

NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

In the autumn an incident occurred in the Suburb which has serious lessons for us all.

One afternoon, three men arrived on the Suburb with criminal intent. Their first act was to visit a house in Heathgate where the householder took absolutely the correct action by refusing to admit them and by immediately alerting the Police. The three men then made off down Meadway to Litchfield Way, where they were noticed by several residents, firstly because they were dressed in a garish and distinctive way and secondly because they acted most suspiciously, looking into the windows of houses and peering over hedges. They were then seen by a resident to approach a house opposite, where one rang the bell while the others peered in at the windows and at the side of the house. The door of the house was opened, and the three rushed in. When in the house, they bundled the owner and his children into one room and then proceeded to search the house - in due course, leaving with various stolen goods.

The Police by this time had deployed their cars and vans round the area, uniformed and plain clothes Police were patrolling on foot and a Police helicopter was overhead. But the three men got away by breaking through back gardens to Kingley Way and eventually escaping over the Heath extension - all of which became known to the Police when, afterwards, they were approached by various residents who had seen all of this happening.

The lessons have been stressed on so many occasions in the past, but nevertheless, must be repeated again.

NO ONE SHOULD EVER OPEN THE FRONT DOOR TO A STRANGER UNTIL HE HAS BEEN CHECKED OUT. NO STRANGER SHOULD EVER BE ALLOWED TO ENTER YOUR HOUSE UNTIL YOU ARE COMPLETELY SATISFIED THAT IT IS SAFE TO ALLOW HIM TO DO SO.

The correct way to check a

stranger who says he has come to read your gas or electricity meter is to record your gas and electricity meter numbers on a small piece of adhesive paper stuck to the inside of your back door. You then ask the stranger to quote your meter number. If he does so correctly, you admit him. If he fails to do so, dial 999 fast. This is the whole purpose of fitting a chain or limiter to your front door (and back door). A chain is NOT to provide additional security, or back-up, to your 5-lever mortice deadlock and other locks on your door - but is so that you can put it in place when the door bell rings to enable you to open the door just enough to see who is outside without actually letting anyone in. Of course, if you can see outside through a window, or you shout through the letterbox or you have an intercom arrangement, you may not need a chain as well.

Having read this far, no doubt many of you may be saying to yourselves: Why does he go on,



and on about chains and limiters and strangers at the door? We have heard this so many times before. Can't he think of anything else to say?

But the point is that although most residents may know about this in theory, they just don't do it in practice. I call on countless people on the Suburb and, in the majority of cases, when I ring the bell, the front door is thrown wide open without any attempt being made first to check who I am. If I do say anything to people, they tend to laugh, saying they know what they are supposed to do but, for goodness sake, this is Hampstead Garden Suburb, surely, and not the Wild West!

But the fact is that, from time to time, some really vicious characters DO visit the Suburb. At present the occasions may be rare, but the more word gets around in the criminal fraternity that it is easy to barge straight in when front doors on the Suburb are opened, then the more this method will be used.

And do bear in mind that this lesson must be understood not just by us house holders and our spouses, but also by all our children and 'au pairs' and any 'daily' who works for us.

The next problem that comes up over and over again is how to persuade Suburb residents that they should be suspicious of characters that look out of place or act strangely - in fact, they should be suspicious of ALL strangers until they have proved their bonafides - and, as responsible citizens.

THEY MUST DIAL 999

On this occasion, having been alerted by the Heathgate resident, the Police were in the Suburb in considerable numbers and literally waiting for the next 999 call to home them in on these three men. Throughout this time the men were seen and suspected by numerous people, but none rang 999. One woman actually saw the men when in her car, which was fitted with a car phone. But she contacted the Police only half an hour later, after she had collected her daughter from a ballet lesson and returned home again - by which time the men had gone.

In summary, the Police and Neighbourhood Watches will do all possible to protect Suburb residents and to prevent crime on the Suburb. But, as responsible citizens, Suburb residents must get their own act together and play their part too.

And finally - after a tiring and frustrating evolution, the last straw for the Police was when they received a complaint from one Suburb resident about the noise made by the Police helicopter and how it had disturbed his afternoon! **PL**

WHY NOT JOIN THE RA COUNCIL

Ever thought of being nominated for election to the RA Council? There are plenty of reasons to do so. The idea of serving the local community appeals to some. There are always plenty of jobs to be done, needing all sorts of skills: organising, secretarial, accounting, catering, using computers, chairing meetings, helping with events, and not least, simply contributing commonsense ideas in the discussion forum of the Council meetings (monthly on the first Tuesday, in one of the Institute rooms). You don't have to be exceptional to be able to contribute in one way or another, and people can devote more or less time to RA affairs,

depending on inclination and time available. There is also the satisfaction of knowing what's going on in the Suburb and being involved in events.

