

RA HONOURS SUBURB PIONEERS

This year the Hampstead Garden Suburb Residents Association honours Jean Henderson, Ted Hoblyn, Brigid Grafton Green, Kit Ikin, Alec Gray and John Enderby.

These newly appointed Honorary members of the RA have in different ways dedicated their lives to caring for the Suburb and its community.

Some did so by fighting and winning a campaign against a scheme which, had it succeeded, would have laid the lovely and historic Conservation Area wide open to possible property exploitation. MF

Since 1907 when Dame Henrietta Barnett turned the first sod to inaugurate the building of Hampstead Garden Suburb, this lovely north west London area bordering Hampstead Heath, has been lauded as a masterly stroke in sociological development.

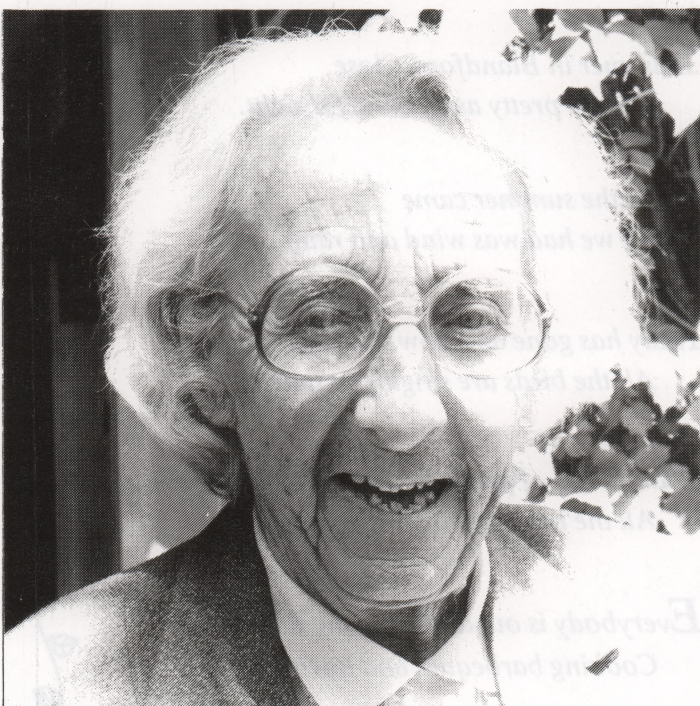
But at the same time it has been regularly threatened by either ill-considered management, property and town planning schemes.

It was so in the early 1960s. Post-war austerity of the 50s passed into boom years and developers, sometimes solely

concerned with the golden rewards of property, helped demolish fascinating – even beautiful – city centres and their suburbs, erecting giant blocks of offices and flats where buildings of suitable proportion and local character had stood.

In a series of profiles the six new Honorary Members of the RA explain how and why they came to play their significant parts in local history.

They reveal, too, their fear that current local apathy means that the Suburb, some time in the future, may yet be spoiled.



The scheme would have lifted the management of the old Suburb out of trusted hands. And it provided no security whatsoever against future bad town planning and property development. "George, to whom all credit must go for spotting the danger, was determined to stop it. 'We must mobilise public opinion against the scheme,' he said.

"I was reluctant to become involved in local arguments. But to my horror he persuaded me to help," Miss Henderson continues. First she alerted her friend, another local resident John Braithwaite. Then Chairman of the Stock Exchange "he knew a lot of useful people. He himself helped us magnificently".

Next she bought five shares in the Trust. Then "contrary to all the strict rules in Chambers, I borrowed our copy of the Companies Act, reckoning no-one would miss it over Christmas".

The extraordinary meeting was held. The scheme went through. But "thanks to George who ploughed his way through the Act a loophole was discovered.

"The scheme might still be stopped if we drew up a petition signed by sufficient shareholders and presented to the High Court within a certain time".

There was only fourteen days

in which to serve a writ and very little time to prepare an overall campaign.

Mr Bower's wife, Joanne, gave her support. The Hampstead Garden Suburb Protection Society was quickly formed. Soon afterwards two more key protagonists, Brigid Grafton Green and Kit Ikin joined the ranks.

By early 1962 "we were pedalling around the Suburb on bicycles trying to discover who were Trust shareholders and which people were prepared to sign our petition".

The campaign "went like a bomb. In the first three weeks we raised £3,000 – enough to cover the whole campaign. "We held a public meeting at the Hampstead Garden Suburb Institute. It was terrific, people were almost fighting to get in.

"John Braithwaite made a wonderful speech. Brigid, our press officer got us marvellous publicity."

By this time confesses Miss Henderson "I more or less knew what I was talking about".

"It was my job to keep everyone informed of what we were doing. I found myself coming home each night, preparing my case for the next day, then racing up to the Institute rallying the troops.

"We gained ground rapidly. Heaps of Residents Association members joined us and finally we appeared before the judge.

The judgement said, in essence, that the Trust company announcement which had alerted Mr Bower, had wrongly given the impression that all four of the organisations holding special defence voting powers would have voted for the scheme. The judgement was that the vote of the shareholders was cancelled.

It did not stop the sale. But it did stop the Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust from winding itself up. It also stopped the Trust from distributing the money from the sale.

The Protection Society members were jubilant. It gave them time to ensure the details for the new management scheme were satisfactorily worked out.

