PETER FALK

The generations since 1945 are guilty of destroying the environment and killing off a huge number of species. We are all complicit, as we have gorged on consumption, destroyed habitats and left a mountain of detritus. If we continue to consume and destroy what future is there for our grandchildren? Many of us consider that there is nothing one person can do but as Greta Thunberg has said over and over again everyone can help by their own actions and if enough follow, the world can be changed.

In the UK, there are more trees than 50 years ago but we remain the least wooded country in Europe. Trees are multitaskers, they soak up carbon and trap nitrogen oxide; their roots bind soils & riverbanks, they provide shade and shelter, recycle water, are a vital habitat for wildlife and are a wonder and delight. Yet a recent survey by the Woodland Trust states that only 13% of the UK land surface is woodland and within that figure half is non-native (mainly commercial conifer). The study estimates that over 1000 ancient woods have been lost or damaged over the last 25 years and another 1200 are currently under threat.

Since 1945 there has been a change in farming from smaller fields separated by hedgerows to huge fields of monoculture and over half a million miles of hedgerows have been removed.

Some experts estimate that due to the degradation of the soil, we only have about 100 harvests left and almost 40% of food produced is left to waste, either in the fields, or rejected by supermarkets and by us the consumers. Meanwhile there has been an enormous reduction in the number of insects which are vital for both pollination and control of pests as well as poisoning worms, earwigs and others crucial for preserving and enriching the top soil.

This has to stop. So what can we do? Here are some of my ideas:

- Write to your MP and threaten to withhold your vote to save your grandchildren's future unless they change the current environment bill and the current planning laws and put a value on trees.
- Stop cutting down trees – it's all very well planting more trees but it will be many years before the foliage will compare to an existing tree. We also need to stop all imports of non-treated wood as imports have been the major cause of the myriad of tree diseases which have taken hold in the UK since 1945.
- Reduce industrialised farming which produces copious green-house gases, erodes top soils, pollutes land and rivers, causes wildlife and insect eradication and increases flooding. Since 1945 80% of our orchards are gone, over half a million miles of hedgerows erased, herbicides and fertilisers are now applied routinely multiple times a year, a huge increase in livestock mostly kept indoors and fed on grain and monoculture in huge fields. Modern farming is part of an inefficient, environmentally-damaging food supply system.
- Cut waste in your home and make sure all fruit and veg you buy is loose and not in packaging
- Reduce your meat cosumption.
- If you have a garden, plant one or two small fruit trees and have at least one compost pile in the garden. Make sure any compost you buy is peat free and do not buy/use pesticides or herbicides.
- If possible, rewild part of your garden and try not to cut the grass or hedgerows too often.
- Last summer many farms left some of their produce to rot as there was not enough labour to pick the fruit/veg so we need to introduce community service (not national service) so university students spend some of the summer working in the fields. Payment would be made by reducing or writing off their student loans by using some of the UK's current farm subsidy (£3.5 billion per annum).
- Increase the amount of agro-forestry in farms which will greatly improve biodiversity and the health of the soil.

Let's all take action NOW whilst we can and secure a future for our grandchildren and the generations that follow.

Early Suburb Houses in the 1911 Census – names or numbers?

HGS HERITAGE TEAM

The HGS Heritage team have been working hard to match Suburb houses with the 1911 census records. However, our researchers encountered a few obstacles along the way…

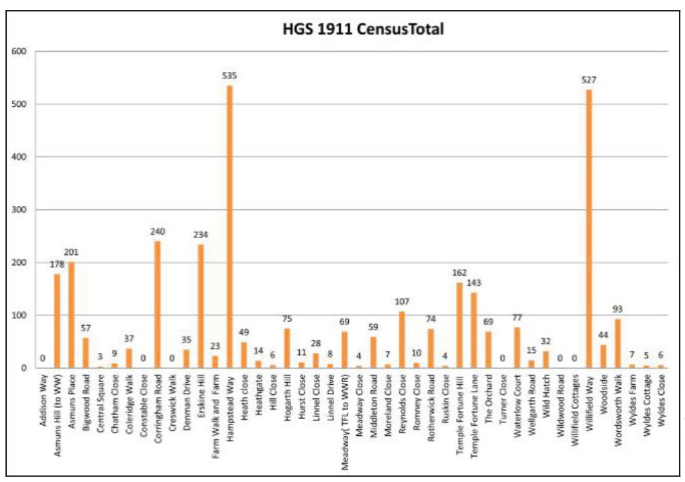
At the time of the 1911 census, some roads in Hampstead Garden Suburb were fully-built, occupied and had numbers. This numbering system enabled us to match most of those houses to a 1911 census form. However, there are some gaps due to occupants having been away on census night, or, some (usually women) refusing to participate, writing 'NO VOTE NO CENSUS' across the form itself.

Then there were some roads only partially completed by April 1911 (such as Hogarth Hill) and roads where the builders had not even started. Of the approximately 130 roads in the Suburb, 90 have no census records at all.

The biggest obstacle for the team were the roads where the houses had been built and were occupied but only had names. Giving your house a name seemed to be the fashionable thing to do for people 'with a view' – many of the houses on the right as you go down Erskine Hill had names, while those on the left were content to use the numbers allocated. Fortunately, we were able to put a number to some of these named houses by matching the 1911 occupant's surname to those listed in one of the early Suburb directories, but, if your house was built by April 1911 and it doesn't have a corresponding census form on the Virtual Museum website, the chances are the original occupants gave their house a name such as 'The Willows' or 'Oak View' or something similar. If you happen to live in one of these houses and you know what it was called or who lived there in 1911 please let us know.

Hampstead Way is a special case. In 1911, the plots at the bottom near the Finchley Road were built, occupied and numbered, the numbering starting at the Finchley road end. Two years after the census, the numbering was reversed! Diligent work by Janice Blackstaffe has managed to resolve this, so, for example, if you live at 42 Hampstead Way don't be surprised to find a census form for No.132 attached to the photo of your house on our website.

Do learn more about the early days of our wonderful Hampstead Garden Suburb by visiting the Virtual Museum at hgsheritage.org.uk and looking at the 1911 Census and much more.



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