

LETTERS

7 Devon Rise, NW11

Sir

I read with interest the article New school buildings on Central Square. What really happened? by Chris Stephen in the last edition of Suburb News.

Yes, an enquiry would be a good idea. But, it is too late to debate what went 'wrong' with the design of the new buildings. I propose instead that the line of enquiry should be along the following lines:

- Why is the school allowed to continue with its current admissions policy?
- Why is Henrietta Barnett School allowed to accept the majority of its girls from out of the borough, when there is a chronic shortage of secondary state school places for girls in the borough?

These are the real issues. They are the same issues that were discussed by parents of primary school-aged girls when the first of the abandoned architects' plans were drawn up in the early 2000s.

Nothing has changed for local residents.

Stop in-fighting. Stop trying to apportion blame. If the Residents' Association is an organisation that represents local residents then it is time to face the real issues for local residents: free secondary education for local girls.

Yours

Mrs Anne Sklar
(mother of three daughters)

6 Corringway, NW11

Sir,

In October we have to choose a secondary school for our daughter who is currently at the Garden Suburb Junior School. Last year the 90 or so pupils leaving Garden Suburb School were scattered over more than 30 secondary schools. Like many, we have been looking for a good local non-religious state school. We were hoping at one point that Christ College would go co-ed but they turned down the idea. The Suburb is outside the catchment area of most other 'good' state schools and even Hendon

school is outside catchment for pupils scoring in the top 25% of their entrance banding exam. We were getting very stressed, even thinking about moving, until we discovered that we have an excellent non-religious state school right on our doorstep:

- Rated 'Outstanding' by Ofsted;
- Classes of 20 to 25 pupils;
- In the top 1% of schools in the country for improving a child's results beyond expectations;
- Over £1m recently invested to provide modern school facilities;
- An inspirational head teacher;
- Has a 6th form partnership with St Mary's and Hampstead schools to provide a wide range of A level teaching;
- The entire Suburb is within it's catchment area and it is easily accessible by bus from large parts of the Suburb.

I am not talking about Henrietta Barnett school, but about Whitefield School. For many parents, ourselves included, a leap of faith is required. This was considered a failing school with around a 30% 5 GCSE pass rate a couple of years ago. Last year this had improved to 85%, with 50% including Maths and English.

For any parents considering a secondary school I would thoroughly recommend going along for a visit and a talk with the headmaster, Martin Lavelle. They run tours for interested parents almost every morning and the headmaster will sit down with you at the end to discuss any issues you may have. We went recently and were very impressed. Contact details at www.whitefield.barnet.sch.uk

The school has been completely transformed and the headmaster is very keen to attract pupils from Garden Suburb, Brooklands and other primary schools in this area. There may be a real opportunity for the school to develop as the natural choice for Suburb parents, keeping friendships alive and providing a stress free transition from primary school.

Yours

Steve Morris

9 Raeburn Close, NW11 6UG

Sir

In the Spring Issue of Suburb News, Richard Wakefield laments the demolition of what he describes as 'a fine Soutar house' in Ingram Avenue.

For objectivity, he might have added that, at the Lands Tribunal, the Judge concluded that the Trust's appraisal of the house was "startling," and he pointed out that even the Trust's expert witness did not make any great claims for its architectural merit.

Yours

David Iwi

In an obituary? Ed



News from the Horticultural Society

May and June were busy months for the Horticultural Society. A successful plant sale was held on 7 May at Fellowship House and the Summer Flower Show and Scarecrow Competition on 11 June at the Free Church Hall. The biggest event to organise was the open gardens, specialist nurseries plant sale, rose festival and teas extravaganza on 19 June. Hundreds of people from all over London and beyond, including Brentham Garden Suburb, visited 15 gardens 'behind the hedges' of the Suburb and met for tea, to buy plants and to see the roses at Fellowship House. Over £1,200 was raised to be shared equally between The North London Hospice and the Horticultural Society. Coach outings to RHS Wisley and Coton Manor and Cottesbrooke Hall also took place. Several members also opened their gardens for the charitable National Gardens Scheme (NGS).

As if that wasn't enough, with spectacular thunderstorms overhead, and in torrential rain, two judges from the London

Gardens Society inspected the nine finalist gardens and one balcony in the Horticultural Society's annual *Suburb In Bloom* competition on 28 June.

Commenting on the high standard and variety of planting in all the gardens, the judges whittled the finalists down to four gardeners, with very little difference in points between them. First was Chris Page of Wordsworth Walk, former Treasurer of the Horticultural Society and currently Chairman of the NW Support Group of the North London Hospice. He will receive the society's Millennium Suburb in Bloom Cup at its AGM in November. Diane Berger of Willfield Way came second, with Yvonne Oliver and Edwin Fine from Asmunds Hill jointly third. The society would like many more residents to enter the competition – contact Patricia Larsen (020 8458 2690, hgs@hortsoc.co.uk) if you would like to do so next year.

Full details of all events are published in Suburb News Diary and also at www.hortsoc.co.uk.

On Thursday 1 September there will be an interesting lecture at Fellowship House at 7.30pm on the history of women in horticulture since 1600 and on 10 September the popular Grimsdyke Brass Band from Harrow will pay a return visit to the Free Church Hall garden to

play several sets from 3pm at the Autumn Flower Show. That flower show will also be part of the Royal Horticultural Society's Dig Together Day. A coach trip to Savill Gardens and Frogmore, which was planned for 25 September, will not take place.

MARJORIE HARRIS



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