

featuring Jane Epstein

I first met Jane Epstein about 20 years ago when we both played tennis at Farm Walk Tennis Club. At that time we were busy with very demanding jobs and so tennis was a way of burning off some excess adrenalin – and lots of fun. A broken ankle on my part and Jane's new found passion for golf meant that we did not see one another for some time, other than for a friendly wave or a chat in Waitrose. So I was delighted when Jane recently re-joined Farm Walk and I took the opportunity to catch up with her news.

EFFERVESCENT JANE

Jane was born in Hendon and educated at King Alfred's School in North End Road from the age of 4 until she was 18. She then went to London University where she took a degree in French and Russian followed by a Certificate in Education. After doing Voluntary Service Overseas teaching children in Antigua (and she doesn't even like cricket!), she started teaching at her old 'alma mater', Kind Alfred's Junior School in 1971. She bought her house in Hampstead Way in 1972, next to the first two cottages built on the Suburb. She was at King Alfred's for 12 years, during which time she was seconded to take a Diploma in Education at Cambridge – specialising in maladjustment. She went on to hold a variety of senior teaching posts catering for special needs and disruptive children and was again seconded, this time to take a Masters degree in Education at London University. Before her retirement last year she had gone on to teach special needs pupils at Akiva and top juniors at Naima Jewish Prep School.

Jane's philosophy on her retirement is a comfortable one: "Life has blossomed along with my garden. I grew up visiting my grandmother who had large garden in Brondesbury and was passionate about horticulture. We would walk around the garden and I would ask her all the names of the plants – we would do this time and time again but she never lost her patience and was always so enthusiastic. One of the reasons I moved to the Suburb was it's 'leafiness' and the proximity to the Heath. My favourite place is Bigwood when you see the silhouettes of the trees on a winter's sunny day with snow on the ground. I'm so pleased that the Suburb has such a thriving Horticultural Society and that now I have the time to benefit from all the excellent talks and outings and participate as an active member. I also love the Suburb's 'village' feeling." She experienced this dimension of Suburb life at the recent opening ceremony for the Centenary celebrations.

"Of course it was great that the whole event started at the cottage next door to me, and I was pleased that everyone was keen to emphasise the need to preserve the unique facets which make the Suburb so special. I have had so much enjoyment living here and now I hope that I can give something back to the Suburb and, for example, help with Fellowship.

Jane may be recently retired but she is by no means inactive! Apart from her garden and playing tennis again, she has recently acquired her first golf handicap after, as she puts it, "many years of frustration and determination." She plays golf with her partner of 10 years whose name is Herb – not inappropriate for a plant lover! She is also a keen cook and makes a very popular elderflower cordial (see recipe).

Jane never stands still, is more often than not creased up with laughter and is one of the Suburb's most delightful enthusiasts.



We all wonder about the previous occupants of our houses but thanks to the archive photo below, Jane Epstein in her Hampstead Way garden, above, knows that possibly the first in her home was a gardener too!



JANE'S ELDERFLOWER CORDIAL

(which her niece calls elderly cordial)

25 heads of creamy white, sweet smelling elderflowers picked on a fine, sunny day! 4 oranges; 1 lemon; 2oz tartaric acid; 3 lbs granulated sugar; 3 pints boiled, then cooled water.

Put the elderflowers in a bowl. Halve and squeeze the oranges and lemon and add their juice and rind (grated) to the bowl. Then add the sugar and finally the water. Stir the mixture, the sugar will slowly dissolve. Leave for 48 hours stirring every so often then strain through muslin into bottles which should then be kept in the refrigerator. Serve as squash, diluting to taste.

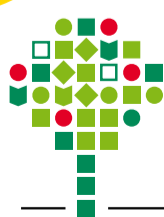
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