



In 2018 when work was being carried out to replace the weathervane of St Jude's the time capsule placed in the spire in 1913 to mark its dedication was rediscovered.

The capsule, a hermetically sealed copper cylinder, contained a message (written on vellum) from Canon Samuel Barnett on the state of the world in 1913. Samuel Barnett (1844-1913) was the husband of (Dame) Henrietta Barnett (1851-1936) the founder of Hampstead Garden Suburb.

As the commemorative plaque at its base inside the church records, the tower with its spire was presented to Henrietta to mark her 60th birthday (on 4 May 1911) and was dedicated by the Bishop of London on 8 May 1913. Together they were intended to symbolise the aspiration of the founders of the Suburb.

Canon Barnett considered he was writing at a time of unrest, of the fear of war and of threats to the accustomed order of society (coming in England from the movements and workmen and women), but he went on to suggest that the spirit of unrest was at heart the human spirit seeking to grow in love and in the power of being, and that it would eventually produce a society bound together by natural respect.

It hardly needs to be recorded that Europe and the world have been through some terrible times since 1913, and that the twentieth century turned out to be one of the darkest in history for warfare and political conflict. We still live in difficult times – at present a world-wide pandemic. The identity of the United Kingdom and its place in the world are much less sure than they were in 1913. The United States of America and China have become the leading powers. In the past year or so Britain has withdrawn from the European Union and the movement for an independent Scotland has grown. Continuity is represented by Queen Elizabeth II who will be celebrating the 70th anniversary of her reign next year.

Hampstead Garden Suburb is now in its second century. It is both the same and very different from its early days. The aspiration of its founders, to which Canon Barnett referred, was to show that social harmony could be achieved - and perhaps unrest avoided - through the careful balancing of architecture, street layout and natural features. But it was also a spiritual aspiration. Here, as in their earlier projects in the East End of London - Toynbee Hall and the Whitechapel Art Gallery - the Barnetts had endeavoured to show how through community and beauty the human spirit could be raised and renewed. The tower of St Jude's, now restored, continues to symbolize that aspiration and, it is to be hoped, stimulate residents, visitors and those who see it from afar, to remember, reflect on, and rededicate themselves to the unconquerable hope of the founders of the Suburb.

The Reverend Alan Walker
Vicar
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