

## "How the Other Half Loves"

To be fair to all those concerned with this production I had better confess that I find Ayckbourn an over-rated dramatist and consider this particular play to be one of his least successful. The characters seem to be very poorly fleshed out and humour arises mainly out of the rather cumbersome device of having the living rooms of two different houses on the stage at the same time. This must have given the director and the set designer some headaches. How to fit all this into such a small space? John Woolf and David Lane are to be congratulated on some masterly solutions. The complicated set worked and the staging of the dinner party, which closes Act One, was very successful. But this scene is an irritating device since one party takes place twenty-four hours before the other and it is the only time that the time sequence slips.

The programme quotes Eric Bentley on Comedy. He says in the last sentence quoted that "Comedy takes place on the other side of despair" but there was not

much of that in evidence here. The characters are rather boring and it is difficult to care what happens to them. Three couples are involved in a comedy of doubt and deception. Is Frank Foster's wife Fiona having an affair with Bob Philips and what is going on between the Featherstones? The answer is not much.

The cast struggled a bit and Roger Rose (good actor that he is) was miscast as Frank Foster. He has such an imposing appearance that one was not able to believe in his muddled thinking. Ashley Collins as his wife, Fiona, looked elegant and shot guilty glances from time to time. Matthew Wootton made such a boorish horror of Bob that Teresa's coming back for more seemed quite out of character. Judith Gubbay gave a spirited performance as a wife unable to cope with her life. Tim Solomons and Jane Gordon as the Featherstones were very good as this innocent couple caught up in other people's lives.

LS

## Hospice Group

It might be the welcoming coffee morning, the choral concert at St Jude's, the viewing of a summer garden, a cosy Bridge evening, or even a sponsored swim, there is no doubt that the residents of Hampstead Garden Suburb give their fullest support to the tremendously successful fund-raising activities arranged by the North West Support Group for the North London Hospice.

Centred in the Suburb, the N.W. group promises in 1993 to bring regular, varied and innovative functions both to be enjoyed socially and for financial advantage of the purpose-built hospice in North Finchley. Membership of the group is a minimum of £5 per year in return

for which regular updates on the progress of the Hospice and future events will be mailed direct. (You can contact the Membership Secretary, Mrs Y Oliver, 4 Asmunds Hill, NW11, Tel: 081-455 8741 for an application form.)

Now open to in-patients, the Hospice continues to provide strong support with their Home Care Team. The multi-faith commitment is carried throughout every aspect of North London Hospice "life". Knowing that the highly trained staff and army of volunteers are sensitive and aware of their spiritual needs, gives patients and their loved ones added strength and courage in the face of the most traumatic of life's experiences.

## 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



## FIT FOR 1993?

Individual  
and Group Workouts  
to suit your requirements

Terry Clarke, PEA, IDEA  
455 9997



Kitty Slack with Glyn

The 1990 RA Annual General Meeting honoured six individuals for outstanding service to the Suburb as first honorary members of the Association and in 1991 two more names were added, one of whom was Kitty Slack, best known perhaps for her fascinating social history of the Suburb, "Henrietta's Dream", published in 1982.

Kathleen M. Slack was born in Hull into what she calls "the heart of Methodism". Her maternal grandfather was a missionary in Australia and her paternal grandfather a Methodist minister. Her father was a director in the firm of Rickitt & Co. Her mother was socially involved and there were often Barnardo boys staying with the family over Christmas. Kitty was the youngest of a family of eight — "two boys, two girls, three boys and me, a neo-Victorian family" as she puts it. Luckily father was a believer in equal opportunities which was important in view of five brothers to educate. Even so she says that she was virtually ignored at home and did not find herself as a person of mind and worth until she left her Methodist Boarding School and, after two years back in Hull, went to the London School of Economics to study for a Social Science Certificate. However she was persuaded to take a degree in Sociology by her tutor. After graduating she joined the staff of the London Union of Girls' Clubs and later, during the war, worked with the Board of Education Youth Service. She then became a tutor for the Institute of Almoners before going back to LSE in 1948 as lecturer in Social Administration.

Kitty remained there for twenty years, and then had two years part-time teaching at Bedford College before she retired.

Kitty moved to her present home in Asmunds Hill from Golders Green in 1970 and very soon met Brigid Grafton Green and became involved in work in the Suburb Archives. She took particular interest in the collection of more than 3,000 architectural plans. These can be viewed by architects, builders and householders and copies can be bought for a reasonable sum.

She has written two other books: "A History of the Institute" as yet unpublished, and the recently completed "A History of the Friends Meeting House and Friends", which she hopes will come out in time for their 80th anniversary this year. She has also begun work on "A History of the Fellowship". Kitty became a member of the Society of Friends during World War Two. In 1983 she gave the Henrietta Barnett Memorial Lecture.

After six rewarding years among the archives she plans to hand over in January, but will remain as a trustee.

