

Who really built the Suburb?

by Roz Archer GradDiplCons(AA)

Just this April, architects voted Norman Foster the most admired architect of the 20th century and put Edwin Lutyens second. If you live in Hampstead Garden Suburb, Lutyens' name will be familiar to you; his buildings are considered by many the jewels in this treasure chest of a Suburb. Almost certainly, the reputation of Parker and Unwin

will be known to you too. Between them, Lutyens and Parker and Unwin have been credited with not just the original suburb's layout but also the design of many streets and individual houses. You may know that the Lutyens houses of Central Square, the churches and some of the other grander houses and squares were Listed

by English Heritage, mostly in the late sixties and that, in 1996, many more of the early Parker and Unwin designed artisans' houses and some others were added to the List. But you might be surprised to hear that there are actually fewer than two dozen Lutyens designed buildings in Hampstead Garden Suburb while there are about five hundred Parker and Unwin houses out of a total number of houses in the suburb of 2000 or so. Who designed the rest?

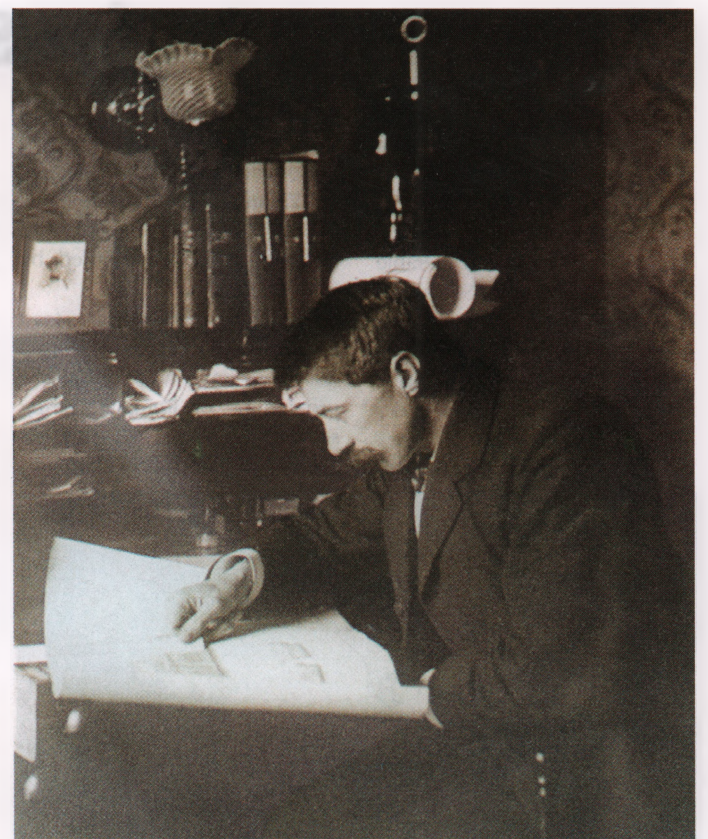
When I came to live in Oakwood Road in 1984, I got a copy of the drawing of my house from the archive (then housed in Henrietta Barnett school). It was signed by G. L. Sutcliffe, an architect of whom I had never heard, and came from the office of Co-partnership Tenants Ltd., at 1 Arcade House, Temple Fortune. I hadn't heard of them either. Noone, it turned out, knew much about G. L. Sutcliffe: a great deal more is known about Co-partnership Tenants Ltd.¹ In 1998, when I had to find a thesis subject for my AA course in Building Conservation, I chose to research G. L. Sutcliffe's architectural biography and went, as a starting point, to his entry in Stuart Gray's² invaluable book. This gave me his dates, told me he was the son of an architect, and gave a list of his main works. At the beginning of his career, these were mostly chapels (he was a strong Baptist), mills, schools and houses in his native Yorkshire; on visiting them I found them often to be impressive, landscape dominating works. It also mentioned that he was the architect to Co-partnership Tenants Ltd. at his early death in 1915.

