

# Christopher 'Kit' Woodroffe Ikin 1921-1998

In the late afternoon of 22nd April, 1998, at a meeting of the Tilford Charitable Trust, the chairman brought proceedings to a close, and the Hon. Treasurer said: "You'll have to excuse me now - I must go - my meter time is running out". Kit Ikin could hardly have known that these were almost certainly his last words, but he would have appreciated the metaphor. He set off for home to his beloved Windy Ridge (No1 Wildwood Rise) in the Hampstead Garden Suburb, but he never arrived. Somehow, he managed to get his car to the curb before he collapsed at the wheel with a fatal heart attack. Taken to nearby University College Hospital, he died peacefully five days later on 27th April. This is how he wanted it to be, certainly not to be 'kept alive' or to linger on as an invalid. But his sudden death was a severe shock; he was the sort of person who seemed always to 'be there'.

At his funeral, the West Chapel of Golders Green Crematorium was filled with his family, friends, neighbours and colleagues, come to pay their respects to a man who gave so freely of his time,

thought and talents to others. As befitted a robust Baptist, it was a simple service of favourite hymns and prayers, with tributes paid by the present Minister of Heath Street Baptist Church in Hampstead, Rev. Edwin Robertson, and by his predecessor, Rev. Basil Amey. The scripture reading of the parable of the talents was entirely appropriate for a good a faithful servant - a genuine activist in his Christian faith. Later on, at Windy Ridge, his azaleas and roses in full bloom in his carefully tended borders stood testament to his favourite relaxation, and the union flag hung limply at half-mast to remind the gathering of his passing as we exchanged reminiscences and memories of him.

Kit was born and bred in the Garden Suburb and lived there all his days, except for four years military service in the Second World War. His first arrival at Windy Ridge was greeted by two older sisters, Ailsa aged 10 and Jane aged 5. Despite the age differences, the siblings were always a close-knit trio and their top-floor nursery was a happy haven, with acres of the Heath and Heath Extension

to roam on and explore. In the days when children habitually walked to school (without a special day being designated for this activity as recently!) young Kit was escorted hand-in-hand by Ailsa all the way from 'Ikin's Corner' to what is now Abbeyfield House in Homesfield, Erskine Hill, where the Anglican 'Waifs and strays' made room for the Henrietta Barnett School kindergarten. Kit was one of a few boys in this little colony of the Dame's 'subjects' and he delighted in describing her state visits and acknowledging that he was an H.B.S. 'Old Boy'. Ailsa recalls how they walked right down the middle of the Heath Extension, sometimes stopping at Miss Fields' drinking fountain and at the little sweet shop which was part of the sports pavilion. No doubt this is where he developed his firm attachment to his (then) 'big' sister and their mutual interest in trees and landscape features was fostered. After 'graduating' from HBS Junior School, he went on to Mill Hill School, a non-conformist establishment, and from there to a year at Cambridge with the evacuated L.S.E., then straight into the army. He was a natural patriot and soldier, often referring to himself as 'an old soldier' - but saying little about his army career, which included the Arnhem landings, where he was taken prisoner after landing safely from a glider. When he came home again he decided on the law as a profession and joined his maternal grandfather Woodroffe's practice.

When Kit married Miss Molly Buffard, they settled in No. 35 Wildwood Road, where they raised four children. Busily engaged in his law practice, he was nevertheless a devoted family man and found spare time for church affairs and a growing interest in suburb management and the history of the wider environs of Hampstead, the Heath and Golders Green. The war and its aftermath had far-reaching consequences for the Suburb and a public-spirited resident like Kit was bound to be involved in seeking ways to protect the area from undesirable development and to ensure the preservation and enhancement of the buildings and street scenes.

It would take many hours and pages even to summarise not only the intricacies of the ownership of the Suburb land and how it came to be sold into the Charles Clore empire in 1962, but also the machinations of many individuals, mostly well intentioned: members of the 'Old' Trust Council, the Dame Henrietta Barnett Board (administrators of

her will), the Residents' Association and the Institute Council.

During the next ten years there was constant legal activity and delicate negotiations afoot, with the Protection Society in the vanguard and Kit bearing the brunt of translating ideas into legal action, always in close consultation with his friend Jean Henderson, Chairman of the Society. Many remarkable achievements emerged from the burning of the midnight oil - for all of the Protectionists had their own jobs and other obligations to attend to. Kit more than once postponed an 'intention of sliding out of Suburb affairs once the mess had been cleared up' but he remained on the Council of the Residents Association, of which his brother-in-law, Edward ('Ted') Hoblyn (married to Ailsa in 1940), became Chairman in 1963, effecting better co-operation with the Protection society. Eventually, the 'old' Trust was obliged to have resident Protectionists as a majority of its Council, and by 1968 it was at last wound up and two new Trusts were established - one for management and the other for charitable purposes, each with a careful balance between elected resident members and appointees from outside interested bodies. Kit was, of course, one of the first elected members of the New Trust Council, serving for a term before the Shankland Cox debacle overtook his patience.

