

The strength and weakness of Neighbourhood Watch

Neighbourhood Watch can tell us what to do to protect our property, ourselves and our neighbours. But it is entirely up to us whether we follow this advice or not. Here is the tragic story of an event that took place in the Suburb in the Autumn which starkly illustrates these facts.

What happened

When their Neighbourhood Watch was first formed, an elderly couple put up their Neighbourhood Watch stickers on all sides of their house. They also had their property marked and put up Marked Property stickers. However, after a time they wondered whether all these stickers were really necessary and, because they felt that the

stickers didn't enhance the appearance of their home, they removed all of them except for one Neighbourhood Watch sticker by their front door.

Then some weeks ago an opportunist burglar singled out this house and gained entry by smashing a side ground floor window which was shielded from view by a high privet hedge. The somewhat antiquated and battery-operated burglar alarm sounded outside the house and was heard by neighbours on either side and nearby. But they failed to dial 999 because, so they said, they were not absolutely sure of the precise location of the alarm. Consequently the burglar had time to go up to the master bedroom and seize a box from the

dressing table containing all the woman's jewellery.

The lessons

The lessons to be learnt in hindsight from this distressing event may seem obvious. Nevertheless it may be worth asking the following questions:

- Have you got a senior citizen or other vulnerable person as a neighbour? If you have - and you are not already looking after them - would it not be an idea to get to know them and come to some arrangement for keeping an eye on them and their house, and advising them without appearing nosy?
- Have you - and they - got Neighbourhood Watch

stickers on all sides of the house - not just on the front?

- Have you - and they - marked all valuable property and got at least five - and preferably eight or more - Marked Property stickers prominently displayed?
- Have you got a high privet hedge that could shield a burglar from view and that could help to muffle the sound of breaking glass? If so, could the height of the hedge be conveniently lowered to give less protection to a criminal and more protection to your home? - plus the advantage of much easier cutting in the Spring and Summer.

- Have you got a modern burglar alarm which makes enough noise outside your house to alert all the neighbours, and that makes the very devil of a noise inside your house, thus scaring the living daylight out of all but the most foolhardy of intruders? (By law, an alarm must now also have a 20 minute cut-out!)

- Do you keep your valuable jewellery in a jewellery box in the most obvious place to look for it, either on top of your dressing table or inside one of your dressing table drawers? Or do you hide it, or lock it away, in a place where no burglar is likely to locate it quickly?

- If you hear an alarm ringing do you ALWAYS dial 999 and call the police? Or do you leave it to someone else, or make excuses that you don't know precisely where the noise is coming from?

Neighbourhood Watch works where responsible citizens are determined to make it work. If it isn't working for you, perhaps that isn't the fault of Neighbourhood Watch. PL



The Suburb and Hong Kong



At the end of September 1992 one of the Council members of the Residents Association took part in an unusual ceremony in Hong Kong. S.F. (Bill) Bailey, Council member and secretary of its Roads and Traffic Committee, worked there from 1967 to 1983, and in his spare time founded and chaired from 1969 to 1980 the Hong Kong Arts Centre. The building was first opened to the public on 25 September 1977, and last year they decided to do something special to celebrate their fifteenth anniversary. So they invited Bill and his wife Tina to fly out for an anniversary party and celebrations, and Bill to unveil a plaque naming one of the teaching rooms after him - not an offer to be refused!

In its nineteen floors the Centre has a ballet rehearsal and practice room, a small studio theatre, a recital hall/film theatre, a 460-seat main theatre, two and a half floors of exhibition gallery, a restaurant, bars and snack bars, and eight floors of offices and teaching rooms. The Centre is multi-cultural in almost every way. Most, but by no means all, the members are Chinese; the arts activities take in Chinese forms, other Far Eastern forms, Indian, European, and anything else that looks or sounds interesting; and encompasses music, theatre, dance, visual arts, whatever. Since it opened in 1977 it has been crowded from early morning to



late at night, and caters for people from pretty well every walk of life, although probably the biggest single group consists of students of one sort or another.

