

# The Youth Hostel in Wellgarth Road

Rosemary Goldstein, RA Secretary and Rev Alan Walker accepted an invitation to RA Council members from the YHA which is celebrating its 70th anniversary.

The world's first youth hostel was opened in Germany in 1907 by Richard Schirman, a school teacher who wished to enrich the lives of young people living in large industrial cities by enabling them to enjoy the countryside. The Youth Hostels Association of Great Britain was formed in 1930.

No. 4 Wellgarth Road was originally the Nursery Training School which moved there from Hackney in 1915. According to Kitty Slack's 'Henrietta's Dream', news of the transfer caused an uproar on the Suburb. Residents feared the presence of poor children in the neighbourhood would have an adverse effect on the value of their properties. Nevertheless the school was erected at a cost of just under £8,000 - half being paid by the Carnegie Trust. The building was designed by AJ Penty and opened by the Duchess of Marlborough 'in the presence of a considerable number of ladies' and under the auspices of the Women's Industrial Council.

Dame Henrietta was pleased with the establishment and wrote that when planning the Suburb she had "set out as one of the hopes, the provision of a nursery school, but the Wellgarth Road establishment, in its efficiency and with its noble human ideals, exceeds my largest desire."

When the first nurses moved into the building in August 1915, the building still had no doors or toilets and within a week air raids were occurring in the area. For over 60 years the college offered training in the care of children from birth to 7 years, accommodating an average of 60 student nurses and 30 children, including refugee children from Belgium.

During the course of its history the building was visited by Queen Mary, Princess Margaret and many well-known personalities concerned with child welfare. In 1935 a new wing was added to provide a baby nursery, play room and accommodation for the principal.

During the Second World War and until 1946 the college was evacuated to Swindon and the building was requisitioned

by the army, presumably in connection with the anti-aircraft battery on the Heath extension.

The building was extended again in the late 1960s and in 1970 the College - as it was now called - had thirty-six children in residence. However by then, residential care for children was falling out of favour and being replaced by fostering in family homes with the result that income from local authorities was severely reduced. In December 1978 the College trustees decided on closure - a decision which was met with opposition from the Suburb residents who over the years had come to appreciate the College for the nursery school facilities it provided for local children. The College closed in 1979 and the building was then purchased by the Youth Hostel Association of England and Wales which reopened it as a hostel in only a few months - although the official opening, performed by Dr David Bellamy, did not take place until May 1981.

In the early 1980s the YHA landscaped the garden area, which previously had been a large lawn, converted the large

dormitory rooms into many smaller rooms (reducing the number of beds available to a more comfortable 200) and created a glass walkway that runs along the back of the building.

Many smaller alterations have taken place over the years, improving the accommodation, common rooms and restaurant, but without making any detrimental changes to the outside of the building.

The hostel is one of only three YHA hostels in London, which can cater for large parties. It has provided budget accommodation to hundreds of groups from schools, charities, sports teams, colleges, churches and social groups from all over the country and around the world, as well as hundreds of thousands of individual travellers, tourists and families. During 2000, further improvements are continuing to be made throughout the hostel and to the facilities and garden. This should ensure the building can continue to serve people of all ages but, as Dame Henrietta Barnett intended, especially children and teenagers.

ALAN WALKER

# Creeping around at midnight

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wanted and collected it in June. It is amazing the difference a polytunnel can make. I really hate making hanging baskets, it's so fiddly and takes weeks to look good, so once a year I treat myself, and Sarah, the hanging basket queen, puts it together beautifully. As a matter of interest Sarah, representing Finchley Nurseries, entered the Regent's Park Flower Show and scooped 1st, 2nd and a Special for her hanging baskets. Well done, Sarah!

August is the time for pruning - Wistaria, shorten the long wispy shoots back to five or six leaves and then cut back further in February. Dead-head roses and maybe you will get a second flush, and continue spraying for black spot. I make a note in my diary to do this on a two-week cycle otherwise I would forget. Trim lavender as soon as the flowers fade but don't cut into the old wood because new shoots won't develop. If you have a hydrangea which was blue but has now faded to a pale pink, you can correct this now for next summer by watering with hydrangea colourant. This will alter the nutrient balance in the soil and help encourage blue flowers for next year.

September is the time to send off for your bulbs. I will use tulip Queen of the Night again but will mix them with Shirley Ivory with pale stripe for a contrast. I might try freesia and cyclamen in the greenhouse but must leave room for tender plants to come inside for winter. This is done in October but do try and clean up the plants before you bring them in. Remove all dead leaves and check for unwanted visitors. This is also a good time to plant new shrubs and perennials. I'm sure you have a few gaps or plants which didn't do terribly well. In fact, why not give yourselves a treat and go to the Rare Plant Fair on Sunday September 24 at the Royal Free Hospital.

