

BEST ACTOR AWARD FOR COLIN GREGORY

Colin Gregory, who has shone in many productions of the Hampstead Garden Suburb Dramatic Society, was named Best Actor for his role as the doctor in Turgenev's "A Month in the Country", by the judges in the Barnet Drama Festival. Having taken over the role at three weeks notice he gave a delightful and amusing portrayal of the wily country doctor, friend and confidant to Natalya, who is not averse to using what he hears to his own advantage.

This was altogether one of the best produced and performed plays the society has given and made one realise what a lot of talent there is around. Considered Turgenev's masterpiece, it tells of the havoc the arrival of a young tutor causes in the household of Natalya Petrovna, the bored wife of an industrious husband, Arkadi. Both she and her ward, Vera, fall in love with the lively and youthful Belyaev, who is quite unaware of the effect he is having. Natalya becoming jealous of her ward tries to marry her off to the neighbour the wily doctor is persuading her to consider and finally ends loosing her son's tutor, her ward's affection and respect and the company of Rakitin, her platonic lover and confidant.

The producer, Fred Griessen, used the translation by Isaiah Berlin and was very ingenious in indicating which scenes were indoor and which were supposed to be in a garden. He also got some lovely performances from Liz Amiel as Natalya; Tim

Solomons as Belyaev and Caroline Wright as Lizaveta, the companion the doctor woos so calculatingly. Above these, two other portrayals stood out. Tessa Duggleby made one feel for Vera, so young and trusting, who comes to hate Natalya and seeks escape in marriage to the ridiculous neighbour. She charted the young girl's path to maturity with great feeling. Philip Grant also brought insight to the role of Rakitin, family friend and platonic admirer to whom Natalya confesses her hopeless love. His bitterness that someone else should achieve what he has not was very moving. A lovely thoughtful and elegant performance.

One must add that Joan Walsh (playing Natalya's mother-in-law) and Simon Ramsey (the elderly German tutor) were both runners-up for the Best Supporting Actor awards and both helped to make this one of the most enjoyable evenings at the theatre. **LS**

THE OLD SUBURB FROM ICE AGE TO PRESENT DAY

Environment Week Walk April 28th

The walk, attended by about forty people, began at Henly's Corner. It was led by Michael Holton, a geographer and resident of the Suburb who was born in Erskine Hill in 1927, and he began by considering the pre-history of the 243-acre tract in the old Borough of Hendon.

Between 2 and 3 million years ago, during the Ice Age, with four main cold periods with ice caps spreading southwards, with tropical interglacial periods, the land at the north of the Suburb has undergone much change.

There was a distinct lack of settlement. None, with the possible exception of a small group of stone age huts in Erskine Hill has been identified. There is no evidence of Bronze Age, Iron Age, Roman or Saxon settlement; no mention in Domesday - the land of the Suburb virtually presented a clean page of history. It would have been a tree-covered landscape, with deep woodlands, wet and badly drained, in contrast to the higher heathlands of Hampstead, Highgate, Harrow and Hendon, all of which developed early settlements. Cultivation and tree-cutting began in the 17th century, with pastoral farming developing to supply north London. Collins Farm, known as Wyldes, Temple Fortune Farm, Decoys Farm (junction of Bridge Lane and North Circular Road) all prospered, strung out along an old road from Hampstead to Hendon - a road often ignored by local historians. The Suburb Archivist has prepared a field map, but evidence for lanes and tracks is not clear. By the late 19th century, as seen in pictures by local artists, the land developed for the Suburb was a rolling pastureland divided into fields. The Heath extension, and the Mutton Brook enclave both represented remnants of contrasting aspects of the original rural character. The latter is one of the best wild-life habitats surviving in the district.

