

SUBURB NEWS



THE HAMPSTEAD GARDEN SUBURB RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION NEWSPAPER ■ AUTUMN 02 - ISSUE 77

The eruv is (almost) here

In 1991, no one knew the impact a modest Orthodox Jewish proposal to Barnet council to erect the country's first eruv would create. The fencing off of a 6.5 square mile area around Hendon, Golders Green, Hampstead Garden Suburb, and some of Finchley, was needed to allow Orthodox Jews to do things that are prohibited outside the home on the sabbath. In addition to physical boundaries such as the Northern line and M1, and other natural ones formed by houses and fences, added wiring would be used, including about 84 poles for the South of the borough; six on the Suburb at the top of Wildwood Road.

The reasons for the proposal dividing this otherwise peaceful community so dramatically, even separating Jews themselves, are not easily understood. But one thing is certain; the eruv's proposal has created more bitterness than anything else since the Suburb was founded in 1907.

The eruv, we learned in 1991, would create a private domain for Jews based on the idea of a biblical walled city. It would allow observant Orthodox Jews, of which, according to 1993 figures, there are about 10,000 in the borough, to perform tasks others take for granted which would otherwise leave them housebound on the Sabbath. Such as carrying house keys and pushing wheelchairs.

Eruvs exist in Israel, Australia and the US. In Washington DC, the White House and Supreme Court are inside an eruv.

By 1992 at the HGS Trust's AGM, the storm had begun. Angry eruv supporters, incensed at a letter from the Trust to the Ham & High, overwhelmed the usually sedate proceedings, forced a vote

of no confidence in chairman Lord McGregor, who resigned on the spot. And so the Suburb became a centre of resistance to the eruv. Chaim Bermant in the Jewish Chronicle said after that meeting, "Whatever the merits of their case, they destroyed it that evening as far as the residents association (sic) was concerned and, although the eruv party may have succeeded on appeal, they left a legacy of bitterness."

Just as many other religious rituals might sound weird to a non-believer, the suggestion also faced strong opposition elsewhere. Objector groups were set up, local press and the council were inundated with letters. Over the next thirteen years the issue reached local, national and even the international press. Many Suburb residents were upset and disappointed that the eruv question seemed to take over, and spoil, the BBC Omnibus film on the Suburb that was meant to celebrate the centenary of Dame Henrietta's birth. Creative suggestions were also made: why not define the eruv by the M25 motorway, use the coastline of Britain, or even the ozone layer.

So, even if superficially it may seem more than a little bizarre, an eruv seems an humanitarian idea, after all it helps the wheelchair-bound and mothers with young children to leave the house on Saturday and integrate with modern society, what has caused all the controversy?

On one hand, the United Synagogue Eruv Committee, stressing the scheme's invisibility, have appealed for residents' tolerance for a strongly felt and essential issue and have fought for the venture as a modern

(continued p.5)

Suburb courts left to decay

Once upon a time, competition for keys to the Central Square tennis courts was fierce, and key holders had to fight for a time slot with Henrietta Barnett School girls, who fired serves from brightly painted back lines like Steffi Graff. In more recent times it is a different story; the courts are in dire need of re-surfacing, new nets and repairs to the wire enclosures, which buckle under rust, bindweed and years of being clambered over by those without a key.

The Institute is responsible for the courts officially, as it leases them from the Garden Suburb Trust. The Institute's plan to move to new premises (as reported in *Suburb News*, issue 76, p.1) means they are understandably reluctant to repair courts that they would not use for much longer. A source from the Institute said that the courts are swept and weeded periodically, but admitted that the budget allocated to the upkeep of the courts was 'modest'.

(continued p.3)

No answers on procedure review at Trust AGM

At well over six foot Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust chairman Steven Licht is an imposing figure. Standing on the Free Church Hall's five foot high stage he is usually almost out of sight let alone earshot of ordinary mortals seated in the body of the hall. In a move to appear more user-friendly and, as he said, "in response to criticism last year," the Trust Council joined the rest of the meeting at floor level in the Free Church Hall for the annual general meeting of the Trust in September.

Perhaps it was this sudden togetherness that helped the ordinary business of the meeting go through on several quick nods with no awkward questions. The report was fine, the accounts OK and, in the absence of any other nominations, Sylvia de Peyer was elected for her second three-year term and Mervyn Unger was elected in place of Mervyn Mandell who stepped down at the end of his six year stint.

The chairman thanked Mervyn Mandell for his time on the council where his expertise and thanked all the members of council who he said, "put their hearts as well as their brains into keeping the Suburb special." Welcoming Mervyn Unger on to council he told the meeting he had been on the Suburb for most of his life and was also on the RA council and Consam committee. His past experience

(continued p.5)

Remembering Henrietta

I am in the process of writing a biography of Henrietta Barnett. I have plenty of material on her social work in the East End of London as well as on her innovative approaches to creating Hampstead Garden Suburb. But what would really make the book come to life are personal memories of Henrietta from residents of the Suburb. So, if anyone would be prepared to share these, I would be delighted to hear from you. Alternatively, some of you may remember anecdotes about her from your parents or grandparents. Again, these would be greatly appreciated.

You can contact me through Chris Kellerman at the Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust or email me at: alicedon@yahoo.co.uk I look forward to sharing and preserving your memories.

ALISON CREEDON

New Suburb News reporter

Esther Walker has lived on the Suburb for twenty years and attended the Henrietta Barnett school. She recently graduated with a degree in English Literature from Bristol University, where she was also Features Editor of the student newspaper. In October, she will begin her post-graduate studies in Journalism at City University, and hopes to continue to contribute to the *Suburb News*.



Jane Goldman and Jonathan Ross, HGS Horticultural Society Presidents, and their daughter, at September's flower show, see p 10.



Mervyn Mandell receives a portrait of his house from chairman Steven Licht in recognition of his six years on the Trust council.



The Suburb was well represented at the Edinburgh Festival in August with RA council member Colin Gregory in *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Michael Mail, Wordsworth Walk's resident novelist, read from *Corelana*, which was featured in *Suburb News* recently, and answered questions from the audience during the Book Festival. Finally 13 year old Vincent Crompton Roberts from Erskine Hill (above centre) was in the Swiss Church Music School production of the *William Tell* musical.

More fireworks please...



...you said, so once again the Residents Association is hoping you will join in the fun and help us celebrate New Year's Eve with more bangs and sparkling wine on December 31.

All residents are invited for a pre-fireworks reception in St Jude's

Church at 11.15pm, (our thanks to the Vicar and all at St Jude's) followed by a spectacular firework display on Central Square at midnight. All organised by the RA's Events Committee.

There will be a collection to defray the cost of the fireworks.

Home Sweet Home

We at Glentree, who live and work in the Suburb regard it as our home and we would like to believe that all our clients feel at home with our service.

Buying or selling a house needs very careful handling and over the past quarter of a century we have endeavoured to provide the kind of service which is professional, understanding and sensitive to the needs of our clients.

We are an unusual company in that although we are locally based, we procure purchasers from a worldwide international network which may enable us to achieve a fulsome price for you, which we hope fully justifies the value to you of your home.

We have produced a guide to selling and renting your home and also one which refers to the various aspects of the recent listing of 500 properties in the Suburb of architectural merit.

If you would like a copy or just an in principle discussion, we would welcome your call.



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