And with such legal backing and the by now massive public support, they could exert tremendous influence.

The planning of the New Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust took some six years to complete. Mr Ikin, a solicitor, represented the Protection Society in the lengthy, complex negotiations with the Trust and the Clore/Cotton solicitors.

Miss Henderson "kept on keeping everyone informed and helped behind the scenes". But when the new company opened in 1968, she was among its first directors.

"Most important of all," she indicates, "there were to be no voting shareholders whatsoever in the company.

"We had to make sure that

the control of the Suburb was firmly in the hands of Trust members – people who had lived on the Suburb for three or more years".

With the battle won and the New Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust established, the Protection Society disbanded. Some of its key workers joined forces with the Residents Association, working alongside its executive committee members including Dr Edward Hoblyn, who became its chairman in 1963.

Today Miss Henderson while no longer in a formal role, can be seen around the Suburb, keeping a watchful eye on its planning affairs.

She worries about what she sees. She is even more disturbed "that many people now paying high prices to live here because it is beautiful, are not in the least bit interested in what happens to the area.

"And they care even less about helping to maintain the qualities which make this a Conservation Area. It augurs badly for the Suburb".

"I sympathise with them in some ways. I was once apathetic myself, but luckily I was suddenly made aware.

"I appeal to them to take up their rights – the rights we fought for – the right and the power to influence planning decisions... their right to join the Trust and the Residents Association and help stop Hampstead Garden Suburb from being massacred". VH

When some 50 years ago she moved with her parents to Hampstead Garden Suburb, little did Jean Henderson think that she would help found a local protection society. Nor did it enter her mind that today she would be one of the area's most respected residents.

In fact, Miss Henderson, one of England's first women barristers, readily admits: "For years I knew absolutely nothing about the Suburb's structure... if I had known there was a residents association I would not have joined it... in fact I could not have cared less..."

But now aged 90 and with a major campaign to protect the lovely area from bad property schemes safely tucked under her belt, she remains constantly alert to the ever-increasing stream of new planning threats.

What is more: "Local apathy – the disinterest of younger newcomers – is terrifying. I only hope they wake up to the dangers as I did years ago, and join us before it is too late," she says.

The event which led to her involvement with the Hampstead Garden Suburb Protection Society, speedily formed in early 1962 when the old Suburb was nearly sold lock stock and barrel to a company then part of the Clore/Cotton property empire, was, Miss Henderson confesses: "Quite extraordinary".

She was not then aware that part of the Suburb – known as the old Suburb – was managed by the Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust. She was also

unaware that the other half of the area was managed by Co-Partnership Tenants Ltd. The latter had been taken over by the Clore/Cotton property empire some time before.

"The Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust was, Miss Henderson continues, "A company with elected directors and voting shareholders. I did not know either that in 1954 special voting powers for the defence of this company had been allocated to four influential bodies. One was the National Trust."

But if Miss Henderson was "ignorant of all this" she did and still does play the violin and the viola and "I had a very good friend, George Bower.

"He played the piano. With friends we often enjoyed music together at his house, so I was amazed one night in December 1961 when he came to see me, asking if I owned shares in the Trust."

Mr Bower showed her a document. It announced to shareholders that the Trust company directors had been negotiating with Co-Partnership Tenants Ltd.

CPT wanted to take over the whole of the Suburb – thus the whole area would be owned by the Clore/Cotton group.

The document also announced an extraordinary meeting of shareholders, to be held some three or four days before Christmas. All the special bodies had been consulted and had signified their approval of the scheme "the document gave us to understand".

LETTERS

38, Oakwood Road, London NW11 6RL

18TH June 1990

Dear Sir,
In your spring issue you asked for comments on wheeled bins and much will no doubt have been said (especially in the course of the local elections) about their aesthetic aspect and their general convenience and suitability.

There is a third aspect which I hope will continue to receive long-term consideration. At a recent Friends of the Earth meeting, Mr. Bernard King of the Borough of Barnet described how the Borough's refuse is emptied into containers and conveyed by rail to Bedfordshire, where it is used for filling in huge holes in the ground caused by the extraction of grits.

Certainly this is quite an efficient system. But when the need to recycle scarce raw materials is becoming increasingly urgent, it was surely improvident to commit the Borough to a disregard of this need by investing in a waste-disposal scheme whereby potentially useful metal, glass and paper are buried in the ground and lost. Moreover, the ease with which we can dispose of all our rubbish in one big container acts as a powerful disincentive to using the Borough's limited recycling facilities.

Yours faithfully,
Michael Pickering
Member of Friends of the Earth.

Dear Editor,
Re: Wheelie Bins
As I see it, the only advantage of the wheelie bin is to deprive our visiting fox the opportunity of emptying the contents of this large unsightly refuse retainer over our front garden.

The fox used to tip over the old bins and strew their contents far and wide.

However, I do not feel that this alleviates the inconvenience and unsightliness of the bin's existence.
Yours sincerely,
Veronica Shaw

Dear Editor,
I have a lot of affection for the Heath Extension so I often wish that its name were less pedestrian and more evocative. Will anyone join me in a campaign to rename it? I myself favour Wylde's Fields.

Yours sincerely
Rona Wood
88 Hampstead Way
NW11 7XY

1st July 1990



Jean Henderson campaigning to get into Parliament.



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