

featuring Georgina Malcolm



Georgina Malcolm, Suburb resident for most of her life and Chairman of the Residents Association, talks to Suburb Style.

**What do you really enjoy?** Really? Sitting doing nothing. I'm very good at that. I love reading and doing patchwork. I'm working on a set of patchwork curtains for my dining room. I love science fiction TV. If I have a huge pile of ironing I'll put on a video of Babylon 5 or Firefly to help pass the time. I also enjoy visiting botanical gardens. I visited one on Lake Maggiore this summer and saw a cinnamon tree for the first time. Trees can be surprisingly exciting.

**What's your favourite article of clothing?** My dark green Land's End fleece dressing gown. I could say my wonderful dark red beaded dress from Monsoon. I got it really cheap because so many of the beads had fallen off and it looked impossible to rescue, but when I was ill this winter I lay on the sofa and sewed all the beads back on again. It is beautiful and makes me feel incredibly glamorous but I never go anywhere smart enough to wear it. I wear my dressing gown all winter. It's warmer than my overcoat and I couldn't manage without it.

**And your favourite shoes?** Oh dear. I have more than 50 pairs of shoes and about 20 pairs of boots. Some I've been wearing since the 1980s. My favourite shoes come from Lord & Taylor in Buffalo. They are dark purple suede with high heels, but so comfortable you can walk a mile along a country road in them - which I have done. I bought them in November 1993.

**So your favourite shop might be a shoe shop?** Possibly. I'm very fond of LK Bennett these days. I saw a pair of purple boots the other day which went straight onto my Christmas present list. I've got some great red fake snake ankle boots and a beautiful pair of wine-coloured suede boots.

**What is your favourite city?** Venice. There's nowhere so beautiful but you have to visit off-season because it's so tiny and gets full up of tourists so easily. Sydney is a wonderful city too. I was lucky enough to spend six months there and got to know it really well. Unfortunately Sydney is really proud of its seafood and I don't eat fish at all so my friends there think I'm a bit weird. I've even been taken to Doyle's the world-famous fish restaurant in Watson's Bay. I don't think they'd ever had a customer before who demanded a fish-free meal.

**What's on your list of places to visit?** Petra. I've only seen photographs but it looks fabulous. And Las Vegas. I flew from Chicago to Los Angeles at night and saw it out of the window. There was a gorgeous glittering bug in the middle of the blackness of the Nevada desert and I've wanted to visit it ever since.

**Beach holiday or activity?** Neither really. I don't like sitting around in too much heat. I've been able to visit Switzerland a number of times recently and I'm happy to sit in the sun when it's snowy, but in summer it's too hot. I like to sit with a book or some sewing, and a glass of wine and enjoy a beautiful view. I'm not really the type to go white water rafting. I did go ballooning once but you have to get up at 4 a.m. which was a bit exhausting.

**What do you always pack in your sponge bag?** Vaseline, Bach Rescue Remedy and contact lens cleaner.

**What do you enjoy cooking?** I'm not a very good cook because I'm not that interested in food but I can do a different pasta dish for each day of the week. My favourite easy supper is pasta shells with chopped sausages. I expect most Italians would be horrified but I think it's delicious.

**So your favourite food is?** That is such a difficult question. Probably strawberries and cream.

**And your least favourite?** Celery. I have to put on rubber gloves to pick it up and absolutely draw the line at eating it.

**Marmite...love it or loath it?** Love it. My mother brought me up to believe that a mug of hot marmite would cure everything from a slight snuffle to a broken leg. It's not bad for hangovers either. I always have a large jar in the jam cupboard. And it has to be British Marmite. In Australia their Marmite is made in New Zealand and it isn't the same.

**What music have you been listening to recently?** My sister-in-law knows Nicolai Demidenko very well and she sent me some of his CDs despite me telling her I never listen to classical music. I have to admit I've been enjoying his Bach piano transcriptions. I've got Snow Patrol, Camera Obscura and Talking Heads in the CD player at the moment.

**What is your pet hate?** Drivers who don't indicate. I'm a pedestrian and drivers don't seem to realise we need to know what a car is about to do just as much as other drivers do. You can often find me standing at a corner yelling, "Indicate!" especially at white van drivers. And only the other day I was nearly run over by a driver who indicated for quite five minutes she was going to turn left into Meadway but then drove straight from Thornton Way to Wildwood Road.

featuring Simon Eder

Simon Eder is publisher of *The Liberal*, a new magazine which is devoted to politics and the arts.

A few weeks ago I was outside my flat in South Hampstead (I grew up on the Suburb and *Suburb News* is still part of my staple diet of reading, especially as my family are still only a stone's throw away from Central Square) and a lady from across the road came up to me and said, completely out the blue, "No Jews! Jews are not welcome here!" It was an incident that pales into insignificance compared to the long history of persecution that Jews have faced but it was nonetheless the first encounter I have ever met of feeling like an unwanted guest in the country where I was born.

The incident brought to mind Freud's embarrassment at his father's passivity, which he recounts in 'Interpretation of Dreams'. When in Vienna, as a young child, walking to synagogue with his father, someone came up to him knocked off his hat and declared, "Get off the pavement, Jew." His response was merely to pick up his hat and carry on walking. So, in the face of torment, I answered back to try at the very least to gain some understanding. What emerged from our conversation was certainly this lady's deep-rooted racism and perhaps my attempt at a reasoned argument was not worth the trouble. What though, particularly bothered me was her simplistic conflation of all Jews under one bracket; the Jews are oppressing the Palestinians, the Jews were behind the war in Iraq, she had insisted. Her assertion was, of course, absurd. The Israel-Palestine conflict cannot simply be explained by an oppressor-oppressed colonialist model and there is no Jewish lobby behind the neo-cons in the States. And yet, I couldn't help feeling that however misguided this lady was, some kernels of her argument must have been garnered from a media and a world that all too often depicts religious communities and ethnic groups as homogeneous.

As an active member of interfaith groups for some time, perhaps the most crucial question that arises in dialogue is

the problem of representation and just how truly anyone can ever represent their own faith tradition. There is a general tendency to minimise the complexity of a tradition's stance on a particular subject and instead to present a uniform position, normally allied to the status quo! Public criticism of one's own community is increasingly seen as flagrant disloyalty when perhaps what faith communities most need is for an open display of healthy and heartfelt self-criticism. Of course it takes courage to speak out but we can all draw inspiration from the founders and pioneers of our different religious communities who railed against the prevailing orthodoxies of their day, broke with unchallenged dogmas and introduced the world to their radical new insights.

Coming back recently from a book fair in Germany, I was struck by the room allocated as a space for quiet reflection in Frankfurt airport. It was simply arranged with chairs in the centre, a table at the far end with several of the world's holy texts laid out on top and two candles flickering. I sat for a few brief moments gazing into the flames. It can't have been long that I was there and my flight to London was soon called but I did savour those few sacred moments in front of the flames. I thought back to the incident with the woman on my street and sensed something of the cleansing power of the burning candles in front of me and a new resolve born inside to speak out for the appreciation of difference in the face of conformity.



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