Meanwhile in the 'outside' world, legislation had been moving towards establishing Conservation Areas, and in 1968 the Suburb was the first and largest created by Barnet Borough. Kit was amongst the first members of the Conservation Area Advisory Committee. Another Act with which he was closely involved at the same time was the Leasehold Reform Act (1967) 'piloted' through Parliament by Fred Wisley, another Suburb resident, which opened the door for the New Trust to obtain a Scheme of Management and the right to control all development in the Suburb. Suburb Leaseholds bowed out in 1970. (It was said that Clore realised his schemes for large scale development were doomed and he sold the Suburb in order to buy Selfridge's!) Ashdale Land and Property Co. Ltd bought the Suburb at auction and thereafter gradually came to co-operate with the New Trust in the progress towards the Management Scheme, the sale of Freeholds to individual owners, and (latterly) the sale back to the New Trust of their remaining properties.

Kit continued his interests with the Institute, to work for the Residents Association, set up the Archives Trust (with Brigid

Grafton Green, also his co-historian of the Suburb), and was frequently called upon for advice by the New Trust Council and staff. When the Protection Society's work was virtually complete in 1970 he must have enjoyed the satisfaction of a job well done, but there continued hiccups of various sorts.

The Suburb has been described as 'over-capitalised on IQ' and often there have been arguments, misunderstandings, back-biting and jealousies which waste time and often money as well. It is not recorded what Kit thought of the dispute between the Institute and the Henrietta Barnett School, nor even of the Eruv, since he has been only a rare attendee at Suburb meetings in recent years - sitting often on a back aisle seat from where he could make a trenchant point or two and retire. He had pursued

his interests in Hampstead - the Heath Hampstead Society and Burgh House in particular, and with his family charitable trusts and church. Gardening in his ancient army outfits continued to provide a favourite relaxation, along with walking his Scottie dogs far and wide.

His writings have been often published and his books on the Suburb and Heath are detailed reference books, requiring time and concentration to absorb their facts, figures, dates and quirky comments. He always thought carefully before answering the many enquiries which came to him and the role of 'elder statesman' (as headlined in the 'Ham and High' obituary) began to suit him. It is to be hoped that a worthy memorial be found for him, to honour this prophet in his own country.

DAWN ORR

## Nellie Deane's 100th birthday

One of the Suburb's older residents, Miss Nellie Deane, celebrated her one hundredth birthday on 28 March this year. Although for the last few years Nellie has lived in a residential home near Hitchin, she had previously lived for seventy to eighty years in Midholm.

A large part of Nellie's working life was spent at the London Missionary Society Headquarters (now the Council for World Mission) where she assisted the Welsh Secretary in translating the Bible into Welsh, a skill which has never left her.

Nellie has been a member of the Free Church for 82 years, taking an active part in earlier

times as a member of the choir and as a Sunday school teacher.

She still takes great interest in Church and Suburb affairs, still reads a great deal, mostly biographies, and enjoys visits from Suburb friends.

A number of them were able to join Nellie and her family in a birthday celebration at her cousin's house at Hitchin, where she cut her cake and enjoyed receiving very many flowers, gifts, cards and, of course, the Queen's telegram.

We are all hoping that Nellie will have a lot more happy birthdays to celebrate.

MARGARET BADCOCK

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## News from Fellowship

Some new members have joined Fellowship as a result of reading these notes, and are already enjoying the Club's activities. More new members are always welcome, especially those who are willing to play an active part.

Volunteers are always needed; drivers to transport our house-bound members to and from our Tuesday afternoon meetings are especially welcome; if you can help please contact Shirley Thomas on 458 4131. This involves a commitment about once a month. We would also be grateful for volunteers who could occasionally be called on to visit the house-

bound and lonely - take them for a short walk, or even perhaps a car drive.

One of our most famous members, Miss Mary Butler, was 100 in June - congratulations to you Mary!

Also in June we had our annual visit from the Senior Care and Leisure Group at Toynbee Hall - complementing all the other Suburb activities relating to Toynbee.

Despite the awful weather, croquet has started again - on Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday afternoons commencing at 2pm.

EILEEN WHELAN



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