



HRH Princess Margaret visiting the Suburb on the occasion of its golden jubilee in 1957. This photograph comes from an album kept by Anne Lowe, then Anne Brown the youngest member of the Horticultural Society's committee. Anne and her mother are seen on the left. Princess Margaret is escorted by Sir John Braithwaite who was President of the Jubilee Committee. Earlier Anne had been presented to the Lord Mayor of London who congratulated her on making a floral City of London coat of arms for the jubilee flower show. Her flower arranging is still renowned.

Royalty and the Suburb

'They do things on a grand scale in the Suburb. Kings, Princes and Peers come to see the work of the wonderful architects who laid out the garden town.' (Press report, May 1912.)

Within two years of the first cottages in Hampstead Garden Suburb being built (1907), members of the Royal Family had started frequenting the area in order to open buildings or to be given guided tours.

Many of the official openings by Royalty were of purpose built buildings aimed at satisfying the philanthropic aims of the Suburb's founder, Dame Henrietta Barnett, who tirelessly accompanied most visits. The first of these official openings was of Waterlow Court on 1st July 1909 by Princess Louise, Duchess of Argyll (one of Queen Victoria's daughters). Waterlow Court, situated opposite the Heath Extension, was the first of several blocks of flats intended for single ladies. This was a grand occasion for which a printed programme was produced. Kathleen Slack recounts in *Henrietta's Dream* (1977):

"First, Her Royal Highness was

to be received by the chairman of the Suburb Trust: a key to open the gates having been presented to her by Mr M H Baillie Scott, the architect of the flats. HRH would then inspect part of the building. The Chairman of the company would then deliver an address and HRH, to whom thanks would be addressed, would declare the building open: the whole procedure being accompanied by a programme of music."

Subsequent regular visits followed by members of Royalty. The Club House on Willifield Green was opened in 1910 by the Duke and Duchess of Connaught who visited again in 1911. The Club House was subsequently bombed in September 1940 and its crumbling remains were paid a visit by King George VI and the Queen. The site was left undeveloped until 1957, when Princess Margaret, on a tour of the Suburb for its Jubilee celebrations, cut the first sod for the new day centre for the Suburb's elderly, Fellowship House.

Queen Mary had numerous outings to the Suburb. She was a personal friend of Henrietta

Barnett and came in 1911 with George V and visited amongst other buildings, the first Orchard (re-built in 1970), a quadrangle of flats for old people. She came again in 1918 when she was photographed in front of the 'working class' flats in Addison Way alongside the Prince of Wales, Princess Mary and Henrietta Barnett. In 1924 she officially opened the Queen Mary block of Henrietta Barnett School and was photographed looking over the balcony of the Institute towards Bigwood Court and the undeveloped 'new Suburb'.

St Jude's Church, named after St Jude's Church in Commercial Road, Whitechapel where Henrietta Barnett's husband, Canon Barnett, had been the vicar, received numerous visits by royalty. According to the *Church Gazette*, between 1909 and 1951 the visitor's book contained the names of twenty two members of the Royal Family. Queen Mary approved the foundation stone in 1911 and the list for visits in 1918 alone include: Queen Alexandra, Queen Mary, Princess Mary, the Prince of Wales, Princess Arthur Connaught, Princess Maud and Princess Victoria. In 1921 the Princess Royal unveiled murals in the Lady Chapel and in 1924 the Prince of Wales unveiled decorative work in the north and south aisles of the church. The Queen of Norway paid a visit in 1920 and 1930 and, in December 1951, the Duke of Edinburgh opened a church bazaar.

1957 was Hampstead Garden Suburb's Golden Jubilee. Watched keenly by pupils from Henrietta Barnett School, Princess Margaret unveiled a plaque to celebrate the occasion. She also was conducted on a tour of the Suburb.

On a lighter note, the Duchess of York (the late Queen Mother), accompanied by Dame Henrietta Barnett, came to visit the Suburb pageant, *Adam Bell*, performed in the open air theatre in Little Oak Wood. She returned again as the Queen during the war to inspect bomb damage and, once again, as the Queen Mother to visit cottage gardens in 1979.

Finally, the Duke of Gloucester re-traced the Queen Mother's footsteps by opening the Little Oak Wood open air theatre in July 1997 and attended the millennium performances of Bernard Shaw's 'In Good King Charles's Golden Days' and a dramatisation of a 1930s pageant, 'The Stars'.

MARILYN GREENE
SUBURB RESIDENT &
CURATOR OF HAMPSTEAD MUSEUM

Memories of the Queen Mother on the Suburb

By Friday 13 September 1940 the London Blitz had just begun and a high explosive bomb fell on Buckingham Palace. The King and Queen were at home, but fortunately they were not hurt. That afternoon they visited the East End where the dense housing had experienced another fire of London, but they were made welcome. The Queen said later that she was glad to have experienced the bombing as she could look the East End in the face.

The Nazis then introduced parachute mines with an explosive power of one ton - never carried by an aircraft before. They were released indiscriminately on the civilian population. On the night of Wednesday 25 September six of these beasts drifted over North West London, four of them in NW11 and another on the border with NW3. In this fashion two mines arrived silently in the Suburb at 10.40pm - with devastating effect. One landed on housing in Coleridge Walk. Thirteen people were killed including five children. The other fell on Willifield Green where the clay soil absorbed much of the shock and there were no fatalities. However much damage was done to the houses around the green and to the Club House, so much so that it was eventually pulled down by the demolition teams. In all there were 86 casualties and 427 houses badly damaged.

Before the war, the Queen, when Duchess of York, had taken an interest in the work of Dame Henrietta Barnett, as she became, and enjoyed a lively performance in Little Wood in June 1931 of a medieval pageant, *Adam Bell*. She recalled this event when, as the Queen Mother, she sent her good wishes for the Suburb's Seventieth Anniversary in 1977. She also remembered having come with the King to Willifield Green in 1940. It was a few days later, recalled Barrett Newbery, the editor of the *Hendon and Finchley Times*, that Their Majesties came to inspect "the most unbelievable havoc wrought in this pretty corner of outer London and to express their sympathy with the victims". They went first to Willifield Green, but while looking up at the damage to the Club House there was an air-raid alert and they were quietly ushered away before they could go on to see the terrible damage inflicted on Coleridge Walk.

One of the residents who remembers the visit is Eileen Barrett. Her house in Addison Way looked straight up Coleridge Walk. She spent the night with many neighbours in the brick shelters in the Brookside Gardens and then moved in with her mother temporarily further along the road. There they had a visit from her brother-in-law, a CID officer at the police station, to tell her about the forthcoming royal visit. So on the appointed day they were waiting outside the Club House for the party to come. The King and Queen received a warm welcome as they arrived and were introduced to several residents, although most of the occupants of Coleridge and Wordsworth Walks by then had left the scene to find temporary homes elsewhere. The Queen, dressed in a pastel blue dress and jacket and swept-up hat,



was vivacious and she made local people feel at ease, until the visit was cut short by sirens. It was several years before all the houses were rebuilt and the Club House was never restored.

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