road. On a breezy summer day, I went to make my enquiries about it from the house owners, Elaine and Keith, inherited their decorative

hedge art from the previous house owner, an artist, who, in turn, had inherited it from the owner before: also an artist. Elaine, also an artist (clearly a theme is emerging here) has a strong interest in maintaining the topiary and does most of the work assisted by Keith, who, being taller, is called upon to trim the tail, so acquiring the name 'tail-man'.

Under their care, the topiary changes between squirrel-like and a bird-like. If he's in the mood, Keith fashions a squirrel's tail, or he simply chops the tail in half and it becomes a bird again. Elaine likes the sculpture to be a mystical cross breed. She recounts hearing

children commenting, "Is it a squirrel or a bird?" From behind the hedge, Elaine calls out in a squeaky voice "I'm a squirrel-bird!" All goes quiet as the astonished children wonder if the mammal-bird has spoken!

When I visited, the mammal-bird was in need of maintenance and Elaine agreed to let me 'have a go'. Elaine uses a light handheld battery-operated hedge trimmer and a manual bolt cutter for areas that are tough and twiggy. She doesn't wear gloves as they make it harder to get an accurate line.

Efficiently and swiftly, Elaine sheared away spare strands from around the sides of the sculpture in demonstration. She explained: sometimes you can't cut everything



Photo: Adrian Marcus

you want to because the twiggy growth gets in the way and if you can't remove them with the manual shears you have to incorporate that area of growth into the design. That's part of the artistic licence and the fun. She then handed me the trimmers...

At first, I felt nervous about damaging this well-loved and elderly structure, but I soon got into my stride. All the hard work of producing the original shape had been done and it was just a question of following the pre-set

lines. It was rather relaxing. I stood back and was pleased to see how much neater I had made the structure. I could see how Elaine got a sense of satisfaction and pride in the creation she has maintained for eleven years. She also enjoys the sociable and communal aspect to her topiary.

As I left Elaine's pretty garden I looked back to admire our joint handiwork. The hedgerow creature looked so lifelike and, as it gently undulated in the breeze, it seemed to nod me a thank you as I left.



Photo: Michael Spiro

## India's Gold winning Bowls Team trained at Bishopswood Club

MICHAEL SPIRO

In the run-up to the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games, Bishopswood Bowling Club in Lyttelton Playing Fields, hosted the National Bowls team of India while they prepared for their Lawn Bowls challenge in the Games.

Having arrived in London on July 20 they spent each day at the Club practising and training from the day they arrived until Sunday 24th, when they went on to Birmingham for further training on the actual greens the competitions themselves were to take place starting later in the week.

Many on the Suburb came to watch. Some club members also

had the opportunity to play with the India team. While the Indians won, the Bishopswood players held their own, giving the visitors 'real' games to play. A strong bond was formed between the club and the India team in the few intense days spent together, with some of the members attending the matches to support them.

At the Games, the India woman's fours team beat New Zealand, one of the best nations in the sport, in the semi-finals. They then went on to beat South Africa, another giant nation of the sport of bowls, to take gold! The India men's fours team beat England in the semi-finals but were defeated by Northern Ireland in

the final to take silver. All in all, an outstanding performance from the Indian squad! And it all started at our Suburb club!

If you would like to try your hand at the sport, just come in whenever the gates are open. Bishopswood Bowling Club is generally open seven days a week from 9:45 through to dusk. The club and the members are friendly and welcoming, and you will be invited to come in, learn about the game and have a go.

Please visit the club website at <https://bishopswoodbc.co.uk> for more information on bowls or the club, or you can contact them on 020 8058 2212 or email to: [info@bishopswoodbc.co.uk](mailto:info@bishopswoodbc.co.uk).



**Free Fellowship trip to Hatfield House** Fellowship's latest initiative to benefit its Club Members, an annual expedition by coach entirely free of charge, was taken up with enthusiasm. On 28th July a visit to Hatfield House for 40 Members was organised. A lovely day out by all accounts.

## Mayor's lockdown walk

EMMA HOWARD

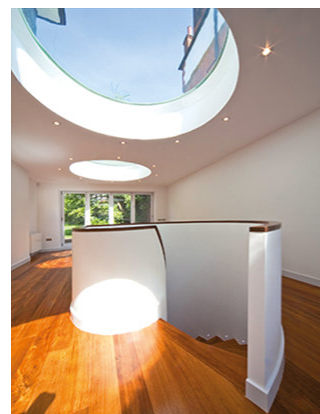
Mayor of Barnet, Alison Moore, was delighted to visit Northway Gardens on a dry but dull morning on Wednesday 27 July. The roses were looking glorious despite the long dry spell, and the Mayor told the Head of Northway Gardens Organisation, Brian Ingram, that she had enjoyed walking through them as one of her 'lockdown' walks.

Brian explained the background to the gardens, including how the original beds which are mainly planted with evergreen shrubs, will slowly be replanted with flowering shrubs of various types – when funds permit. Sponsors to the gardens, which include local businesses, The HGS Trust and HGS Residents Association make all this possible, as does the generosity of some key volunteers who pay for the roses themselves.

Many volunteers are involved in keeping the gardens beautiful. There is also a regular coffee morning at the hut by the tennis court: a great opportunity to make new friends and meet people. The Mayor chatted to the attendees, who were enjoying a cup of coffee, before moving on to her next visit.



Photo: Emma Howard



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