



Fireworks on Central Square

After two months covering the Afghan war I was on familiar territory watching fireworks lacing the sky on Central Square to celebrate New Year's Eve. Only this time, the explosions were only up there, rather than down on the ground.

And unlike Afghanistan, I got to watch the explosions with champagne poured by a vicar, rather than a cup of cold tea from a dodgy warlord.

Being a war reporter, I did get to hear about the various battles already raging around the Square. It seems residents may need to deploy a T-55 tank to have a chance of finding a place to park as the school continues its expansion (In fact, if anyone is considering this, I know a bloke in Kabul who can let you have one at a knock-down price). Another local skirmish seems to have been lost: they have given up replacing the light from the Henrietta Barnett memorial because someone keeps stealing it.

In fact, wars seems to be boiling everywhere behind the

leafy exterior of this superficially tranquil Garden Suburb. A signals facility that would not disgrace the United States Air Force has sprouted on top of shops in Temple Fortune. The mobile phone companies have billions of pounds but are happy to build with no attempt to fit in with the harmony of the existing buildings.

One battle is apparently over, with the 1st Battalion, the Residents Association, having repelled dastardly attempts to send mighty street lamps, each the size of the Eiffel Tower, marching across the Suburb.

Having been brought up to date with the wars of the Suburb, it was time to take advantage of a rare double act: the fireworks blasted off from a tennis court on the Square, with St Jude's Church nearby opening its doors to allow residents in to quaff champagne. So well done vicar, and the church wardens, not just for throwing open the doors of your church for the purpose of alcoholic consumption, but also for apparently getting the Almighty on our side – the

weather was cold and crisp and even with not a hint of rain.

And special mention to Alan Brudney, David St George and their sons of the Resident's Association who had trained themselves in the use of fireworks, so that the Association needs pay only for the explosives themselves, not for the people needed to set them off. If they're looking for work, there are a few warlords in Afghanistan who might be able to use their services.

Finally, well done the RA themselves: they splashed out about £700 for the event and did their bit organising the eats and munchies inside the church.

The Association made me feel at home by making me a steward, confident that I had the experience of road blocks and minefields to know how to keep people from getting too near the fireworks.

And finally, well done to everyone who turned up. I keep hearing about the lack of community spirit in modern Britain, but it was there in spades on New Year's Eve.

CHRIS STEPHEN

Chris Stephen, whose first published article appeared in an early Suburb News, is a journalist based in Moscow and covered the war in Afghanistan for *The Observer* and *The Evening Standard*.



Jubilee celebrations on the Suburb

The Residents Association's Events Committee is working to prepare a programme of events to mark the Queen's golden jubilee. While still at an early stage, plans include a family picnic lunch on Central square with a Mad Hatter's lunch party for children at the same time; an

evening of jazz and fireworks and a Pageant performance of *The Hollow Crown* put on by Garden Suburb Theatre. All this would take place over the weekend and public holiday of June 1-4 on and around Central Square. David Littaur says "We are planning a really festive

occasion and hope to cater for everyone." The RA is also working with Brookland School, staff, parents and pupils, to put on a Suburb wide event in the grounds of the school on July 4 as 2002 is also the 50th anniversary of the founding of the school in 1952.

The Horticultural Society - keeping members busy

There is a lot going on in the Horticultural Society this year, in fact we are full up – no not really, just my imagination running riot – but it is going to be a good year. Mr Clematis in March, the plant sale on 18 May, loads of the usual plants but also a selection from Graham my superhero from Marchants Hardy Plants the amazing specialist nursery at East Sussex. This special arrangement is for those of you without a bike! On 25 May, four open gardens as our contribution to the Hampstead/Highgate festival fortnight.

8 June sees a trip to Pashley Manor, a Grade I listed Tudor timbered house with magnificent gardens and, in the afternoon, a trip to Merriments Gardens which is known for its triumph of colour composition. The trip costs £18 which includes entrance to both gardens. There is a good restaurant at Pashley offering many delights at reasonable prices.

On Sunday 7 July we are hoping to have a day of open suburb gardens. If you feel you would like to participate, please contact me on 8455 0455. Please don't feel your garden has to be

perfect but it would be quite nice if it is! In August we will be going to Great Dixter. Of course, if you were a member of the Horticultural Society you would receive all this information in your bumper fun pack. Please contact Ruta Teteris, Membership Secretary, on 8455 9944, she will be only too glad to reel you in.

In the meantime my window sill is groaning under the weight of gardening magazines. If anyone would like my back copies of *Gardeners World* 1998 and 1999 please give me a call.

DIANE BERGER

Suburb rainfall

A perfectly average three months' rainfall of nearly nine inches fell over October to December. This was little over half the total of the same period last year, (17in.). However, October, at just under six inches, was the third wettest in 22 years. November, with just under two inches and December, with just under an inch, reduced the average for these two months and ensured that, at least in the Suburb, the sodden conditions of last year were not repeated.

As with last year's October record, this year's has increased the average for the month, to over 3.5in. This is nearly twice the February mean of 1.9in. Maybe we should start to look more closely at monthly

averages before deciding when to take our weekend break in Britain. Or perhaps that should be amended to arranging outdoor events in the Suburb, (although it is doubtful whether people will readily be persuaded that February is the ideal time for a picnic on the Heath). In the thirty years from 1961 to 1990 the October average in St James's Park is the same as that for November or December whereas my North London figures for 1980 to 2001 make it a third as much again. August, too, is different, being much drier in relation to the other summer months in St James's Park. This shows there are considerable differences between locations relatively

small distances apart, as well as from year to year.

In spite of a drier end to the year, 2001 saw the third highest annual total since 1980, bringing the 22 year average up to almost 30in. The year's 37in. was less than the very high amount of 41in. falling in 2000 but is still very high. Getting on for half the total fell in the first four months. Thereafter, apart from October, it was much drier. It may not be such a good pattern for gardeners, but October seemed quite a good time to have the rain. After all, to follow we have had the very high pressure and the really splendid sunshine of December and early January. Not at all a bad idea for an English winter.

DIANA IWI

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