The Suburb, which has a way of spurring on its lively inhabitants, will surely not allow her to be uninvolved for long. LS



The care and understanding that went into the design and construction of houses should be employed in their maintenance. When redecorating, details as shown above should never be overpainted in white. Builders and decorators may need to be reminded of this.

## Coach Comfort Aids Hassle-free Theatre Trips

Almost door-to-door transport is a major benefit of membership of the HGS Theatre Club, according to members who ventured out on a wet and windy November evening to see Harold Pinter's play, "No Man's Land" at the Almeida Theatre in Islington.

As part of the cost of the monthly outing, members board a private hire coach outside Pullen's in Temple Fortune which takes them to the door of the theatre. On the return journey

the coach drops off at Market Place as well as Temple Fortune.

The coach facility has already taken the hassle out of a trip to The Mill at Sonning on the Thames for a Saturday matinee. In February and March visits to evening performances at Watford and Greenwich are on the calendar. RA members are invited to join the Theatre Club by phoning Ruth Gumb (455 6490) for an application form.

PO

## Hampstead Garden Suburb Mervyn Miller and A. Stuart Gray

Phillimore. Chichester, 1992.

Expectations have rightly been high since this book was announced. The recipe seemed infallible. Take the architectural guru of the Suburb, who has also soaked up the atmosphere of the Suburb community by rendering innumerable personal kindnesses to old and new residents over 60 years and strap him to a scholar who is the internationally acknowledged planning historian of the Suburb and of the wider English Garden City movement in which it is set, and who also actively serves on the Trust Council; know that they are able to stand on the shoulders of the high quality corpus of existing writing about the Suburb, ensure they have access to the unrivalled Suburb archives, give them the strong support of the Trust, and a Cordon Bleu dish must emerge.

Indeed there is much to praise. This is an important work and it is a handsome book. The illustrations, especially the colour photographs and the maps and plans that match them, are quite splendid, and will open up the Suburb to many residents and visitors.

Manifestly the book will be valuable to architectural and planning students and historians and also for the many Suburb residents who have been involved in some of the events that it recounts, though I suspect that the reaction of the last will often be 'Actually it was rather more complicated than that'. For 'lay residents' it will enjoyably inform our knowledge of the history of our neighbourhoods and illuminate our perspective of the built environment. A stroll to the Bull & Bush will be made more exciting by the knowledge of the platforms down below for the Northern Line Wyldes Farm station which was never opened. "Walking to Marks and Spencer we will people Hampstead Way and Asmunds Hill with the 400 navvies at work on the pioneer development of the Artisans' Quarter, and will also imagine our predecessors contacting the butcher in Hendon by postcard. We shall enjoy the memory of Raymond Unwin deliberately taking a slow boat to a Philadelphia conference on city planning so as to work eight hours a day on his draft plan for the New Suburb. Northway will remind us of the narrow gauge railway with steam engine hauling heavy building materials from East Finchley. Friends House will be recognised as a copy of Penn's Meeting House at Jordans, Pennsylvania.

Much that is described in the book of the contradictory personality of Dame Henrietta herself

whets our appetite for a more detailed account of her life and character. She was clearly a despotic bully and something of a NIMBY too - witness her concern to protect the outlook from her own windows and, alone amongst her neighbours, to have her own Suburb 'motor house', but she did show admirable tenacity in pursuing her Suburb goals, she abhorred noise and surely it was wrong for her to be maligned as a Philistine simply because she liked pelargoniums and calceolarias.

Thus Miller and Gray will be the most important element in the precious core of writing about the Suburb.

But when it comes to reading the text from start to finish one is left with a feeling of disappointment; the high expectations are dashed. The book seems to have been roughly cobbled together - it is certainly no seamless collaboration. Despite the immense local knowledge of the authors there is a lack of engagement and a lack of balance; major issues and trivial matter are given equal weight; unusually, the total is less than the sum of the parts. One seeks in vain an introduction which could have clarified the scope of the chronicle and described any difficulties that the authors encountered. The essence of our privileged sanctuary is not explored, yet for many the feeling of returning from work and coming out of the tube station or breasting the Northern Heights in the car and dropping down into the Suburb bring enormous feeling of relief and security in the broadest sense, of being able to unwind and relax in a community of men and women of goodwill, a feeling which has more to do with the planning and the people than with the architecture.

There are sad omissions. For example, the soft landscape with brings about the greening of the Suburb is scarcely mentioned, although the growth of trees in our gardens has wrought some of the major visual changes. Surprisingly, Dame Henrietta's gift of apple bushes and other plants to new residents, and the fact that many still flourish, is not recorded. There is no discussion of the welcome high quality management of the Heath Extension by the City of London Corporation, or the less certain touch of Barnet Council in Northway Gardens and their environs or in Big Wood and Little Wood. The imaginative initial policies in street tree planting with interesting single species in many roads and the

continued on page 7

## Rooms in the Suburb Rooms with Bath Parking

## CENTRAL HOTEL

35 Hoop Lane  
Golders Green  
London NW11 8BS

Tel: 081-458 5636  
Fax: 081-455 4792