G. L. Sutcliffe was born in 1864 in the West Riding hill village of Heptonstall, still remote but now quite a tourist magnet in the Calder Valley. He trained as an architect locally with a John Sutcliffe, architect (not, as said in Stuart Gray's book, his father and probably not a relation). He came South to set up a London office for Sutcliffe and Sutcliffe in 1902, having been offered a partnership in 1890. That partnership was dissolved in 1907 and Sutcliffe must have had enough work on his own account as he stayed in London with his London-born wife and their two young sons. He took the job as Co-partnership Tenants Ltd.'s first payroll architect in October 1910. Before then, probably from March 1910³ he had worked directly for Ealing Tenants Ltd. on houses at Brentham Garden Suburb. I don't know how he got that introduction; he could have known Henry Vivian, the prime mover at Brentham as well as the Chairman of Co-partnership Tenants Ltd., through mutual contacts in either the co-operative or the Liberal movements. However they met, Vivian must have recognised that Sutcliffe had not only real architectural ability but that he also had the organising skills and energy to enable him to run what was to become a large drawing office with work throughout the country.

His first built design for Hampstead Garden Suburb was Creswick Walk; the first drawing for this road in the archive is

dated 22nd October 1910 and it was issued from Co-partnership Tenants Ltd. London office, at 6 Bloomsbury Square. If you know Creswick Walk, you will be aware that this cul-de-sac could be mistaken for a Parker and Unwin design; from my own experience in making alterations to the houses of the Suburb, I'd say however that G. L. Sutcliffe's buildings are often more consistently and better built than those of the more famous office of Parker and Unwin which perhaps exercised less control over its young employees than did Sutcliffe. (See adjacent photo of G. L. Sutcliffe with drawing).

G. L. Sutcliffe was not only an accomplished architect by this date with many buildings to his name, he was also an author, mainly of books on building construction, some of which continued to be reissued as standard texts after his death. After his first design for Hampstead Garden Suburb, he went on to do both the road layouts and the pretty houses for Denman Drive, Oakwood Road and Addison Way, including the part we now know as Falloden Way, Turners Wood and the much under-rated Holms on the North side of Falloden Way. He also designed many of the "Lutyens" houses: the pair, in one of which Henrietta Barnett went to live in South Square,⁴ the ones on Meadway at the foot of Heathgate, as well as those to the North side of Erskine Hill both at the top of Erskine Hill and on North Square (on Sutcliffe's drawings these are noted as being to the elevations of Sir E. L. Lutyens but are all wrongly attributed in English Heritage's List descriptions to Lutyens). He finished off the other three corners of what is usually known as "Baillie Scott junction" (where Hampstead Way crosses Meadway and Baillie Scott had done one of the four corners for the Development Company) very successfully. The houses at the Bigwood end of Temple Fortune Hill are his as are numbers 1 to 15 Wildwood Road (these are my favourites, the great group of houses which backs on to the Heath Extension just uphill of the Wildwood Road Roundabout) and the group of larger detached houses at the East Finchley end of the Bishop's Avenue is G. L. Sutcliffe's too (these last are unusual for Sutcliffe designs in Hampstead Garden Suburb in that they don't relate one to another as strongly as do his other groups). Finally, he designed two blocks of flats in the suburb: the terrifically good Meadway Court and the earlier, rather hidden, Bishop's Court (I'm sure the first of these is familiar to all but the second is now lost behind a high hedge just on the corner of the Bishop's Avenue and East Finchley High Road). In Brentham, it's possible to identify many more G. L. Sutcliffe buildings; Holyoake Flats are a smaller, earlier, version of Meadway Court and the Club House (Brentham's only Listed building at the moment) is his – his own interpretation of the Hampstead Garden Suburb Willifield Way building, complete with imposing tower; the Hampstead Garden Suburb building was of course



Sutcliffe looking at what might be his drawing for St Hilda's church, Kings Cross, Halifax.



Urban scale in the rural setting of Wildwood Road



Bricks and tiles in Midholm

lost in the second world war. Virtually all of the housing there of 1910 and later is by him: this can't be said even of the old suburb as much more here was developed either by the Garden Suburb Development Company who made their own choices of

architects or by private developers of individual plots and not by Co-partnership Tenants Ltd. Most of Temple Fortune Lane, much of Hampstead Way, Wild Hatch, Meadway and so on were developed in this way; however, all pre first world war Co-

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