Most of the money for the building and equipment (and it is very well equipped) was raised in cash, and the site was provided at a peppercorn rent by the Hong Kong Government. The Government later wrote off the remains of the bank loan covering building costs, but apart from that it has from its inception to the present day not had a penny in public subsidy, nor asked for one. The financial position fluctuates from year to year but it always keeps its head above water, and it ended 1991/92 with an operating surplus of over 12 per cent, and liquid reserves of over 32 per cent of the year's expenditure of about £2.6m. One wonders whether the British Arts Council knows about this.

Incidentally, Bill reports that he and Tina had a great time, with their feet hardly touching the ground for ten days.

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Hampstead Garden Suburb

unconvincing reasons for their abandonment are not examined.

The chapter on 'Life in our Garden Suburb' is a particular anti-climax, being little more than a superficial scrap-book with a fascinatingly unimpressive catalogue of Suburb worthies. The Suburb families of three or four generations who have already founded public service dynasties are not explored, the perspective of the Suburb held by the Members and officers of Barnet Council is not examined. The rush towards throttlement and visual disfigurement by cars and other traffic cannot be solved by wringing of hands. Chris Kellermen's short essay in Suburb 75 on buildings and people is far more illuminating and balanced.

Yet a second reading straight through of the book followed by a

re-reading of Kit Ikin's dreams and realities led to such a similar feeling of disillusionment, of ending not on an up-beat note but trailing-off like a damp squib, that reflection suggests to me that the main fault lies not with the authors, who are rightly describing what they find, but with those who live 'on the Suburb' (itself an arrogant phrase which many of us use with relish).

Latinisms are in fashion. Enjoy this book, and revel in the motto which uncovers from Colin Gregory's researches into the Suburb pageants just before the first world war; the 1910 pageant held above Bigwood Road fittingly concluded:

'FLOREAT SUBURBIUM HORTULORUM'

SH

HAMPSTEAD GARDEN SUBURB

Mervyn Miller and A. Stuart Gray

HAMPSTEAD GARDEN SUBURB was described by Sir Nikolaus Pevsner as 'the most nearly perfect example of the unique English invention ... the Garden Suburb'. Founded by Dame Henrietta Barnett in 1907, after a long campaign to protect the open land north of Hampstead Heath from the indiscriminate development, the Suburb was planned by Raymond Unwin, with Edwin Lutyens responsible for the Central Square with its twin churches and Institute. Unwin, with his partner Barry Parker, had recently planned Letchworth, the first garden city, while Lutyens, after a decade of designing country houses, was anxious to participate in the 'high game' of classical architecture and civic design. The built environment of the Suburb thus encapsulates a unique blend of Arts and Crafts informality and meticulously detailed Queen Anne and Georgian style.

Life in the Garden Suburb, particularly in the early years, attained an idyllic quality, and many active residents' groups were formed. During the inter-war period a more commercial approach was evident and the tranquillity of the Suburb was shattered by the routing of the Barnet by-pass, now the A1, through its northern sector. Following extensive war damage, the post-war period was dominated



by the takeover of the original Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust and the sale of its assets. Following residents' action, the Trust was reconstituted and continues to administer and 'outstanding' Conservation Area.

In this new book an appraisal of the architectural and planning achievements of the Suburb is set against an

entertaining account of its enfolding, varied history. The authors are supremely well qualified for their task and their book will stand as the definitive account of the Suburb for many decades to come. In addition to its value to social and architectural historians and town planners, its profusion of splendid illustrations alone will ensure enduring popularity for the book among all who have known or have lived in the Hampstead Garden Suburb.

HAMPSTEAD GARDEN SUBURB is published as a handsome, well-produced volume, with over 150 illustrations, 20 in colour, and costs £19.95.

If you would like a copy please complete the coupon below and return it to the Trust Office together with a cheque for £19.95. We shall deliver the book by hand. For addresses outside the Suburb please send us an additional £2.50 to cover packing and postage.

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