On a recent visit to my doctor (he of the hosta) I was reminded that as a gardener it was time for my tetanus shot. This should be done every ten years, so you out there that toil in the soil, be brave. It didn't hurt and the bleeding stopped eventually! Carry on enjoying your garden and if you can come up with a recipe including slugs and snails, you could make a fortune.

Good gardening.  
DIANE BERGER



One of the first of the Music for the Millennium musical events on the Suburb was "Hallelujah 2000" a choral concert by the Free Church choir led by Ken Dougall.

# Suburb rainfall

No wonder the British always talk about the weather. The present pattern of months of well above average amounts of rainfall interspersed with particularly low totals is what makes life in this country so unpredictable. Maybe this is the cause of the national preference for 'muddling through' to careful planning.

The pattern this year of dry January followed by wet February and then dry March was continued by 5.57 inches in the wettest April recorded in north London for 21 years. However, there was a change as May, too, was wet, with 4.2 inches, the second highest

amount in 21 years. June then had the second lowest total (0.8 inches) in the same period. The pattern of this quarter is identical to that of 1983, when it was followed by a very dry July and below average for all the remaining months of the year. This meant 1983 had a total well below average.

Unfortunately (or fortunately if one is concerned about the garden or water supply) there is no reason to suppose we will continue to follow the 1983 pattern.

Many people have tried to see patterns, and therefore make forecasts, but it is probably as

satisfactory to wait for St Swithin's Day on July 15th.

Day-to-day variations in rainfall can be more important to human activity than total amounts. The three weeks from June 9 to 29 were virtually dry, reasonably warm and, for three days, even very warm. It is this that makes gardeners pray for rain even when underlying water tables are pretty high. It was presumably the fact that of only seven days without rain rather than the high total in April that ruined the early strawberries in the 'pick-your-own' farm beyond Trent Park.

DIANA IWI

# Chairman's statement

After six years Edward Caplin retired at the last AGM. Eddie was a marvellous Chairman who over his years in office ensured that the Trust Council meetings and decisions were all open, free, sensible and good-humoured. Retiring this year, also after six years, will be Colin Gregory who, in addition to his numerous other Suburb activities, has served the Trust very efficiently and thoughtfully. His expertise will be sorely missed.

It is difficult to know where to start in acknowledging the contribution Mervyn Miller has made to the Trust during the last 21 years. He has been Vice-Chairman since 1992. He not only co-authored with Stuart Grey the Suburb book 'Hampstead Garden Suburb' but also produced a collection of Old Suburb photographs. He surveyed the Suburb for English Heritage, which directly led to an additional 500 properties being individually Listed. Mervyn

represented the Trust at a number of Public Inquiries such as Falloden Way and Henly's Corner. He is retiring after 21 very full years as the Royal Town Planning Institute appointee on the Trust Council.

Members of the Council believe that to recognise these 21 years adequately they need to do something very special. The Council is, therefore, proposing to change at the AGM the Articles of Association to allow for the appointment of an Honorary President, a post Mervyn Miller is uniquely qualified to fill.

Over the past year we have, I believe, continued all normal activities in a professional and courteous manner. The Trust was closely involved with the Highways Agency regarding the Falloden Way Red Route Scheme which has resulted in the road becoming two lanes, better entry treatments at the three Holms, and there are plans to introduce traffic calming in Brim Hill and Deansway.

Now that the new Mayor for London has taken office Henly's Corner is back on the agenda, and a new scheme for this junction is likely to be drawn up. The Trust, of course, will follow developments closely.

After much discussion with English Heritage, the RA and Barnet, the Trust produced new guidelines on the demolition of buildings. With the rise in Suburb property prices there is a feeling that applications to demolish could increase. The guidelines are available from the Trust office.

Thanks are due to my fellow Council Members who voluntarily provide us all with the benefit of their time, expertise and energy. Thanks are also due to all our staff at the Trust Office, including David Davidson who has occupied the position of Trust Architectural Adviser so professionally and Chris Kellerman who manages the Trust's affairs so admirably.

STEVEN LIGHT

The Annual General Meeting will take place on 20 September at 8pm in the Free Church Hall

**HAMPSTEAD - GARDEN - SUBURB - TRUST**

The New Hampstead Garden Trust Ltd. 862 Finchley Road, Hampstead Garden Suburb, London NW11 6AB. Telephone: 020 8455 1066 & 020 8458 8085