

ROBINS

I think I heard someone say once that the robin is the British National Bird. This seems about as significant as Father's Day or being Tuesday's Child, but there is one odd thing: robins are found almost everywhere



in Europe, except in remotest Scandinavia and some parts of Spain; and on the continent they are skulking woodland birds, difficult to spot, only glimpsed as a brown flash like the nightingale or the indistinguishable warbler. In Britain, as everyone will have noticed, you have only to start digging and a robin will be elbowing you out of the way to get his fair share of spade handle time, and grab the new half-worms before they can crawl off to start their separate lives.

Another interesting thing about robins is that they are essentially sedentary residents, but large numbers of them migrate over to Europe, and others cross the country, east-west, or fly to Ireland. They travel by night, and when this results in numbers of birds

packing temporarily in small areas, they fight as if defending their home territories. A high percentage of hen birds are found among those migrating and this may hold the clue to the cross-country movements: the bird is fiercely territorial and a pair breeding would hold about 3,000 square metres of countryside if the habitat was reasonably mixed, with

cover and scrub interspersed with cleared areas. Breeding being complete, the birds will moult for about 50 days and set up winter territories separately. A mere 1,500



square metres of territory might involve rather too many meetings with one's neighbours, or provide too thin a living as the birds prepare themselves for the Christmas card trade. Some have to leave.

Robin populations in Britain have been almost static for the last 150 years despite the species' vulnerability to long cold spells. This has been achieved by vigorous self regulation effected by the territorial system and surplus production of fledglings through spring and early summer. The programme of production is as follows:

On a mutually agreed day in March the pair of robins start to build their nest. They work at this for four days completing it on, say, 19th March. The hen, pleased with what has been largely her work, lays four or five eggs in it, the last being laid on 24th March, and she sits on them until they start to hatch on 6th April, the cock bird bringing her meals. Both adult birds now work like mad



to feed the chicks. On 27th April the fledglings start to leave the nest and begin picking up the basic living skills with some parental guidance. Immediately, a new nest is begun by the adults, and by mid May, five more fledglings could be grubbing about in the hedge, and perhaps five more by the beginning July—17 robins where there had once been two, barring accidents. However accidents must happen or the population would not remain static, and one robin (probably the cock bird) would have to drive 16 out of his territory at the end of summer.

Perhaps Father's Day has some significance after all! CG

Help for bats



Sir,
NATIONAL BAT YEAR

Bats are probably our most threatened group of mammals and severe declines have been reported in many populations. To publicise the problems facing bats and to promote their conservation, 1986 has been designated National Bat Year.

The Barnet Wildlife Group will be supporting this locally by launching an Adopt a Bat Box Project. Bat

Willfield garage

Dear Sir,

Without wishing to monopolise the letters column of the Suburb News, I feel that the points raised by Mr Freeborn in your last issue are so important that they should not go unanswered. The Trust recognises that one of the biggest problems facing the Suburb is how to accommodate the motor car. Obviously when the Suburb was planned it was impossible to foresee the growth in car ownership. The advent of the car has created two particular types of problems. Many Suburb roads have become through roads and rat runs for commuters, and as a result are carrying far more traffic than they were originally designed to handle. The second is parking and particularly in the Closes, Holms, the roads adjoining Golders Green and East Finchley Stations and on roads such as Hampstead Way and Willfield Way which are used by through traffic.

The Trust believes that a traffic management scheme is required to solve the first problem, and this was advocated in the Shankland Cox Report which was commissioned by the Trust in 1974. As regards parking, the Trust considers that front gardens and hedges are essential features of the Suburb environment and that permission for hard standings should be granted only in exceptional circumstances. When considering applications for garages the Trust takes into account a number of factors, including the size of the garden, the quality of the garage design, the extent of overlooking and the relationship between the proposed garage and the existing house. Even in the Old Suburb there were houses with original garages and we believe, therefore, that our policy is entirely consistent with the ideals of Parker and Unwin.

