

Garden Suburb Schools' Centenary

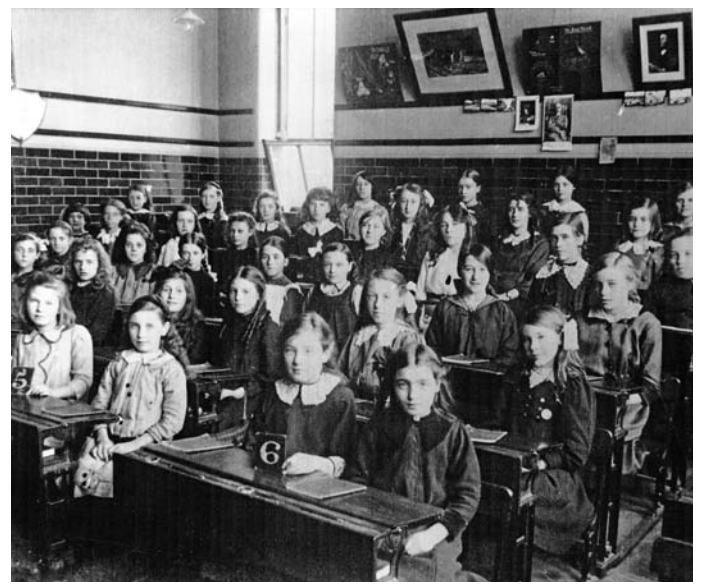
This year marks the beginning of a very special centenary in the history of Hampstead Garden Suburb. Architect W.G. Wilson's attractive design for the one-story Garden Suburb Elementary School was constructed in 1912 at a cost of £17,748. The buildings were constructed on land granted to the then Hendon Education Committee by the Garden Suburb Trust, and their features were fully in keeping with the architecture

of Hampstead Garden Suburb. The School had separate buildings for Infants and Juniors and even provided cookery and laundry rooms for girls and a boys manual training room. In February 1913, 620 Infants and Juniors began their primary education in Childs Way – a far cry from only four years earlier, when just 36 children and a staff of two were housed in the Suburb's 'Temporary School' based at the Institute.

To accompany a wide range of activities to mark the Centenary, the Schools will be compiling stories of their 100 years at Childs Way. "We would be delighted to hear from former pupils and staff – both to record their reminiscences of school life, and to make copies of any old photographs or school reports that they may have," says Alan Dein, a member of the Garden Suburb School's Centenary Committee

and whose three children attend the Schools. "We are especially keen to hear stories about school life during WW2 – when bomb shelters were built under what is now the front playground and when teachers taught classes in children's homes while the Schools were closed for months at a time."

If you have memories or memorabilia then please contact gsscentenary@gmail.com.



The first year in the Childs Way - Junior Girls snapped for posterity by the Garden Suburb Trust in 1913

RA Open Forum on basements

The open meeting held by the HGS Residents' Association on 4th October 2011, attended by nearly 100 people, enabled residents to put their views and the HGS Trust, invited by the RA, to explain its position and the limits on its powers under the Scheme of Management.

The views expressed will help reinforce the dialogue which has been under way for some time between the RA's CONSAM (Conservation & Amenities) committee, the Trust and the London Borough of Barnet.

BACKGROUND

The creation and extension of basements is a growing phenomenon on the Suburb and elsewhere. The majority of applications have, until recently, related to basements to be constructed beneath new, larger houses. Applications on the Suburb are growing and there is a detectable trend towards applications relating to smaller houses in smaller roads, which could soon reach the 'Artisans' quarter (one is under consideration).

NUISANCE & DISTURBANCE

A great deal of disquiet was expressed about the traffic nuisance and other disturbance generated by basement works which were often prolonged. The nuisance is exacerbated when the work is being carried out in narrow Suburb roads and closes. Also, when permission for development is granted there is no mechanism allowing the Trust or LBB to take account of the particular difficulty of the cumulative effect of a succession of developments in the same road.

LIMITED POWERS

The Scheme of Management under which covenants are imposed on freehold properties in the Suburb gives the Trust control over any change to the external appearance of buildings and their gardens, including forming sky lights and light wells, but only the visual

'character' of the Suburb. While a number of residents expressed their own views on what is meant by character, legal advice obtained from time to time by the Trust confirms that this relates to character manifested by external appearance and does not have a social element. Accordingly, the Trust has limited control over a proposal for a basement development which leaves the external appearance of a property unchanged, irrespective of the use to which the basement is to be put. However, control over leasehold properties depends on the terms of the individual leases.

