



Youth Music Centre visit

The Youth Music Centre, Hampstead Garden Suburb's Saturday morning music school and established for more than 30 years, was visited by both Rudi Vis MP and Councillor John Marshall during its Open Morning on Saturday, 11 November.

Both visitors were able to observe orchestral rehearsals and classes in action and greatly enjoyed the friendly and lively atmosphere whilst commenting on the high standard of music produced.

The Youth Music Centre has activities for all ages, including adults: orchestras, string quartets

and ensembles, musicianship from age three, Kodály and voice production classes, instrumental tuition, theory workshop.

For more details, contact Jane Barnett, tel. 020 8343 1940, email: mail@youthmusiccentre.org.uk or you can visit our website: www.youthmusiccentre.org.uk.

Nora Leverton Court

Nora Packer (née Leverton), now living in The Orchard with husband Roy, worked for Barclay & Perry in the 1930s as one of the 'landladies' who collected rents for St Pancras Housing Association. She was born in Oakley Square, Camden, and has family connections going back to the 18th century. Nora is the sole survivor of

SPH's (now St Pancras & Humanist HA) 'landladies', and on Wednesday 13 December Nora Leverton Court in Randolph Street, Camden, was named in her honour.

It was a delightful occasion, with many of the family present, and contributing to the traditional decorating of a Christmas tree in

the courtyard of the development, which consists of three 1 bedroom flats, three 2 bedroom flats, one 1 bedroom wheelchair user flat, and a commercial unit.

In 'Housing is Not Enough' by Malcolm Holmes, published for the 75th Anniversary of SPH, Nora recalls: "It was the weekly visit by the rent collector that helped gain the confidence of the tenants to explain their financial problems and enable SPH to provide an escape route for their spiralling debts. We were encouraged to get to know every tenant by spending time talking on the doorstep and wherever possible going inside the houses. This enabled us to evaluate the living conditions of the tenants and, if increasing amounts of goods were being pawned each week, we would report to our seniors. The wedding ring was invariably the last item to be pawned and a woman lacking her ring was a sure sign of the family being in dire straits."

JOHN BIRD

Abandoned vehicles

This has been an increasing problem within the Suburb and within the whole of the Borough. If you have a dumped, abandoned or derelict vehicle outside your home, you can report the details to Barnet Council's Neighbourhood Management service on 020 8359 4490 or 020 8359 4600.

They have powers to remove abandoned derelict vehicles within seven days and dangerous vehicles can be removed immediately.

Where a vehicle appears to be in good order LBB must attempt to find the owner and will remove it after 21 days if the owner has not responded to a notice served by the Council.

A full leaflet can be obtained at the library or from the Town Hall.

KEN MURRELL

Brentham: A history of the pioneer Garden Suburb 1901-2001



Brentham is our sister suburb - just go West around the north circular to find it near Hanger Lane. In 1901, newly conceived Brentham was known just as the estate of Ealing Tenants Ltd but as early as 1903 the acting secretary wrote to the papers saying "we shall go in for a larger estate and work up a small garden city on our own account". It wasn't until the more appealing name of Brent-ham was coined that its claim to be a pioneer Garden Suburb was made explicit.

This is an impressive book even before you open it: the cover is all illustration, and announces not only the usual stuff found on covers but also that there is a foreword by the Prince of Wales (he approves of the book) and an introduction by Professor Sir Peter Hall (he's a professor of Planning and he has lots of nice things to say too). The title makes clear that it is published for Brentham's centenary. Aileen Reid, the author, isn't new to the subject, having written her thesis on E. W. Godwin, the first architect of Bedford Park which has been called the "prototype garden suburb". Brentham showed real perception when they commissioned her: she has taken what has become a somewhat dull, and possibly overworked subject and given it new life and a fresh perspective.

Hampstead Garden Suburb will celebrate its own centenary in a few years time but it isn't just the close birthdays which make Aileen Reid's book relevant to Hampstead Garden Suburb. We share a lot of history: Copartnership Tenants Ltd. had a big role to play in both places and many of the same historical figures appeared there as here. There are lots more good reasons why this book is reviewed here: it is not only a celebration of the life of a sister suburb over the last hundred years but an erudite placing of the early years in the previously under-researched and under associated context of the co-operative movement. Aileen Reid gives a real new perspective to those formative years and it won't be possible ever again to ignore the importance of the ideals of the copartnership movement when giving the history of the garden city and suburb. How the Labour Association grew out of the Owenite co-operative movement and the Christian Socialists, how Ebenezer Howard fits into the frame, the contribution of so many individuals mostly now remembered by us only through

the street names of both Brentham and Hampstead Garden Suburb - all this and more is seamlessly woven into the book. On top of these virtues, it's great to find that the book is also a good read with lots and lots of illustrations - and these aren't just of the streets of Brentham (though there are plenty of local scenes, both historical and modern) but there are photos of the diverse characters and events which shaped the suburbs' geneses and subsequent histories. There are photos of Hampstead Garden Suburb, especially in the early chapters; lots of the Brentham ones could be Hampstead Garden Suburb of course, as we shared not only some history but some architects.

The new things the book tells, like what happened to some of the characters who only flit across the scene, the real importance of May Day and how it came to be celebrated the way it was (and still is in Brentham), the involvement of national figures like George Bernard Shaw on the sidelines of Brentham's history, all these newly researched facts (plus a bit of what would have been scandal if it had come out half a century ago) sit lightly in this lively book. While it is a serious and academic work and it will certainly make an important contribution to the study of its subject, it is so good to look at and is written with such enjoyment and sometimes with a wry and at other times a rather shocked pen (you can positively hear the author's sharp intake of breath when she tells about the 'Blackbirds' - blackened faced minstrels) that the serious academic import can pass you by if you prefer it that way. You could concentrate on the pictures, on residents' stories, on Brentham in two world wars, and always on a good tale well

told. For the co-operator, here are stories of the triumph of social endeavour - not least in the very production of the book; for the mocker, there is the story of the dispute between General Builders Ltd., (a co-operative building company for whom the initial Ealing pioneers had worked) and Ealing Tenants Ltd. (a co-operative tenant society) early on in the building of Brentham which lead to a strike by the co-operative builders against the co-operative tenants!. For the social historian, there are numerous tales of war and peace in a small community. There are chapters which could equally have appeared in a book about Hampstead Garden Suburb - the first chapter, focused on Henry Vivian and the copartnership movement and the second, on Ebenezer Howard and garden city development, are important reading if you are interested in the history of Hampstead Garden Suburb and want to see it in its full context.

Of course the book is largely about Brentham and its life is described in detail, tracking its evolution. Similar in many ways to life in Hampstead Garden Suburb, a community emerged through the provision of open land, a club-house with a library and with sports facilities, allotments and with well orchestrated and organised communal events. Openings and the visits of the great and good, plays and pageants, sports days and may days were common to both in the early years; indeed, there is a photo of some children of Ealing tenants here at Henrietta Barnett's cutting of the first sod ceremony of May 1907, dressed in their maypole braiding gear. This set a precedent for similar inter-suburb visits in the early years (Aileen Reid says that the Sports Days against Hampstead

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