There are only a limited number of houses on the Suburb with space to build a garage, and for the majority of Suburb streets other policies are required to alleviate the parking problem. One idea put forward by Shankland Cox is to have parking bays let into the pavements. An obvious place where this approach might be applicable is on the Heath side of Hampstead Way. In the case of the Closes and Holms the parking problem could be improved by doing away altogether with the pavements, which are often too narrow to be passable. Perhaps the RA could get together with Barnet to see whether solutions can be found to the chronic parking problems on many Suburb streets.

Mr Freeborn concluded his letter by saying that the Trust should not be swayed by the threat of legal action when considering planning applications. There are two types of litigation in which the Trust can get embroiled. When residents carry out work without Trust approval a decision has to be made whether to take legal action to get reinstatement. The other kind of litigation is when the Trust is sued by residents for unreasonably withholding consent. Our sole criterion in deciding

boxes look very similar to bird nesting boxes, apart from the entry slit in the floor. They provide valuable roost sites in summer, especially where many natural sites, such as old trees, have been destroyed.

We would like to appeal to readers to help bat conservation by adopting a box. For every £5 sent to me, we will erect and maintain one box on a local site of wildlife importance. You will also receive a postcard giving details of its location and any occupants.

If they are to survive, BATS NEED FRIENDS! Please help.

Angela M. Holmes
Bat Project Coordinator
Barnet Wildlife Group
56 Tudor Road
New Barnet
Herts.

whether either to take legal action on an infringement or to remain firm on a Trust Council decision is our chances of success, and this can only be determined by our legal advisors. Since these disputes are settled in the Courts and not by architects or town planners, the overriding factor when embarking on litigation must be the strength of our case from a legal point of view.

The Trust Council are very aware of their financial obligations, and residents would be unhappy if the Trust squandered money on fighting lost causes. The approach taken by the Trust can best be illustrated by two recent examples.

A few months ago our barrister visited the Suburb to inspect three infringements on which the Trust were considering legal action. In none of the three cases did the barrister recommend taking action since he considered the cases to be marginal. More recently he inspected the illegal dormer window at 6 Asmunds Hill and as a result of his advice we are going to Court in order to have the window removed.

Yours faithfully,
C.M. Kellerman
Trust Manager

Lutyens

Dear Sir,
Re: Lutyens Interiors

In your Autumn 1985 issue Brigid Grafton Green suggests that there is no evidence that 16 Ingram Avenue is by Lutyens. On page 143 of the Shankland Cox Report it is described as "a hitherto unrecorded design by Sir Edwin Lutyens himself, done privately for his patron and friend Reginald McKenna as a wedding present for McKenna's son". I remember the excitement at Shankland Cox at this find, but I do not

know where they found the evidence. It is I think too circumstantial to disbelieve. Unfortunately recent enquiries at Shankland Cox have produced no further evidence.

Brigid also mentions the North Square plans signed by Lutyens. Were the interiors built according to the Lutyens plans? Hussey (Life of Sir Edwin Lutyens 1950) records:

(a) Lutyens was asked to prepare designs for "the houses on the west side of the northern approach (Erskine Hill) and of North Square".

(b) He came up against some opposition from Mrs Barnett who "saw her homely village-suburb being apparently magnified into a conception beyond her aspirations". "A nice woman", Lutyens described her tartly "but proud of being a philistine."

(c) Following a battle in April 1909 ("Mrs Barnett vanquished"), St Jude's designs were approved but Mrs Barnett obtained a resolution of the Board that if Lutyens's designs (for North Square and Erskine Hill) were unsuitable for Copartnership another architect should be employed.

(d) Co-partnership Tenants Ltd later took exception to the planning of some of the houses and had the power to change it.

(e) In March 1911 Lutyens complained that his eight houses at Hampstead so far built had been "so pulled about inside by the Copartners that they are found to be, as I said they would be, unliveable in".

Did any Lutyens houses originally have Lutyens interiors? Of those that did, which survive unaltered?

As a teaser, for it does not relate to Lutyens interiors, why is not the Lutyens War Memorial more visible?

Yours faithfully,
C.W. Ikin

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