

“A lively and entertaining read”

Henrietta Barnett: Social Worker and Community Planner.

Micky Watkins

Hampstead Garden Suburb Archive Trust. £14.95

along at much the same time (the other being ‘Only a Woman’ by Alison Creedon, 2006). Why so long? Micky suggests that Henrietta too rapidly became an old-fashioned figure. The novel and often radical ideas she had advocated as a young woman had become accepted and uncontroversial by the end of her long life, while those she had thought secondary seemed to locate her in a remote past. An attractive and well turned-out young woman, Henrietta ended up as a rather isolated and imposing Victorian widow, outdated in dress, manner and morals, frightening school girls on Central Square and intruding into the affairs of local organisations. (The first Suburb Residents Association was formed to resist her interference).

She was an advocate of ‘female causes’ rather than a feminist (she apparently used this word to mean ‘homosexual’). She opposed both the campaign for women’s suffrage (as a distraction from serving the poor), and birth-control (after all “Our Empire is not half-populated, let alone overcrowded”).

Communal accommodation on the Suburb was provided for working females, but a distinction made between professional ladies at Waterlow Court and “thrifty working women” at Queen’s Court. The latter had shared

bathrooms; the former shared servants. Henrietta assumed many domestic servants would be employed on the Suburb and provided in Homesfield a residence where young girls would be trained for this work. She wrote an article ‘The Servant as Citizen’ advocating labour-saving devices and the use of ‘temporary help’ so that servants would not have to catch up after their hours of recreation. To ensure servants had decent working conditions she opposed basements in Suburb houses.

In preparing my own Centenary Book of St Jude’s (2011) I came to realise how unconventional Henrietta had been in her religious views and Micky’s more detailed analysis corroborates this. Her spirituality was essentially practical and undogmatic, but was a spirituality nonetheless. In Henrietta’s mind the Suburb was to be more than just a nice place to live. Community living in healthy and beautiful surroundings was meant to transform individuals (though not necessarily society itself). One of the most fascinating and amusing features of the book is the account of the many social facilities now lost or never realised (some of which would probably be opposed today). The Institute (which stood for ‘high culture’) was to be at the very heart of Suburb life, complemented by the Club House for worthy pursuits. There was to have been a library and a theatre, a swimming bath and open-air gymnasium, as well as a senior boys’ school, an Art School, and a School of Domestic Science. A national memorial to Anglo-American friendship with a peace column listing the names of all the American soldiers who had died in the Great War was planned for Bunker Hill near the Hampstead Golf Club. There really was an illuminated roller-skating rink on part of the present Orchard site, and Henrietta pioneered the modern book club with her ‘Novel Literary Club’ that met in her drawing room on South Square to discuss the latest fiction writing.

When Henrietta Barnett was made a Dame in 1924 she was one of the most famous women in the country and well known in North America and the Empire. She travelled and lectured extensively and her advice was sought by charitable and public policy organisations. Micky Watkins’s book places the Suburb and its founder in this broader context and speculates, not-uncritically, on what Henrietta would think of her project today. Extensive use is made of primary material, much of it in the possession of the Hampstead Garden Suburb Archives Trust and appearing for the first time. The book is fully illustrated, although the modern images tend to be snapshots rather than the professional images the text and subject matter deserve. A more serious flaw is the eccentric index: ‘lesbian’, ‘homosexual’ and ‘bicycling’ each has its own short entry, while every reference to the Suburb is listed under a single heading. The cover price is remarkably low for a book of this range and quality.

THE REVEREND ALAN WALKER

Available from Joseph’s Bookstore and Garden Suburb Gallery

Two hundred surgical lives

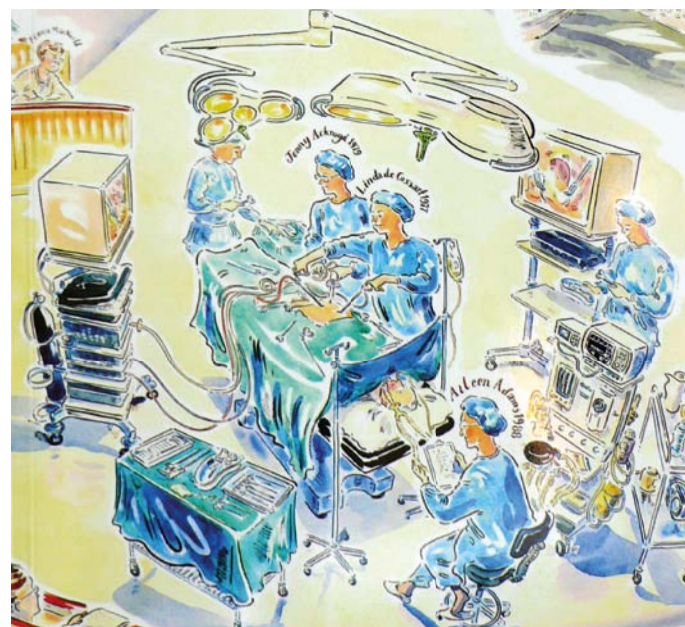
The Fellowship of Women. Margaret Ghilchick

Smith Gordon. £25

‘How easy are the lives of men’. This comment seems to summarise the courage, determination and the frustration that the early female pioneers in Surgery felt, on stepping out on the long and tortuous path to recognition as Fellows of the Royal College of Surgeons. In this new volume, Margaret Ghilchick, a Suburb resident, who herself represented only 10% of women Fellows in 1989, has charted the history of the Royal College and its reluctance and final capitulation, in receiving women into their ranks, with careful attention to historical chronology, lively and humorous narrative and with acute empathy and sensitivity for the disappointments and gargantuan achievements of the first 200 female Fellows.

