

'Most readable' Suburb book

A fresh edition of 'Henrietta's Cream' was launched at the Anniversary Festival. More than just a reprint of the version published 15 years ago, it has an extended text and fresh illustrations. Of all books about the Suburb's past, Kathleen Slack's is still the most readable, although its coverage is somewhat uneven (and it lacks an index).

From the outset, Henrietta Barnett was remarkable. In her teens, she chose to leave a home of luxury to work among the East End poor for 30 years; marrying a shy and awkward curate who would later become a distinguished canon of Westminster Abbey, founder (with her) of Toynbee Hall and of the Whitechapel Art Gallery.

Her energy and forcefulness, which brought her critics, were what achieved so much—the Suburb included; but Kathleen Slack also evokes the warmth, concern for others and practical abilities which gave her greatness.

The influence of her 'dream'. The Suburb, is sometimes forgotten. It was founded long before (and helped to bring about) town-planning laws, provision for preservation orders and government involvement in social housing and environmental issues: all now taken for granted worldwide, but unheard of in 1907. At that period, to be a woman, and under-educated, was a double handicap for her, increasing one's amazement at all she succeeded in pioneering.

What she failed to achieve was the intended mix (no integration was intended) of social classes here, with workers from Whitechapel occupying small and bathroomless houses in what is still referred to as the artisans' quarter of the Suburb—now modernised and inhabited, like all the rest, by business and professional people. Artisans were meant to number a third of the population but this was never achieved. The disruption of the 1914-18 war meant that control over new buildings slackened, the original high ideals were dissipated and community spirit weakened. In the 1960s there was a narrow escape from complete takeover by commercial developers. (No escape, alas, from the bisection of the Suburb by the roaring A1 which was allowed to slice through it, ending the shopping heyday of the once peaceful Market Place.) Kathleen Slack makes the important point, often overlooked, that although Henrietta was the prime mover, Canon Barnett too was active in planning the Suburb, its churches, the Institute (which he intended to provide for communal activities as well as courses, another lost ideal—the Suburb now has no community centre), as well as housing for widows.



Kitty Slack presents her new book to the lady Mayor, Cllr Agnes Slocombe, at the Festival opening ceremony

The Lutyens clock above the Institute was set there in 1920 as a tribute to his efforts to unite the churches.

As the years passed, the benign despotism of Henrietta and her associates on the Suburb Trust was challenged by a new Residents Association which criticised the 'self-perpetuating clique out of touch with residents', a charge it was later to incur itself; while the focal point of life became not the church (particularly when the proportion of Jewish residents greatly increased) but rather the Golders Green tube station for commuters and Finchley Road shops, those intended for Central Square never having been built.

Among the new material in this edition of 'Henrietta's Dream' is a short account of the synagogue that was built in Norricle Lea in 1932 for about 80 people. One of few Suburb buildings to be bomb-damaged during the war, it was rebuilt in 1967 for a membership that is over 1,000 now (the Reform synagogue does not get a mention even though the Unitarian and RC churches outside the Suburb do).

The Institute's steady enlargement over the years, and the origins of its recent dispute with the Henrietta Barnett School are chronicled here; essential reading for all concerned with the present situation. As such courses as English for foreigners multiplied, so did community facilities decrease (club rooms, the periodicals reading room, and other social amenities went), with pressure on space so intense that even the Suburb's church halls and so forth have become heavily booked for the Institute's teaching needs. The Tea House too was leased to the Institute in 1952—another community resource lost. Meantime the Club House on Willfield Green had gone too (a landmine casualty in the war), replaced only by the present Fellowship House for over-sixties. Out of the pageants that were a regular feature of the early years grew the Open Air Theatre in Little Wood, in its

heyday attracting audiences of up to 3,000, and this at least does still flourish.

One day a historian may research questions that still remain unanswered. Where and why did the 'artisans' go when they left the idyll planned for them? What is the history of the substantial change from a gentile to a Jewish population? Why a plethora of tennis courts and so little other leisure provision? The place of our ten allotment sites in the allotment movement as a whole needs to be chronicled. The preservation of the Northern Heath Extension is a key part of Suburb history, too; as is music in the life of the Suburb (from St Jude's Proms to the Crowndale and the Henrietta Barnett School's orchestras, the outstanding Youth Music Centre and the Operatic Society). Even the transformation of the public lavatories into our notable little Toulous café deserves a footnote in recent Suburb history!—as well as things that perplexingly after 90 years, still don't exist, such as adequate amenities for young people. The list could go on... The Suburb is such an extraordinary place that there is scope for many a researcher yet, and meantime Kathleen Slack has covered an immense amount of ground in under two hundred pages.

Elizabeth Gundry

'Henrietta's Dream' is on sale at £9.99 in the Gallery, which is at the Temple Fortune end of Hampstead Way.

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What a summer!

