

# I WAS THERE.. SUBURB COMMUNITY CENTRE

It was appropriate that the Whitehall Theatre (home of British Farce), closed for so many years, should ring up its curtain on the eve of the Falloeden Way Inquiry.

Having sat through the pre-inquiry and many of the other sessions of the Inquiry itself, I take this opportunity to clear my mind of the impressions that I gained.

At the start of the pre-inquiry on 20th February held in the Methodist Church, East Finchley (well out of the Suburb bounds), the assembled objectors listened quietly to the Inspector (Mr M.D. Kavanagh) as he propounded on the scope and conduct of the Inquiry. But it was when it came to the request for evening sessions that the real aggro started, which was to prevail throughout the whole Inquiry. The DoT stated that in their opinion evening sessions were counter-productive (they would say that, wouldn't they?); the Inspector thought, yes, he would allow evening sessions two nights a week from 5pm-7pm. That was when the place erupted and the objectors started to have doubts about the independence and impartiality of the Inspector.

On the question of provision of transcripts of the daily proceedings he did regain some of his credibility by instructing the DoT to provide them to any objector who asked. As to the question of a Suburb venue he would try and seek a solution before the actual Inquiry on 11th March.

By 11th March not a single objector had received a copy of the 20th February proceedings; all that we had got were some notes from the Inspector's office purporting to be from the pre-Inquiry. I certainly wondered if they were from the meeting I had attended. So once again the objectors assembled with a nagging suspicion that the Inspector had gone back on his declared inten-

tions. I think that the objectors were correct in their summing up, he was not able to get the DoT to do his bidding and from that moment he was treated with hostility by most of the objectors. Whilst he was not actually insulted, he was harangued, lectured and sneered at.

On which points he thought to be valid he would say "I'll take that on board when I consider that question"—obviously a sailor—the only trouble, he took so much on board his boat must have been awash.

The Inquiry produced all those theatrical characters—the Wicked Baron, the man we all love to hate (the Counsel for the DoT), the Prince (Terry Rand), the Good Fairy (our solicitor), plus all the Clowns and Tumblers—they were all there. But in spite of all the wit and repartee, there was a heavy atmosphere of frustration hanging over the church—here we were, taxpayers with a responsibility for paying for the DoT who were trying to foist some half-baked scheme on the Suburb which no one wanted, and having to pay a second time to try and stop them. So to many it was a real live farce; however as in all good stories, good overcomes evil in the end. AL

The first major project for the RA's new Expenditure Committee has been a feasibility study for a new community centre. The centre would also provide offices for the Trust; the disposal of whose Finchley Road building would help towards financing the project.

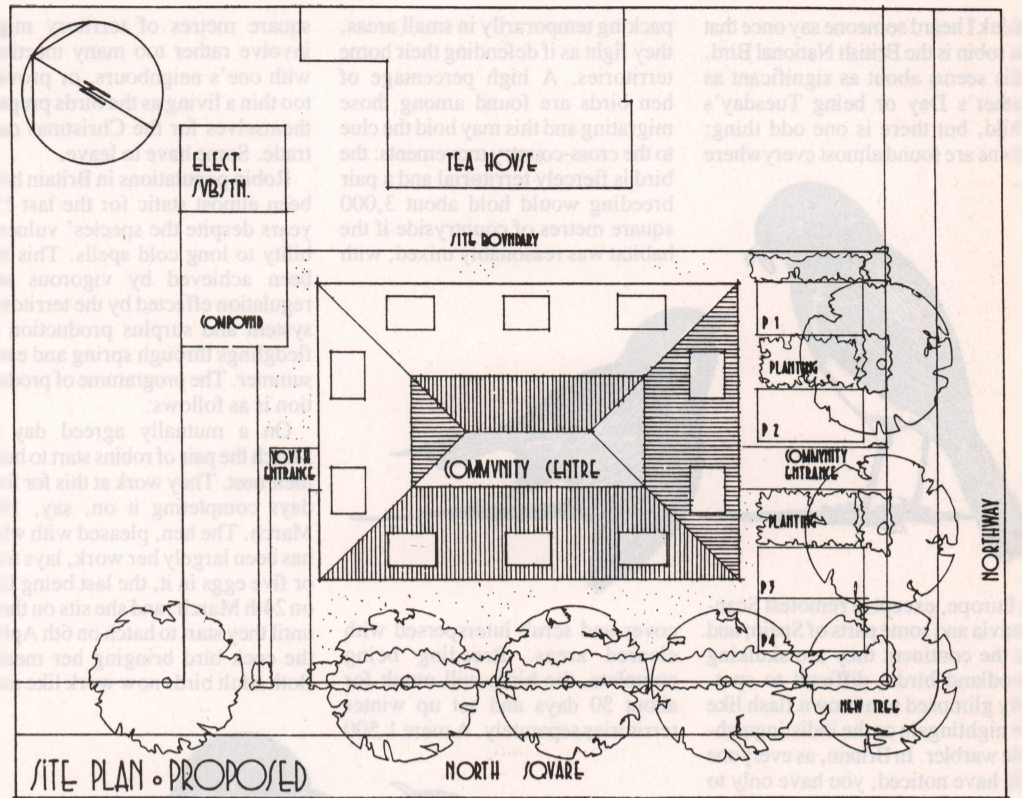
A possible site was found at the corner of Northway and North Square.

Alan Brown RIBA was commissioned to carry out a study and his plan provides for a youth centre, the Archives Trust, and community rooms as well as offices for the Trust.

The cost of building at current prices will be in the region of £400,000.

A meeting was held on March 10 at which the RA outlined the plan to representatives of all interested groups where problems and anxieties were aired. There was evidence of a need for such facilities but it was suggested that they might be met by better use of existing buildings.

The next stage will be a meeting with the RA and the Trust leading to a more thorough survey of needs and use of present facilities.



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