The walk proceeded by way of Creswick and Wordsworth Walks. The social side of Hampstead Garden Suburb was filled in. Mr Holton threw doubt on whether Henrietta Barnett seriously intended working-class residents to be accommodated when she referred to 'the industrial classes'. He remembered during his boyhood that the social groupings were indeed mixed, including skilled artisans or craftsmen, local government and civil service clerks, writers and those of small independent means. He wondered whether the Suburb could seriously have been considered for working-class housing due to its distance from any major employment. Event the existence of a "tuppenny tube" would have added so much to the cost of getting to and from work as to have ruled it out of consideration for labourers as a place of residence. He described life on the Suburb during the First World War. It was, apparently, cut off from the feeling of conflict. The *Town Crier*, a residents' magazine of the period, gave a detailed picture of a Zeppelin flight over the Suburb in 1915, when the correspondent had felt 'for five minutes the war came to the Suburb'.

The walk moved to Willifield Green, a centre for social gatherings which at one time included village stocks. The Club House facing the Green was a symbol of social life. It hosted the 'Suburb Parliament'

during the interwar period and housed 80 Belgian refugees during the First World War, and two Belgian children's classes were organised in the Farm Walk School nearby. The Club House, with its characteristic tower, was damaged during the Second World War by a landmine, and it together with other houses around the Green were demolished and rebuilt. regrettably, however, it did not regain its former glory.

Landmines were dropped by parachute on the night of 21st or 25th September 1940. One hit Willifield Green, and the soft clay subsoil cushioned the impact of its explosion. Nevertheless houses nearby were damaged, windows were blown out over a wide area, while the tower and front façade of the Club House were badly cracked. The second landmine fell on Coleridge Walk and killed twelve, including three generations of a single family.

During the Second World War social life in the Suburb assumed a more improvised character than previously, although it included the bonus of the London Symphony Orchestra using the large Orpheum Cinema on the Finchley Road as its home. Many eminent musicians lived on the Suburb, notably in Willwood Road Myra Hess, the organiser of the wartime National Gallery concerts, who gave many informal recitals on the Suburb.

Off Erskine Hill are the Homesfield buildings, three Georgian-style developments catering for disadvantaged groups. Nearby, the Suburb was damaged by incendiary bombs which rained down in 1944. They fell in gardens, in gutters, and penetrated bedrooms and linen cupboards, and many were put out by sandbags and stirrup-pumps.

Little Wood contained the open air theatre, much identified with the Play and Pageant Union. Despite the roar of traffic in nearby Falloden Way, this still represents a tranquil setting, much used by groups for plays and masques in days gone by. Falloden Way itself was a target for protest as early as the 1930s. At that time there was no speed limit imposed and an early act of civil disobedience in 1936 brought about the installation of a 30 mph limit. Little Wood and Big Wood were separated by a field developed for Denman Drive. This latter area formed the winter quarters for Sanger's Circus before development of the 'New Suburb' began in 1912/13. In the area of Chatham Close, nearby, there was considerable bomb damage on 16th November 1940. At least one bomb fell but did not explode, and bored a neat 12-inch diameter hole in the pavement. This was about to be plugged by a local resident, but it exploded shortly before he could undertake such a dangerous and near-fatal task.

As we walked around the Suburb it was evident that many of the great and good, particularly on the left of politics, had lived there over the years. The novelist Rebecca West moved to the Suburb about 1915 when she had a child by the novelist H. G. Wells. Musicians included the composer Eric Coates and the musical humorist Gerard Hoffnung, whose family had fled from Austria in 1938. **MH**

FAMILY HOLIDAY ASSOCIATION FETE

Nearly £6,000 or as the Family Holiday Association likes to think of it, another twenty families off on their first holiday ever as the result of another highly successful fete held by the F.H.A. in May. Joan Laurance the charity's founder said the wonderful total well illustrated the generosity of Garden Suburb people. The fete was opened by Lucy Pilkington of the B.B.C. Clothes show.

For the first time, this year, the F.H.A. have given holiday grants to over a thousand families at a cost in excess of £300,000.



Marlen Tafarello helps Pat Laurance draw prizes.



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