

Suburb to twin with French village?

Hampstead Garden Suburb Twinned with St. Clément-de-Rivière. Hardly flows off of the tip of the tongue, nest ce pas?

Let me explain. I am an ex-Suburbite who abandoned the Suburb ship and set off for Montpellier in the south of France back in 1992. I try to earn my keep as a writer-cum-journalist although a more accurate description might be skint in the sunshine! Just as well, therefore, that throughout those seven years I couldn't bring myself to part with our cottage in Chatham Close which was let to a series of tenants all

of whom, I might add, were charmed by the Suburb. I simply couldn't bring myself to let go of an area which I had come to love, even though we have all settled down (wife, two children and one English-barking golden Labrador) exceedingly well. Then I hit upon my grande idée. Not terribly original, admittedly, but one which, nevertheless, I hope will appeal. To have the best of both worlds and twin HGS with our lovely village of St. Clément-de-Rivière situated just a stones throw from Montpellier in the pine-forests and with spectacular views out to the Med and

beyond. Lots to do, lots to see. Lovely people, ignore those old stereotypes about the French!

The vast majority of St. Clémentois to whom I have spoken are terribly enthusiastic about the cultural and educational opportunities which a twinning would undoubtedly confer.

Et voici donc ma question: is there as much enthusiasm on your side of the Channel as there is over here?

Let me know what you think on tel + fax: 00 33 467 84 41 73 or you can send an e-mail to josephs@crit.univ-montp2.fr

JEREMY JOSEPHS

Stop noisy gardeners

It's 12.45pm on a Summer Saturday afternoon. The sun has just come out and we settle down to lunch in the garden. The birds are singing. The garden is green and pleasant.

And then next door's contract gardeners arrive. For the next 45 minutes we hear the decibels of a motor mower. Well, I suppose people have to mow their lawns - but perhaps not on a Saturday lunchtime.

It ends. We breath a sigh of relief. But then 10 minutes later the dreaded leaf blower starts up. It amazes me how a machine

which does so little, makes so much noise. The blower is easily three times as loud as the mower.

I put my head over the fence and shout "Excuse me". The gardener doesn't hear me. I shout again at the top of my voice. Still she doesn't hear me (she isn't wearing ear muffs and I wonder whether that contravenes some health and safety legislation. So I have to bang on the fence to attract her attention. She switches the machine off.

"Your machine is very noisy. Can you use a brush instead

please?" Unlike her colleagues on previous occasions, she seems reluctant to stop. "I need to get this done quickly," she says. I explain that her machine is making more noise than the 85 decibel legal limit, that she is probably in breach of Health & Safety regulations and that if she persists I will get Barnet to close her company down.

I then leave her to it and am pleased to hear the sound of a brush which takes just a couple of minutes to finish the job.

DAVID LEWIS

Neighbourhood Watch seeks a new co-ordinator

At the six monthly meeting of Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinators and Deputy Co-ordinators in April this year, Peter Loyd explained that, having been Area Co-ordinator for over 12 years, he felt the time was coming for him to pass on the 'baton' to someone else, and announced his intention of retiring not later than April 2000.

The Steering Committee are not looking for someone to carry out the role exactly as Peter Loyd has done it. On the contrary, the Committee is seeking someone who will adapt and develop the role, and deploy new initiatives in it, building his/her own ideas and experience. This is above all a management task. The new Area Co-ordinator will need to review and determine the various key functions, which of them s/he will want to carry out personally, and which should be done by other members of a team.

The key requirement, therefore, is for someone who understands how to consult and communicate; how to determine priorities and

set objectives; and how to organise and lead to achieve measurable results.

Such a person may well have retired recently, or be about to retire, or have a job which is considerably less than full time. Maybe in his/her forties, fifties or sixties, s/he should have enough drive and physical and emotional energy to want to do something really worthwhile with the next period of his/her life.

Some knowledge of how Neighbourhood Watch (and Hampstead Garden Suburb) work could be an advantage, but would not be essential.

The Committee believes that it would be very unlikely that the sort of person being sort would respond to any generalised advertisement or public appeal; and Co-ordinators have therefore been asked to consider whether there was anyone they knew who had the necessary requirements who could be approached on a personal basis.

There have been some helpful and positive replies, but enquiries by anyone who would like further details would be very welcome. Any such enquiry would, of course, be treated in complete confidence and without commitment.

Please contact the Committee via Peter Loyd at 12 Meadway, tel 455 4543.

