

SUBURB MEMORIES FROM THE PRESS

Preserved in the Suburb Archives are many hundreds of cuttings from both national and provincial newspapers, dating from 1905, the year the Suburb was first referred to in the press. From this treasure house, *Suburb News* will now include some of the tales and stories in the belief that they will prove to be of interest and amusement to present residents who follow the long line of Suburb-lovers, beginning with stories of *Beauty and Loveliness*. "A thing of beauty is a joy for ever. Its loveliness increases. It will never pass into nothingness." John Keats.

If one changes Keats' "Things of beauty" into "Place of beauty", it is true to say that when Mrs Henrietta Barnett first wrote about the coming of the Hampstead Garden Suburb in *Contemporary Review* (February 1905), she described a place of great beauty. It was to offer to all classes of society a home amidst the loveliness of nature and the skilled handiwork of man. There were to be tree-lined roads, arbours, gardens, resting places for the old, houses of prayer, schools, shops, a library and a lecture hall. We know now that not all Mrs Barnett dreamed of materialised, partly because at times her heart ran away with her head. One such run-away of her heart is to be seen when she wrote, in the picturesque language she so often used:

"There will be semi-detached, two-storied houses, on the ground floor of which will dwell the family, with the man at its head who is ready and capable of working neatly and productively his tenth of an acre and on the first floor the poor lady or working woman ... who cannot dig but whose refining influence will help the children whilst their mother will be glad to earn something by domestic work."

Whether such an arrangement could ever have been a success, even if sufficient poor ladies or working women of refining influence had been found to match the number of families on the ground floor, is open to doubt, and so far as is known no such arrangement ever materialised.

But apart from her occasional flights of fancy, and the fact that some of her dreams remained but dream, Mrs Barnett's picture of the Suburb's beauty as a whole did come true and it was increasingly appreciated as the years passed by. When the Lord Mayor of London, Sir William Treloar, travelled by stage coach, accompanied by the Sheriffs elect, to open the first of two cottages built in Asumns Place, a certain Mr Henry Knight was so moved that it seemed he could express himself only in poetry - bad poetry it is true, but charged

with deep emotion. It was printed in *Hampstead Record* (October 5th 1907), and ran as follows:

"Oh! haste from the heart of the town for today
Motor bus and the tube will soon bear us away
Where the scene is still rural, the grass is still green.
The landscape is boundless, the prospect serene.
Here to live and breathe there is plenty of room,
The flower're abundant, Dame Nature doth await
But to welcome the wise in this lovely estate.
O sweet garden suburb, secluded and blest,
Shed the mirk and the more of the town from your feet
Live the freest of lives in this rural retreat."

A little later the Rt Hon. Alfred Lyttelton (after whom Lyttelton Road and Lyttelton Playing Fields are named), when opening a Town Planning and Housing Exhibition on the Suburb, was less poetic than Mr Knight, but he too found beauty of mind and beauty of nature on the estate. He was reported as saying that the thirst of modern life for excitement, its febrile restlessness and want of repose would be largely counteracted by surroundings such as those to be found on the Suburb, the features of which repelled modern temptations and led to a more specific enjoyment of life with continuous and enduring pleasures which did not require excitement. (*The Standard*, July 5th 1909).

It may be that not all Mr Lyttelton's sentiments will be echoed today, but as the Suburb grew so its beauty grew with it. One reporter was moved to write that it was one of the most artistically arranged homelands on the green fringe of the Metropolis; a more beautifully situated garden-land home, with its charming little bijou residences, no man or woman of simple tastes and modest means could desire. (*Referee*, February 6th 1909).

The Guardian echoed the same sentiment when it wrote (April 8th 1909):

"The new Suburb is growing

in beauty and promise of beauty every day. There is a serene atmosphere about it ... It seems as if a new era has dawned with the assurance that in the dwellings of the ideal Suburb not only will beauty of line and harmony of light and shade be found but comfort and convenience too."

The beauty of the Suburb was emphasised again in a report in *The Westminster Gazette* (June 14th 1909), which described in particular the hedges that took the place of fences, which were mingled with sweet briar, jasmine, clematis and wild roses, with thousands of daffodils in orchards and open spaces. The variety of the hedges is mentioned many times in early descriptions of the Suburb, but strangely there is only an occasional mention of the privet which frequently surrounded many of the first cottage gardens and of the large houses that were built later. Did the privet hedge become more popular than the wild rose or sweet briar, one asks oneself, because the fear expressed in the *Birmingham Daily Mail* (July 2nd 1908) came true, namely that damage could be done to the gardens behind the flowering hedges by "the predatory creatures who emerge from low haunts of a large town who cannot see a flower growing without wanting to gather it for the sake of mere possession."

Whether or not this is so, Mrs Barnett claimed further floral delight when she wrote (*Architectural Economist*, January 1910):

"I have been happy to influence the Postal Authorities to give permission for the Trust to plant roses, canary creepers and clematis round the telephone poles on the Hampstead Garden Suburb."

Arthur Waugh wrote of the Suburb as "The Land of Beulah" (*The Daily Mail*, July 17th 1909), and those who know John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* will remember that the air in the land of Beulah was very sweet and pleasant, with continual singing of birds and flowers appearing every day, when the sun shone by night and day and the voice of the turtle was heard in the land. "I do not know what more the taste of man can demand", concluded Arthur Waugh.