Council members are normally elected at the AGM, this year on 25th March, but people can also be co-opted to membership of one of the Standing Committees (listed in the back of the Yellow Directory), which consider specialised aspects of Suburb affairs. If you think you might be interested, telephone one of the existing Council members or Ward Organisers listed in the Directory to find out more about it and get yourself nominated, if you think the idea worth pursuing. **PRGT**

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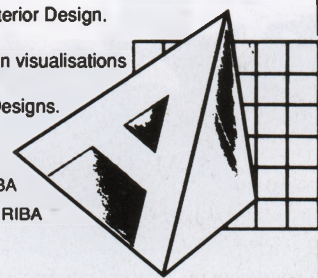
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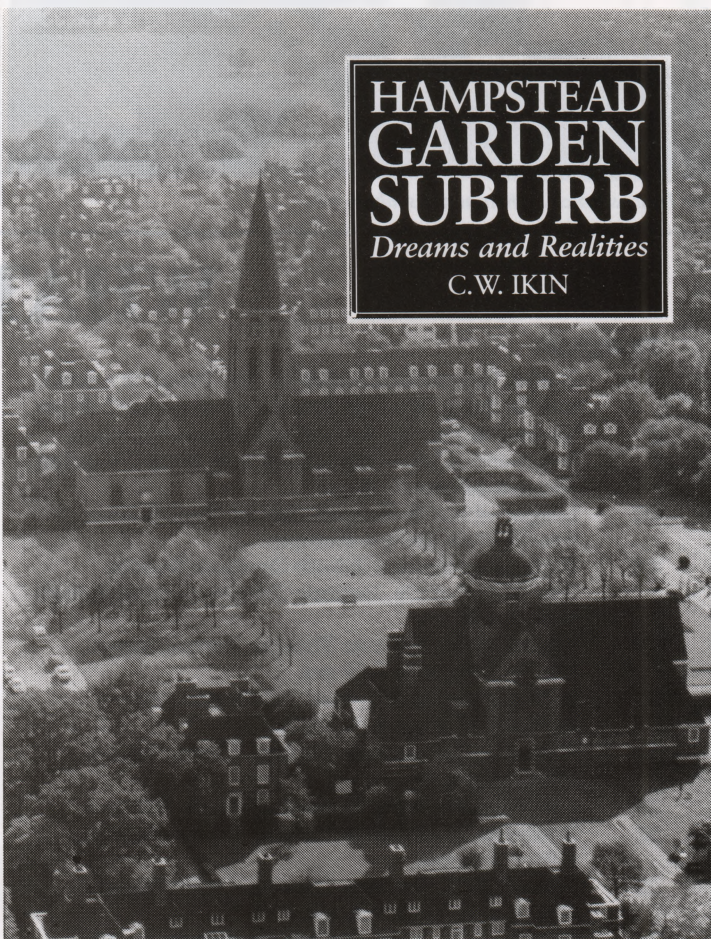
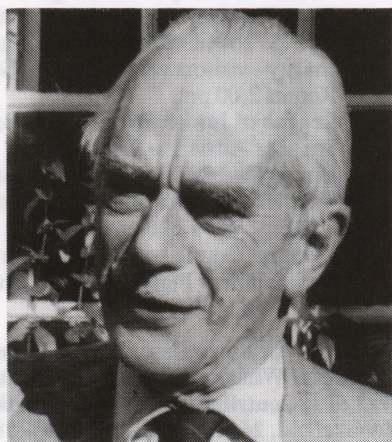
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Hampstead Garden Suburb represents one of Britain's most famous attempts to create a type of ideal community: where, in beautiful, pastoral surroundings, but a few miles from the noise and grime of the big city, would dwell a community of mixed social classes and incomes.

Mistakes, wrong decisions, bad intentions, malpractice, laziness have all prevented the Suburb becoming what it might have been. Yet despite this, the Suburb is world-renowned; its inhabitants are always ready to defend it. Now a conservation area, carefully overseen by the New Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust, it remains a monument to socially creative town planning and architecture.



Kit Ikin's fascinating book is just the thing to send to friends who have left the Suburb or as a welcome gift to new arrivals, certainly it should be on every Suburb coffee table.

Published jointly by the Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust and the Residents Association your copy of this 176 page book has been reserved for you at the Trust office at a special early-purchase price of only £9.50 (after March £12.50).

Call in or send the coupon with your cheque for £9.50 plus £1.50 p.p. (free delivery on the Suburb)

**Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust,
862 Finchley Road, London NW11 6AB.**

The unusual story of Hampstead Garden Suburb, from its beginnings in the 1900s to the present day, is the subject of this book. The author, C.W. Ikin, brings an authoritative eye especially to the intricacies of the legal aspects of the Suburb's history, and charts the course of its development through the maze of byelaws, acts of Parliament and regulations. In particular, where records have disappeared or are at risk, he goes into some detail. He has lived in the Suburb all his life and now occupies the house where he grew up: his garden wall is the boundary between Hampstead and the Suburb; his garden fence bounds Hampstead Heath.

Please send me copies of HGS Dreams and Realities. I enclose my cheque payable to HGS Trust for (£9.50 each) and £1.50 p.p. (if outside the Suburb)

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