

# LETTERS

*To the Editor*  
I had just read in the February issue of Barnet Borough News that "Barnet Council places great emphasis on maintaining its green heritage" when I saw a group of young people hacking at the philadelphus bushes on Willifield Green. On inquiring who they were I was told that they were employed by Barnet Borough Council to prune the shrubbery. Pruning is hardly the word I would use for the butchery that went on. Almost every year this happens with the result that there are never any flowers, but this year it is worse than ever. Willifield Green is neglected and uninteresting enough without this sort of treatment and I was so angry about it that I wrote a letter to the address given in the article.

I received a reply from Controller of Engineering Services regretting that the shrubs had been pruned incorrectly and stating that "training of staff is a lengthy procedure and identification of plants often proves difficult". The writer finally trusted that I would be able to enjoy the benefits of correctly pruned shrubs in future seasons.

The original article had suggested that anyone in doubt about how to prune trees or bushes should get in touch with Barnet Council — well, looking across the green at those poor stumps, I hope no one is foolish enough to do so.

Leonie Stephen  
Willifield Way.

*Dear Sir,*  
Countless discussions with my 11 year old daughter and a magazine article have prompted me to write to the Suburb News.

The subject is the dangers facing children when they are given the freedom to travel alone either home from school, shopping or visiting friends.

To most of us the Suburb appears a haven compared with other areas of London, but there are always dangers for the inexperienced child to cope with, thankfully, usually imaginary.

The proposal is to have a local Safe House Scheme, whereby local children would know of houses where they would be made welcome if they in any way should feel threatened by a stranger, find they had lost their door keys or even have fallen and scraped their knee and require a plaster. These houses would display a coloured sign indicating that they were part of the scheme.

The Safe House Scheme has been operating successfully in Canada and Australia for some years and has come to Britain just over a year ago. Usually it is school-based but there seems little reason why it would not work within a neighbourhood like the Suburb perhaps incorporated into the existing Warden Scheme under the auspices of the Residents' Association.

Naturally anyone volunteering to help would have to be 'vetted' for their assistance. Should any resident like to comment on this scheme perhaps they would like to write to the editor with their views.

Yours  
Diane Michaels  
Constable Close  
London NW11

# WORDSEARCH WINNER

WINTER '87 WORDSEARCH



Ben Bromilow of Hampstead Way won the Winter Wordsearch Competition. Ben, age 12, is especially keen on wildlife and so the subject 'British Birds' interested him very much. However, Ben's main hobby is music. He plays the oboe and sings with the School Choir, St. Judes Choir and also with the Finchley Childrens Music Group who performed recently at the Royal Festival Hall. He also plays tennis, collects keyrings and loves reading, especially James Herriot. After leaving the Garden Suburb School, Ben joined University College School. He hopes his career will be in veterinary science or medicine. With his £5 Book Token, Ben is going to complete his collection of the 'Just William' books. EW

# NOT SO SHY

When, at the end of the latest Ice Age the Arctic Ice Cap started to recede from Henly's Corner back to its far more convenient present position, the English oak woods spread north to occupy the countryside revealed. It was a very slow process, but would have been far slower without the help of birds, particularly jays.

An acorn can only roll so far, but luckily jays love them, and when they are ripe fill their crops with as many as possible, fly to an open spot, dig a hole in the turf, and puke the acorn into it.

I cannot believe that a bird, however bright, could ever remember the cache.

The Suburb is full of oaks, and also of jays, which are woodland birds, shy by nature but becoming bolder over recent years. In the fifties a jay was a rare sight in the garden, except when forced by hunger to take scraps from the lawn. Nowadays they are very common as are their crow cousins, the ubiquitous magpies. This increase in numbers and boldness possibly stems from reduced persecution. Until recently both species were vermin, shot on sight by people protecting the poor defenceless pheasants, in order to kill them themselves later on.

The jay is predominantly vegetarian, almost exclusively so in winter, but as summer approaches it adds insects to the diet and quite soon, having chicks to feed, takes to raiding other bird's nests both of eggs and nestlings, cleverly and methodically searching out the best hidden home.

