

Suburb News *in conversation with...*

...Professor Evelyn Fishburn

Professor Evelyn Fishburn or 'Evi', as she prefers to be called, who has been living in the Suburb since 1958, talks to Daphne Berkovi

Yet, today's surroundings are very different to where Evi's story first began, in Vienna, Austria on 18 July 1937.

Once Hitler came to power, Evi's family had to leave Vienna. Evi explained that she and her brother were taken to Hungary with their nanny, to stay with their grandmother. Months later her parents were able to join them and they all set off from Italy to start a new life in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Life was very happy for the family in Buenos Aires, where Evi describes, "I went to 'Northlands' school, a bastion of British Empire in education." With Anglo-Argentine roots, it became renowned as the best girl's school in South America. It was at the age of 17 that Evi moved to Geneva, where she took her 'A' levels and studied languages at the renowned Ecole d'Interprètes, obtaining a University Diploma in Translation. Whilst in London on her way to a May ball in Cambridge, Evi met her husband to be, Freddy. "It was my marriage that brought me to London, where I became the Spanish teacher at a local independent girls' school, Channing, in Highgate." She stayed there for ten years, interspersed with raising her family.

The pathway to Latin American Studies in Britain came through a rather circuitous route. It was during a period

when Evi was urging her A-level pupils to apply to a new course called MILARS (Modern Iberian and Latin American Regional Studies) being established at University College London, that it occurred to her that she should also do the same. Thus in 1970 Evi enrolled as an undergraduate student at the newly established MILARS course. She was the only mature student on the course, and recalls that not a single female author was included in the MILARS syllabus. The rest she explains is history, well, Evi's history.

Thereafter completing her PhD at UCL, with a few interruptions, she has remained attached to the Department of Spanish and Latin American studies ever since. Her teaching career evolved as follows, "I inherited a two-year special subject option, 'Borges and Cortázar', which I taught first at Birkbeck College, then Westfield College (as it then was), King's College, and finally the then Polytechnic of North London." At present, she is working on humour in fiction, but her main research interest over the years has been the Argentinian writer Jorge Luis Borges; her seminal work is "Hidden Pleasures in Borge's fiction."

When we discuss family life, Evi explains that her parents and brother remained in Argentina. Her husband Freddy studied law and worked as a solicitor. They have three daughters, all of whom are academic, and ten grandchildren.

Academic work has always taken up the greater part of Evi's life, but she is able to pursue her hobbies with interests in Opera, Art, Literature, Travel, and Theatre. She also enjoys Pilates and Tai Chi.

When the family first moved to the Garden Suburb they lived in Howard Walk, then moving to Ossulton Way and finally to South Square where they presently reside. The main

reason for moving here was because Freddy had family living here and it was the nearest suburb for them to travel to central London.

The other attraction was also the picturesque surroundings in the Suburb and Evi explains "it was also the geography of the area with its superb greenery, fine hedges and wonderful feeling of being close to nature, which has not changed."

However, she has seen changes in the demographics of area; it has become more diverse in character.

Due to the demands of academic life Evi has not been able to engage in local activities as much as she had hoped. However, she now intends to become more involved locally. As just recently she took up the initiative promoted by the Reverend Ian Tutton to establish

a literary course 'Serious Readers' as part of the new 'Community Learning Network'. The group meets alternate weeks at Evi's home and discusses theoretical aspects from a variety of literary texts.

It is envisaged that the group will continue, but Evi also anticipates starting a literary group for the new Hampstead Garden Suburb U3A when it is formed this summer **S**



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