Room for trees to breathe

LBB Tree Officer Andy Hills has arranged a programme of mulching for Suburb street trees planted in grass verges. A small area of grass will be cleared around each tree and mulch put down to prevent weeds and grass growing. This will be better for the trees as they will no longer be competing with grass for rainwater, and also there should be less damage caused by contractors mowing or strimming the verges.

Take control of your TV

A new television service is being launched in Hampstead Garden Suburb that allows viewers to take control of their television viewing to watch programmes whenever they want.

Pioneering video-on-demand company, VideoNet which announced its pilot service in Suburb News in the Spring, is now launching its full commercial service under the brand name Homechoice, again starting in the Suburb, before rolling out across the whole of London during next year.

Homechoice is ideal for the Suburb because it requires no satellite dish or outside cabling. The service is transmitted down

In an era of two and three car families, with sardine can parking and roads bearing traffic far beyond their design capacity, Terry Rand emerges from his front door on to the roaring Falloeden Way with a look of cautious optimism.

At 66, Terry is an experienced campaigner where traffic abatement is concerned. Waging a long war rather than a short battle, there are probably few objectors so well-known on the Suburb as Rand, who is the chairman of the HGS Lorry Route Joint Action Committee. The phrase 'an Englishman's home is his castle' might have been created for Mr Rand, a latter-day King Canute who has lived on the A1 for well in excess of three decades and during that time has incessantly battled with ministries over their various road widening schemes.

Formed in 1967 out of members of the Suburb Residents Association, residents of Falloeden Way and Market Place traders, the history of the JAC is one of successes against diversity reminiscent of David and Goliath. The immediate story began in 1962 when the Department of Transport established a pattern of heavy traffic using the A1 by sign-posting it as a lorry route to the docks. This then justified the publication in 1966 of plans to create a six lane motorway with a high central reservation in its place.

"It would have meant taking out all the trees and footways," said Rand. His concern went further, however. "In the 1920s the government acquired the freehold title to all the gardens along the Falloeden Way. There was therefore nothing to stop them also digging up my garden and putting the road right past my front door. Access across the A1 would have been at two crossing points, the Bishops Avenue and Henlys Corner or possibly by tunnels. No compensation was proposed, either. It was a scandal."

A Public Inquiry began the following year, despite the area being designated an Outstanding Conservation area in 1968. The JAC was determined to put forward a case for resisting the new highway programme, however, and arranged a sit-down protest at Market Place and collected 4,400 signatures. Under pressure, the Secretary of State, Peter Walker recommended that a group of Consultants prepare a report in 1971, but the Department refused to release its findings. The JAC complained to the Parliamentary Ombudsman and it is to their great credit that the Inquiry was finally shelved in

Having no truck



PHOTO: TERRY RAND

March 1978. There was a price to pay. Walker ordered the go-ahead of an interim improvement scheme which did nevertheless significantly enlarge much of Falloeden Way to its current width.

There have been other achievements, however. In the early 1980s the JAC forced the Department to allow the roadside dwellings the opportunity to buy back the freeholds to their gardens. This meant that a further stumbling block was put in front of the Department should it again seek to blight their properties with motorway proposals. In 1975 the then GLC announced proposals to route lorries down the A1. Faced with stiff opposition from the JAC - it raised over 3,500 signatures - the GLC backed down, even if it did not go as far as removing the trunk road status without which there could be no weight limit to vehicles. Crossing has always been difficult and pressure from the JAC as well as sadly, numerous accidents resulted in the moving of a refuge from Mutton Bridge to Brookland Rise in 1978.


But what allows Rand his optimism is the newest success. For the London Road Directorate (LRD) are to alter the phasing of traffic lights at both Market Place and Bishops Avenue as well as build a new set at the Brookland Rise junction.

Together with making the A1 a single lane in either direction, these changes should at last slow down the speeding traffic, (even if they cause bottlenecks elsewhere).

And pedestrians? Whilst Rand regrets that they were not able to secure cycle paths so that the cyclists would not use the footpaths, he tells me that at least the LRD plan to construct wide pedestrian refuges opposite Westholm, Eastholm, and for the first time Midholm.

Yet Rand is not complacent. Due to commence in May, the LRD are still yet to make a start, and if there is one thing above all that Mr Rand has learnt since he moved to the Suburb in 1960, it is that victories are earned not given.

DANIEL ROBINSON



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