What may truly be called these idyllic views of the Suburb reached a climax on the occasion of the presentation of "The Masque of Fairthorpe", written by Mr Paul Jewitt, described in *The Hendon Times* (September 16th 1910) as one of Hampstead Gardens Suburb's most worthy sons. This Masque was presented, the paper said, as "A Birth Play" in a Suburb in which there was a reverence for all things, where the flowers bloomed unprotected in perfect safety as no one would dream of picking them. There was perfect safety as no one would dream of picking them. There was perfect order. It would have been a sacrilege to litter the thoroughfares and unseemly to shout aloud and disturb the harmony of silence. All this, went on *The Hendon Times*, was brought about without a forest of notices, of warnings or threats of pain and penalties - usually the only means of keeping the public on the right path. Suburb residents, the paper concluded, were proud of themselves and their municipality and the stranger within its gates came under its subtle influence.

KS

THE INSTITUTE IN THE COMMUNITY

My first and most striking impression of the Institute was of the beauty of the buildings and environment followed closely by amazement that so many students attend our courses in such restricted accommodation.

My plans for the Institute are many and varied but, as a former community educator, one of my objectives is to promote a close relationship with Suburb residents and I accept that any future plan must take on their needs. I would like to arrive at a situation where all residents are involved with the Institute as students, friends or occasional users, and resulting from this involvement they develop a sense of ownership and pride at this valuable local resource.

The Institute curriculum must continue to develop in a way which is consistent with modern trends in the education and training of adults. It would be a mistake for us to allow our curriculum to become outdated and irrelevant to modern needs. Part of our development must be in collaboration with Henrietta Barnett School who share the site, to capitalise on this unique mixed age campus. We share with the School a strong commitment to the education and achievement of girls and women.

Our cultural and social programme must be strengthened to include discussions, talks and musical events using the considerable number of distinguished and well known people living in north-west London.

I completely accept that considerable effort is required to



Josephine White and her successor Fay Naylor. Dame Henrietta looks on.

strengthen the bond between the Institute and the Suburb residents. I would like everyone to know that the Institute is not an EFL school which causes a lot of traffic congestion, but a major provider of a wide range of daytime and evening courses in subjects as diverse as Extra Mural Archaeology to Home Video Production. Our EFL

department is of course outstandingly successful, and the many young students it attracts add a fresh, cosmopolitan element to the atmosphere.

Surely the best way to find out about the place if you have not already done so is to try a course this autumn. We have tried to provide something for everyone.

I look forward to seeing you.

FN

FRIENDS OF THE EARTH

The local Friends of the Earth Group has had a most successful campaigning quarter, with a string of activities which we feel have helped to give us a stronger presence in the area.

With some professional assistance from Peter Kyte and Ken Ackerman, we made a vigorous input to Barnet's Unitary Development Plan and Green Strategy Report.

Local supermarkets have been targeted in a campaign to reintroduce the use of returnable bottles, with the manager of Waitrose in Temple Fortune being presented with the results of a local survey of public opinion on a returnable bottle scheme. Over half of those surveyed in the under-34 age group said they would support a scheme, and a quarter of older customers said they would do so. Returnable bottles can be used fifty times each, resulting in tremendous savings in energy and raw materials. Incidentally, we have written to congratulate Sainsbury's on their recent initiative in asking customers to return carrier bags for re-use or in exchange for a penny.

A protest was also staged at the gas showrooms in Golders Green about the failure of British Gas to produce documentary evidence of the impact of its test drilling operations in the rainforests of Ecuador. Although they have repeatedly said that they will 'report publicly' on their performance, they have not yet done so. The national Friends of the Earth, backed by the Ecuadorean Government, says that crop damage and reduced fish stocks due to water pollution have followed in the wake of the drilling, and is requesting co-operation from British Gas in publishing a review of its environmental assessment.

While on the subject of rainforests, members who came to the May meeting expecting a talk by Pat Saunders of the Society of Friends were treated to a change of programme - Jonathon Doig gave us instead a glimpse of some surprising happenings due to the internal strife on the Burmese/Thai border, where the teak forests are being plundered as the Burmese military dictatorship struggles to raise money from logging concessions to crush the rebellion. Not a local story, certainly, but we were pleased to see that the 'Hendon Times' appreciated its wider importance and gave it excellent coverage.

Finally, I have to report that our membership in Hampstead Garden Suburb and Golders

Green is rising steadily - now nearly 100 - and our finances are in a much healthier state than they were a year ago. Two very successful fund-raising events have helped to bring this about: a Flag Day in Temple Fortune and Golders Green, when the sun shone and encouraged people to put their hands in their pockets for a good cause and we raised over £300, and a lunch at the Unitarian Church hall in Hoop Lane - indoors, due to the unremitting rain but decked with flowers and a lot of enticing home-made food contributed by members, to all of whom, and to the many will helpers, we would like to express our thanks. This raised about £150.

If you would like to join the local group, contact Bobby Brazier (455 2859).

MC

Having truly established ourselves in Hampstead Garden Suburb . .

. . . we feel that we can say we know how you like to be treated. That is why our Hampstead Garden Suburb Staff are patient and prepared to spend as much time and effort as is necessary to find your exact requirements - whether it takes one week or one year.

If you are looking for a home - come in and let us prove that we are the Property Professionals.



14 The Market Place
Hampstead Garden Suburb
LONDON NW11 6JJ.
Tel: 01-458 8448

DAVID
BAKER
ARCHITECTS

1981-1991

A decade of design
in the Suburb

109D Regents Park Road, London NW1 8UR
• Phone 071-722 7220 Fax 071-722 0030 •