

Mosaics brighten Garden Suburb school

During the last week of the summer term, all the pupils in the school were involved in an environmental project as a reward for their good behaviour during the year. The pupils worked alongside mosaic artist, Maureen O'Kane, who had recently won a regional BAFTA for her work and often works with children and adults on community arts projects. She used the children's drawings to create the theme of a wildlife garden against the wall of the dinner hall which needed to be made more cheerful.

Using money provided by our school PTA we commissioned Maureen to also work alongside children and parents to make the

brightly coloured mosaics and attach them to the wall in the playground. The children had the opportunity to create their own mosaics as well as works in groups on the larger pieces.



This article is not, as the title might suggest a critique on the architectural merits of the two parts of the Suburb, but is about the way in which the social fabric, especially that of the older part of the Suburb, has changed over the years.

As a third generation Suburb resident, now in my fifty-second year (my family have lived on the Suburb for virtually all of its 97 years), I feel well qualified to comment on this changing environment. My grandparents moved into the flats in Addison Way circa 1911 and I, like my father before me, was born in this road; my father at No. 27 and I at No. 149.

The Suburb of my father and grandfather's generations was one where most of the men were Artisans – skilled men who worked mostly with their hands and the sweat of their brow and their wives stayed at home to look after the children.

Even as late as the 1960s these older Suburb dwellings were full of such families. When we moved to Asmunds Place in 1959, and at that time, there were just three families who owned cars, and these were all second hand. Many of the properties on the older part of the Suburb were still rented from Co-Partnership Tenants Ltd who looked after and managed the Estate efficiently and well.

We used to know most of the residents in our turning and many elsewhere on the Suburb – my father having gone to Childs Way (Garden Suburb) School with many of them. Many of the houses, after becoming owner-occupied, have now been re-sold (several times). People seem to come and go with alarming regularity. They are

Old Suburb, New Suburb - a personal view



Quieter days in Asmunds Place

mostly upwardly mobile young couples or single people to whom this is a stepping stone on life's journey. The Suburb of my youth was full of children and in Asmunds Place alone there must have been 20 to 30 of school age. Today there are hardly any. There was also a wide spectrum of age groups. Today it is either those who are in their twenties or thirties, or the retired.

For as long as I can remember we have cultivated an allotment on the Suburb, first a temporary war-time emergency plot by the Mutton Brook, then a plot on the Big Site and finally, for the last 36 years, one behind the houses in Asmunds Place. However, this was done more out of necessity than pleasure as times were hard and growing vegetables and fruit eked out the small family budget. There will probably be those reading this who think that anyone who can afford to live on the Suburb can't be that badly off. But this would be to ignore the fact that we, having lived here all our lives, have known economic hardship. If we had

not taken the opportunity to purchase our house, as sitting tenants in 1970, then there is no way we could have probably afforded to have stayed. We could have stayed on as tenants, but that would have been at the risk of the rent remaining at an artificially affordable level due to the Rent Act legislation, introduced because of the housing shortage created by the loss of housing stock in the two World Wars. We therefore now live in a house whose capital value is now well above what other similar properties elsewhere could command. Those who purchase properties on the Suburb now do so in the knowledge of the restrictions which apply because of its designation and the control of the Trust which ironically is, in many ways, reflected in the value of the property. And those who can now afford to purchase here do so in acceptance of these responsibilities of ownership and are probably not going to be bothered about the additional costs. But these old properties bear the signs of age. Windows and doors that no longer fit properly, brickwork that requires re-pointing, guttering and down pipes requiring constant attention. Yet the Trust and the other bodies responsible for regulating the alterations, improvements and repairs that we are able to carry out, prevent us from making the sort of improvements when doing so which other owners of older (non-Suburb) properties can make. What repairs we are allowed to make are usually much costlier as they have to be

in the same materials and to the same (usually hand crafted) design as the original. Yet the Trust and the Council expect us to pick up the bill for this extra expenditure and it is of no concern to them that we continue to endure the additional expenses, particularly heating costs, which ensue. Nowhere else in the country, except possibly the Dulwich Estate, is there a situation where you can own the freehold of your property but still be virtually in the same position as a tenant. Not for us solar panels, velux rooflights, double-glazed windows or conservatories and the Trust would even charge us for the privilege of erecting a glasshouse or shed in our gardens.

But what else do the Trust do except prevent us making these alterations and 'improvements' in return for taking an annual maintenance charge for this dubious benefit?

Well apparently very little really. When it comes to matters of substance which really do affect the quality of life and appearance of the Suburb, not much at all. For example the grass verges and non-resident parking in Asmunds Place. The grass verges have steadily deteriorated as the level of parking increases; mostly the cars of people who work nearby in Temple Fortune. I appreciate that this is, in the main, a problem which the Local Authority is responsible for solving, but where are the Trust when it comes to lobbying and speaking on our behalf as the body responsible for the appearance of the Suburb?

The Trust's role should not only be a negative one, preventing certain alterations and unsuitable improvements of which they do not approve, but also a positive one in ensuring matters which affect us all like those referred to above are resolved.

They must do their job properly by enforcing lease covenants where they are the landlord and spend their income (obtained primarily from us) in maintaining the fabric of the Suburb and lobbying, where necessary, other bodies to ensure that the Suburb remains in the condition which we expect.

ERIC HOLME

Recycling - it's so easy!

Rubbish is one of the greatest threats to our environment. It is on the increase and we're running out of places to put it! On average Barnet residents produce just under 146,000 tonnes of rubbish per year, most of which is sent to landfill.

Barnet Council has set up a comprehensive range of easy-to-use recycling services for residents, so that we can all play our part in reducing waste.

- Recycle from Home – an easy-to-use, weekly service that collects paper, cans, glass, batteries, engine oil, foil, mobile phones, shoes, textiles and yellow pages from your black box. To get involved, contact ECT Recycling on 020 8371 3670.

- Flats Recycling Service – an easy-to-use, weekly service for residents living in medium to high-rise flats. Under the scheme, a mini recycling centre is set up which residents can use to recycle all their paper, cans and glass. To get involved, contact ECT Recycling on 020 8371 3670.

- Civic Amenity and Recycling Centre – you can recycle 33 different materials at the centre in Summers Lane, North Finchley N12, including cardboard, electrical items, fluorescent tubes, fridges, furniture, gas bottles, garden waste, hardcore, paint, plastic bottles, scrap metal and wood. The site is open Monday to Saturday 8am to 4pm, and

Sundays and Bank Holidays 9am to 4pm. To find out more, contact ECT Recycling on 020 8362 0752.

- Compost at Home – home composting can cut the contents of your household bin by one third and create free compost! Barnet Council offers residents home composters at subsidised prices. To find out more, contact Barnet Council on 020 8359 7473.

Using these services makes a real difference to our environment.

A compulsory recycling scheme was introduced in April 2004, which initially covered Totteridge, Oakleigh, Brunswick Park and East Barnet wards. It is intended that this scheme will be expanded to include all houses in the borough from late 2004. Residents must place all glass bottles and jars, tins and cans, paper and magazines in the black recycling box provided by the Council. These materials must not be placed in your wheeled refuse bin. If you need a new or additional black box, contact ECT Recycling on 020 8371 3670. To find out more, phone Barnet Council on 020 8359 7400.

Residents are invited to make suggestions on recycling to Henrietta Barnett girls. See Marion Boulicault's letter on page 11. Please do let them know what you think and help them with this project which will be strongly supported by the Residents Association.

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