

featuring Joan Rees Phillips

Joan Rees Phillips is one of the Suburb's best known ladies. I use the word 'lady' as on first meeting Joan, with her perfect dress sense and elegant manner, you have no doubt that you are in the presence of a formidable person who is used not only to arranging herself perfectly, but probably could arrange the lives of other people. She has an air of totally charming authority, which no doubt came in handy when she was teaching at Meadway Nursery School for 30 years and played a vital role in the formative years of so many of the Suburb's youngsters. However, let us start by rewinding the the clock to Joan's own childhood.

**THE LADY WHO ARRANGES**

Joan spent her early childhood in Malaya where her father was a rubber planter. They lived in Perak amidst an international colony of British, Danes and Dutch involved in palm oil, tea and rubber. She and her younger sister attended the Notre Dame convent in the Cameron Highlands which was staffed by Irish nuns. The family returned to the UK just before the start of the Second World War and moved to Pulborough where Joan remembers one particular experience of the German bombers. "We often heard them droning overhead on their return from bombing London. Sometimes they would fly very low and I vividly recollect seeing the pilot of a Heinkel plane, which had a glass front, only 200 feet above me – I can still see his face now."

After attending Malvern Girls College, Joan went on to the Mayfair Secretarial College. Her first job in 1946 was working for Iain McLeod who was then the MP for Enfield West and also helped to run the Conservative Research Department. The secretaries involved in research would often be seconded to other parliamentarians. One of Joan's favourite memories was when she had to help Anthony Eden who she thought 'such a charming man'. He would often read me a paper or a speech and say, "now what do you think of that?" "I was so flattered that he would ask such a young thing as me, my opinion." Joan continued to work for the party until her marriage to Paul in 1952. They moved to the Suburb in 1955.

At that time you could only move onto the Suburb on Quarter Days, so she has no problem in remembering the exact date – September 23rd in 1955, just before the birth of her first son. Her three sons all went to The Hall School in Hampstead where Joan became Honorary Secretary of the Parents Association. Her daughter went to South Hampstead and then The Mount School. Joan told me about life around Brim Hill in the 50's: "We could hear the steam trains running through East Finchley and see the trolley buses coming up from Archway. Home Farm was behind us, with sheep and cows – it really was very rural. In Marketplace we had an Express Dairy, Stoller the fishmonger, a general grocer, Fishers who fitted my children's school shoes and a proper hardware store where men wore brown overalls. But my favourite shop was Walton, Hassel & Port who would grind their own coffee. The aroma was magnificent.

"In 1963 I was fortunate to meet Sydney D. Bailey the eminent Suburb pacifist and quaker who took me on as his secretary. For those who are unaware of Sydney's talents, he was an 'egghead' for the Foreign Office advising them as an authority on the United Nations and the Security Council in particular. He was a 'conflict expert', and advised on resolutions ranging from Rhodesia to Kashmir to the Middle East. I worked for him once a week for 30 years, arranging the notes for his books and political advice – it was a great privilege. In 1968 I joined Meadway Nursery School which derived its name from Meadway Court where it started in 1950. I was responsible for music and cookery and loved teaching the 3-5 year olds for 30 years. Of course I still see many of my ex-pupils around the Suburb who are now parents themselves!

"Another passion during my time on the Suburb is horticulture and particularly flower arranging. I was Chairman of the Hampstead Garden Suburb Flower Club and have been Honorary Secretary of the Horticultural Society for 10 years. I also help with the flowers for St Jude's."

Joan also loves travelling with her friend Gill Read (sadly Joan's husband Paul died in 1979). Gill is another Suburb stalwart and the two of them have visited some exotic locations since 1993. These include climbing Machu-Picchu, going up the Yangtse River, seeing Alaska and the Yukon, touring South Africa, driving around India (with a driver who spoke no English!) and visiting the amazing Victoria Falls in Zambia. They are off on the Glacier Express train soon which will take them from Cologne all the way down the Rhine Gorge.

When not otherwise engaged, local residents can still see this phenomenal lady cycling around the Suburb!



Deborah Warland

Suburb Style editor Deborah Warland, talks to residents about some of their favourite things



(Above, right) Joan attempts to ride an Ostrich in South Africa  
(Above) Joan puts up with a bad-tempered camel in the Sahara, Morocco

featuring Beans Balawi

Beans Balawi, the Suburb's young star, he's nine now, (Styles passim) was most recently seen as Mr Polly as a boy, Lee Evans played him grown up in the History of Mr Polly on ITV. He is also in the BBC's current series Holby Blue, as the son of the detective character. In Beans' latest film, 28 Weeks which opened recently, he played with Robert Carlyle (right), "he played football with me on the set". One of his best known parts was that of the intrepid little bank robber in the Peugeot commercial (below). But that, and a long run in Mary Poppins was before he started at Westminster Abbey Choir School where he is now enjoying his life as a chorister.



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