SUBSIDENCE

The hydrology of the Suburb is not homogenous. The Trust requires applicants to commission independent hydrogeological surveys which are taken into account in reaching a decision on any application. No adverse effect on trees on the property or nearby is allowed and reports are required to ensure this.

In the same way, independent structural surveys are required to avoid subsidence and similar problems. Some residents have expressed concern that where a basement is to be constructed beneath a semi-detached house, the adjacent undeveloped house will be put at particular risk, either because of the disturbance of the development

itself or because improving the foundations of the house with the basement will leave the other half of the semi more vulnerable to subsidence.

PARTY WALL AGREEMENTS

The Trust has subsequently advised that this is a matter that should be addressed in the engineering reports and through Party Wall Agreements. Where work is close to an adjoining or neighbouring property Party Wall regulations provide for a party wall surveyor to be appointed (at the cost of the person instigating the work) to protect the interests of the adjoining owner.

Under Party Wall legislation the adjoining owner can require that an independent surveyor be appointed; and there are arrangements for settling any failure to agree, by appeal to a third surveyor.

Measures that could be considered under a party wall agreement might include: an insurance bond to cover any failure to complete the work satisfactorily or an agreement to monitor the neighbouring property to check for movement.

SCHEME OF MANAGEMENT

Some residents have suggested that steps be taken to apply to the Leasehold Valuation Tribunal to amend the Scheme of Management to give the

Trust control over basement development. The Trust's view is that while this is theoretically possible, given sufficient support from residents, it is an inauspicious time for such an application taking into account the government's policy to free up development and reduce restrictions. An application might (unintentionally) result in the relaxation of some of the Trust's current controls.

ALTERNATIVES

Several residents voiced the need for more space as an alternative to moving out of the Suburb. Some thought basements a parallel to loft rooms in their reflection of changing times. One resident suggested that in some cases the cost and trouble of the construction of basements and loft extensions could be avoided if the Trust Design Guidance on the size and type of garden buildings were more lenient (subject to suitable screening and landscaping).

OTHER BOROUGHES

It has been suggested that other London boroughs, including Camden, currently exercise stricter controls. However recent consents granted by Camden indicate that once engineering questions are answered, there is little scope for restricting the development of basements under existing planning legislation.

Martin Bell said he was pleased to be able to help such a worthy cause and thanked the organisers for all the effort they put in to raising money for Combat Stress as he opened the the Winter Fair at Fellowship House in November



Mission is revolution

I first met Saul Zadka, the enfant terrible of the Suburb Trust, outside the Winnington Close house of Saif Al Islam Gaddafi on a cold day early last year.

He had tipped-off some Libyan exiles that the son of Libya's dictator had a ten million pound pad in the heart of the Suburb. They had gone to occupy it, to prevent the Gaddafi family making a quick sale, and Saul took me and a photographer to meet them.

The Libyan students spoke poor English so Saul did the translation. And at one point the irony of the situation hit us all: An Israeli translating the words of an Arab for the benefit of an English journalist and a Russian photographer. United Nations on the Suburb.

Later I left for Libya and revolution and, back here, Saul began his very own Suburb Spring.

Infuriated by what he saw as the lack of accountability on the part of the Trust, he ran for a vacant seat on the Trust Council. Backed by a self-formed group, Concerned Residents, he won with a thumping 323 of the 713 votes cast.

A year on, I meet the Suburb's latest trustee in Fellowship House.

He says he decided to jump into the political mire over what he says was a lack of consultation over the extension to the Henrietta Barnett School.

"The school for me was the last straw. First of all they (The Trust) committed the sin of not consulting the people. There was such resentment against the Trust." He and his Concerned Residents went door-to-door to meet the voters and the rest is history. "They liked the idea of a maverick or an outsider trying to help the Trust think outside the box."

He freely admits to having no political experience – he had a career as a London-based correspondent for Israel's Haaretz newspaper. But he has one thing going for him – some years ago he got himself a PHD in guerrilla warfare.

"I have a developed a liking for insurgency," he says. "The next move will be setting up a guerrilla establishment on the Suburb." He is joking.

At least, I think he is joking. But he insists he has a mission, and that mission is revolution. "The Trust should be there for the residents, not the other way around," he says.

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