Gardeners never really seem to have an easy time. What a summer it has been, a beautiful May and floods in June I know the gardens needed it but not a whole year's rain in one hit!

The snails have really enjoyed the rain and they all decided to party in my garden. I have resorted to Murphy's 'Slugit'. It has to be watered over the soil around the plants and stops slugs before they emerge but does not harm worms.

Earlier in the year I was fortunate enough to go to Monet's garden in Giverny. Having seen many of his paintings in various exhibitions I was really looking forward to this trip. I was not to be disappointed. Having read a little about his garden planting and his thoughts, it was obvious that he went for colour and light and not really architectural plants. The garden was a riot of colour, just like an artist's palette with all the colours spilling over each other.

On closer examination it was interesting to note that all this was achieved with fairly simple plants but all the colours put together caused the overall effect.

The borders were lined with flag irises but these were not yet in bloom; a pity, had I gone a week later they would have been. In the middle of the iris borders, the plants were forget-me-nots, wallflowers, pansies and tulips. All the colour was achieved by these fairly simple plants. Colours were combined which screamed at you, orange wallflowers with red pansies, yellows with blues etc. Pale pink tulips poked through a haze of blue forget-me-nots. I wondered what plants replaced these once they had gone over and was told that dahlias and sunflowers were to be next in the beds. There really was very little herbaceous except for lilies and phlox. I have decided to try something similar myself in the autumn, with wallflowers, forget-me-nots and pansies but I

don't think I will be quite so bold with colours; why don't you give it a whirl?

In May, I made my annual trip to Chelsea; every year there is one plant to dominate the show and this year it was *Iris Sibirica*. I was pleased as I have many of these in my garden, tall elegant plants with deep blue flowers. Even after flowering the tall leaves are very attractive.

They take up far less space than the flag iris and planted near Johnson's blue geranium and Artemisia Powis Castle they look magnificent. Another winner in my garden this summer has been adenophora, a tall slender plant of three feet in purple blue and interspersed with larkspur, made an ideal herbaceous border.

As we approach August there are a few things we should be doing. If you are growing dahlias, make sure they are staked properly as it can get a bit blustery in the coming months and these very large plants, with their bold flowers can become top heavy. Don't forget to disbud if you want large specimen flowers. You can take cuttings of shrubs and also prune others, such as philadelphus, deutzias and weigelas, taking out some of the old wood. Colchicums can be planted now to flower in the next couple of months.

September is the time for lifting and dividing perennials. If you strolled around earlier in the year and made notes, you should now carry out these jobs. I'm going to be bold and risk moving a peony. I could see earlier in the year that it was in the wrong place. It will probably sulk and not flower for a few years but I'm still going to try. There are two schools of thought on pruning roses, some people do it now, others in the spring. I tend to do a bit of both (belt and braces). I find that by pruning now the garden looks tidier but also reduces the possibility of wind rock and then I give them a light touch in the

spring.

It's probably the last time this year to clip the hedges. Don't put it off until the spring, you will only regret it later (believe me). Time to lift the exhausted annuals and replace with pansies, wallflowers, polyanthus etc. You can deadhead perennials, but some people like to leave seed heads for the birds in winter and it also tends to protect plants from very heavy frosts. I deadhead and cut down because it looks tidier, but then that's just me! Apply a slow release fertiliser to herbaceous perennials at four ounces a square yard, which will help them for next year.

In October I will be doing my tubs. Replace the top two inches with fresh soil, give the soil some food and have fun with polyanthus, ornamental cabbages and small hardy cyclamens with winter pansies. I used this combination last year and they kept going for months. Containers planted with tulips and then winter pansies on top, come the spring, tulips poke through the pansies and the effect is so lovely. Colour co-ordination for example, yellow tulips and blue pansies or shocking pink tulips and dusky pink pansies. Just because winter is coming, doesn't mean that we can't have continuous colour.

I read somewhere that the Queen is having a crocus lawn planted for the millennium. Yes you have guessed, I'm going to do it as well. I am going for two colours, purple and white, and will pop them under the lawn at the front of my house. Come the spring, eat your heart out, Betty! Good gardening! **Diane Berger**

Picture Kenwood

The Friends of Kenwood are running a competition for photographers entitled "Kenwood and its Landscape". There are valuable prizes to be won and the closing date is 31 December. There are two classes, under-14 and adult. For further information contact 19 Southwood Hall, Muswell Hill Road, N6 or phone 458 1677.

Suburb Portraits

Professional local artist will create a unique water colour, coloured pencil or pastel portrait of your home, garden, pets, children or the beautiful Suburb scene you choose. To commission an original memento, contact **Tamara on:**
0958-675288 or 0171-287 3998



The Gallery, which is run by Residents Association volunteers and supported by the HGS Trust, sells Suburb books, maps, cards and the work of more than thirty local artists. Browsers are welcome.

The Garden Suburb Gallery

at the Temple Fortune end of Hampstead Way
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