

SUBURB Culture

featuring Simon Kovar



Simon Kovar, 26, has lived in the Suburb for over 20 years. He was educated at King Alfred School and then read Politics and Parliamentary Studies at Leeds University. He is currently Research Assistant to David Rendel the Liberal Democrat MP for Newbury and has just returned from 3 weeks travelling in India. *Suburb News* asked him about his cultural taste in films, books, music and TV programmes.

Favourite Film:

My favourite film is E.T., in that my emotional response is the same every time I see it. I love the story, the cinematography, and the music. My favourite part in it has to be the last 15 minutes or so – the farewell. That has to be among the most glorious 15 minutes in cinema's history!

Favourite Actress:

I would choose an Indian actress, Kajol, who is a real screen presence – beautiful, charming, funny and moving. I would recommend seeing her in the Hindi blockbuster, *Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham* – romantic melodrama at its best, with memorable music and dancing and an engaging story.

Favourite Book:

I find it difficult to pick one book. My favourite novels are the 'Return of the Native' by Thomas Hardy; the characters, and their names, are brilliant – Eustacia Vye, Damon Wildeve, Diggory Venn. Oh, I like 'Waiting for the Mahatma' by R.K. Narayan as well.

Current Read:

I am just finishing 'Radical Then, Radical Now' by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks – his explanation of Judaism and its continuing relevance today. I have found it engaging and thought-provoking, providing a perspective on my own heritage which I had not fully appreciated before. For example, the centrality of the experience of exile and the injunction to love strangers as well as neighbours – remembering that we ourselves have been strangers in other people's lands – is a message that has powerful implications for us today.

Favourite Album:

Again, it is difficult to pick any one album. Recently I have enjoyed Eva Cassidy's 'Songbird', Stephen Warbeck's music for the film *Captain Corelli's Mandolin*, and A.R. Rahman's musical 'Bombay Dreams'. But it depends on my mood at any given time.

Favourite current musician:

I mainly listen to film music – including, more recently, Hindi film music. Favourites include the composers Patrick Doyle, George Fenton and John Williams.

Favourite TV programme:

I have been thoroughly hooked on *Cutting It* – both the first series and the second (just finished). The characters get themselves into some ridiculous entanglements, but it is absolutely compelling.

Creative Hero:

I'm not sure I believe in heroes – as most of those I've had have been knocked off their pedestals. I think the political figures I most admire are those who have wrestled with the great issues and dilemma's of their day, and not always come up with the right answers, but perhaps asked the right questions and sought to bring a philosophical or principled approach to bear. Jawaharlal Nehru would be a good example.

SUBURB Showbiz

featuring Beans Balawi

Jonathan Ross, Richard and Judy, Martin Bell, the Suburb has its fair share of famous residents but now we have a child star in the making, in the shape of Beans Balawi. Beans is coming up to his sixth birthday, attends Hampstead Garden Suburb School and is in Year 1. Outside of school he enjoys learning the violin at the Youth Music Centre behind Henrietta Barnet School, where he is taught by Tania Goldberg.

It is clear that Beans has show business running through his blood. His grandfather, as well as being a theatrical agent, has been married to singer Patti Boulaye for 25 years and Bean's mother Mandy was a ballet dancer who then went into modelling before becoming involved in films in Hollywood.

As a baby, Beans was a very successful model, but his parents decided that in order to help his integration into school they would put his career to one side. However Beans, love and enthusiasm for the business was hard to quash, and both his mother and father believe that now is the right time for Beans to restart his quest for fame. He is on the books at the famous Sylvia Young's Theatre School agency, and has already got quite a track record including various ads, two different TV series and a role in a fairytale-style film.

Whilst still only five, it is obvious that Beans has a tremendous talent, so much so that he has got every job that he has auditioned for, an achievement that is not to be sniffed at. So, what does the future hold for this young talent? As a massive fan, his main aim at the moment is to be cast in the 4th Harry Potter film, and with his current record, one would not be surprised if he achieved this. All that is left is for *Suburb News* to wish Beans the best of luck for his promising future, and it seems that we shall be seeing a lot more of him for years to come.



SUBURB Nature

featuring Georgina Malcolm

Georgina Malcolm is Chairman of the Residents Association. She told us about wild flowers on the Suburb.

Where have all the flowers come from? What is happening on the Suburb this summer? I haven't seen so many wild flowers around for years. Suddenly the verges are a riot of red and white clover, creeping buttercup, birds-foot trefoil (maybe you call it eggs and bacon or perhaps lady's fingers) and selfheal. I've seen ragwort down by the Market Place, alongside common mallow and Jack-by-the-hedge. Ribwort plantain and yarrow are bursting out between the red brick pavements of the North side and the tree pits are full of black medick, which has a yellow pea-flower and black seeds, and redshanks, a native polygonum. As usual, there are plenty of daisies and dandelions around – everyone knows these, however, amongst the dandelion-type flowers there is smooth sow-thistle, lesser hawkbit and autumn hawkbit, then there's another I think is

probably nipplewort, and maybe cats-ear. I find it difficult to tell these apart.

In the hedges there is bindweed and woody nightshade, not so poisonous as deadly nightshade, but don't try it just the same, and goosegrass, which someone taught me to call sticky willie. Growing under the hedges there are several different willow herbs, sorrel and dock, and mouse-scented herb-Robert, although I never saw a mouse that smelled like that, I'm just passing on what the book tells me. Also, under the hedges is groundsel, like a little yellow thistle, and wood avens, with spicy smelling roots, and meadow thistle. Even the gutters are full of chickweed and spurge.

I'd like to think that Barnet has changed its greenspaces policy and is no longer spraying herbicide on anything green that isn't grass but I hesitate to ring and congratulate them on this change of heart in case someone has just forgotten and immediately sends out a fleet of spraying machines. Anyway, that wouldn't explain why so many lawns are full of wildflowers too. Perhaps it was the weather. In which case, good for the weather.

None of these is a rare plant and some may call them weeds rather than wild flowers especially when they turn up in the garden, but the sight of them brightens our roads and pavements. And I like to know what I'm admiring. Don't run away with the idea that I'm an expert – the first identification book I reached for was 'Flower Fairies of the Wayside' which I've owned since I was 4. I also looked in Keble Martin's 'New Concise British Flora' which has the best drawings for comparing your sample (make sure you don't bring home too many insects), and Richard Mabey's 'Flora Britannica', which tells you what it would be called in Scotland or Somerset, and whether or not you can eat it. Fascinating stuff, and all on my own doorstep.



Deborah Warland has lived on the Suburb for 24 years. As a busy publisher for Conde Nast, her last two assignments were as publisher of *House and Garden* and then *Conde Nast Traveller*. Deborah says "We," her husband Peter was also in publishing, "were too busy to take much notice of the Suburb environment or its activities." The RA is fortunate that they both find time now, when not travelling or watching cricket, to put something back into the Suburb. "I hope readers will enjoy this new look at life on the Suburb through the eyes of a few of its residents."

Warland



Deborah