But enough of this knocking copy! Anybody who has seen a jay in the sunlight will remember it. An unbeatably splendid colour clash of glowing russet pink and iridescent blue. Worth a few miserable sparrows.

One very curious and not explained habit; jays eat ants, and have tongues well adapted to this, but in addition they love to disturb an ants nest and sit there, wings spread and every feather fluffed while the furious ants run over them. This is known as "passive anting". Active anting on the other hand entails pecking up the ants one by one and rubbing them along the feathers. Some people say that these activities rid the plumage of minute parasites.

But the look of ecstatic joy on the face of a dishevelled jay sitting in a heap of angry ants suggests to me that he knows something I don't. CG



## SPRING IN TEMPLE FORTUNE HILL

by Elizabeth Over

Snowdrops peep out of the earth,  
In number forty-two's garden,  
Where — as at number forty, crocuses,  
The sky a pale blue,  
Like a pool of crystal clear water,  
And the grass as green as emeralds.

Across the road people are tending their flowers,  
And rejoicing that Winter has gone at last.  
Children frisk in their gardens like lambs,  
Enjoying the rays of sunlight that so rarely fall on them,  
Windows glisten and sparkle with the sun,  
And roofs are tanned.

Later the soft rains of April start,  
The delicate transparent droplets patter on your window pane,  
And everywhere is damp and fresh,  
Flowers stretch to have a drink,  
The soil is moistened,  
And the pavement is spattered with drops of water.

Number eighteen's occupiers are enjoying the garden in spite of the rain.  
On the green next door people are playing tennis on the lawn.  
Car doors reflect the trees swaying in the breeze,  
And at last people come out again the rain has stopped,  
Everyone in Temple Fortune Hill is enjoying Spring!

## WORDSEARCH COMPETITION

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF DOGS

Find and ring the names of fifteen breeds of dogs hidden in the box of letters. They may read forwards, backwards, up, down and diagonally.

A	B	D	X	O	S	A	L	U	K	I	C	D	E	C	F	G	O
W	U	O	A	V	I	T	P	U	U	C	B	A	O	J	I	A	H
I	X	S	H	H	E	U	S	E	I	D	O	R	K	P	O	F	P
O	J	E	T	W	M	T	A	V	K	E	G	L	O	F	E	G	Q
P	K	T	Y	G	C	A	E	R	S	I	M	N	T	G	Z	H	E
M	L	T	N	Z	A	Q	T	Q	R	W	N	Q	U	O	R	A	U
F	X	E	B	Z	D	Y	E	I	Y	X	V	E	R	H	I	N	S
A	U	R	O	E	G	I	D	P	A	W	P	S	S	B	A	H	T
S	C	D	F	N	R	B	C	O	X	N	Q	E	C	E	U	O	W
B	E	A	G	L	E	O	S	U	O	I	O	D	R	V	A	U	A
U	D	C	B	A	Y	I	O	N	Z	N	E	L	E	M	P	N	B
E	Y	D	A	C	H	S	H	U	N	D	M	K	V	D	C	D	A
S	F	O	G	E	O	T	P	Q	F	R	S	T	E	U	R	I	E
M	Z	G	D	M	U	R	O	G	C	O	L	L	I	E	E	Q	L
E	I	L	E	I	N	A	P	S	A	G	U	O	R	V	F	E	D
E	X	B	H	H	D	H	N	L	M	J	I	H	T	W	G	S	D
O	L	K	I	F	I	J	E	N	A	D	T	A	E	R	G	A	O
B	U	L	L	D	O	G	J	K	D	S	U	T	R	X	O	Y	P

If you are under fourteen on the 1st June this year, you may list the answers on a postcard with your name, age, address and telephone number and post to: 35 Wildwood Road. The first correct entry drawn on the closing date, 1.6.87, will receive a £5 Book Token. To help you on your way we have given you the first answer. Happy Hunting! EW



Whichever way you look at it we are the

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Telex: 268312 Wescom G Attn. Birchco  
Fax No. London (01) 734 0670