The foreword to the volume is by another well known Suburb resident, Prof. Harold Ellis, who talks warmly of Margaret Ghilchick as a skilled surgeon but still amusingly insists on calling his female students ‘his girls’.

I read the first few chapters of this appealing volume on a tedious train journey to South Wales and became immediately immersed in the drama of the engagement between Elizabeth Blackwell, Elizabeth Garrett and the Royal College of Surgeons, in the days when women who worked were expected to do so for philanthropic not remunerative reasons. The extent of the misogyny they encountered and the antipathy they endured which was countered with an assiduous application to their medical studies, is truly amazing. Sadly, neither was accepted and the first woman, Eleanor Davies-Colley, was not to be admitted to the



Fellowship until 1st December 1911. This story should be compulsory reading for all women who are embarking on a career path and who may not be aware of the bravery which opened up that path to them. The Fellowship of Women is a moving story of the very gradual unfolding of acknowledgement, courtesy and grace towards women in a professional field and provides humbling testimony of the difficulties which they transcended.

The lives of the 200 first women Fellows are listed in chronological groups and the biographies make stunning reading with many amusing anecdotes to put flesh on the bare bones of fact. Can you imagine any examiner opening a viva voce examination with the word ‘If you can put down your bag, you silly woman’ – an opener worthy of a hand-bagging! It is striking that so many of

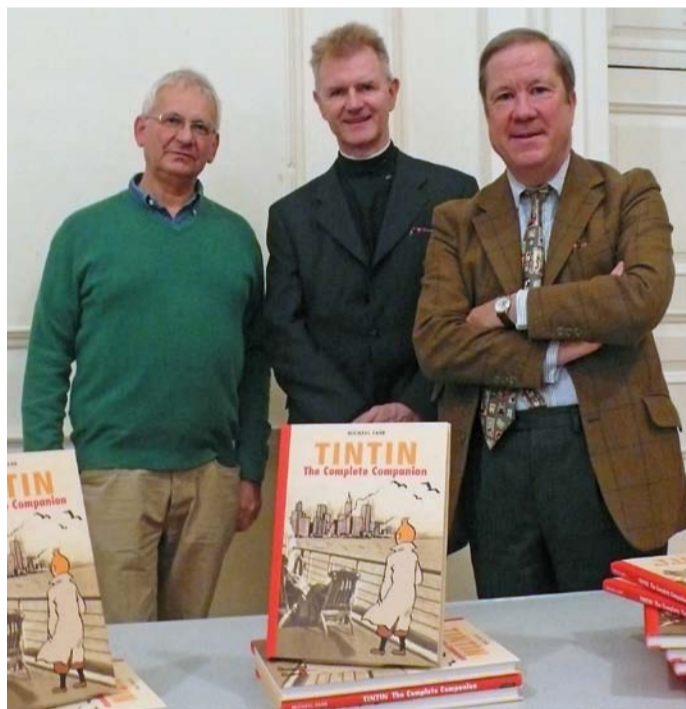
these women chose to follow glittering careers overseas where they were more readily accepted. The list of lives gives fascinating insights into war-time bravery, pioneering work in India and Africa and the fascinating ways in which many managed their work and home-life.

The book has many resonances for Suburb residents, not least because the author lives here but because of the benign influence of the Royal Free Hospital and its London School of Medicine for Women. There is mention of Toynbee Hall. Many of the names mentioned will be familiar as the names of wards in the Royal Free, before they were reduced to impersonal numbers. Remember Garrett Anderson, Thorne, Scharlieb, Mann and Jex-Blake? Find out about them all in this fascinating book. I recommend it to readers of Suburb News.

ELINOR DELANEY

Micky Watkins’s new book continues and concludes the life of the Suburb’s founder, begun in ‘Henrietta Barnett in Whitechapel’ (2005; Reviewed Suburb News 2005). In fact ‘Henrietta Barnett: Social Worker and Community Planner’ includes the entire text of the earlier work and so is a complete biography in itself with new material amounting to about two-thirds of the whole. Had it been a separate volume it would no doubt have been called Henrietta Barnett on the Suburb. It is certainly a much more lively and entertaining read than its rather pedestrian title suggests.

Henrietta had to wait a century for her Life to be written and then two came



In November the Henrietta Barnett Literary Society welcomed Michael Farr translator of the Tintin books and friend of their author Hergé. Introduced by Rev Alan Walker, Michael Farr gave a fascinating talk, answered questions from Tintin devotees and signed copies of his book. Seen here Michael Joseph, from Joseph’s Bookstore, Rev Alan Walker and Michael Farr. The next Lit Soc event is a Dickens evening on February 4. See What’s On p 10.



Our services:

- General Care
- Live-in Care
- Night Care
- Special Needs
- Equipment

A Better Way...

Tailored Home Care Services for Private, Social Services and PCT Customers

We support our Clients in every way we can and give them the control they need for a better quality of life in their own homes.

For more information contact us on
Tel: 020 7916 7270 Email: info@hartwigcare.co.uk

www.hartwigcare.co.uk

HC/013/0410





**ARCHITECTURE • INTERIOR DESIGN
PROJECT MANAGEMENT**



TO DISCUSS HOW TO TRANSFORM YOUR PROPERTY INTO YOUR DREAM HOME
CALL A SENIOR MEMBER OF THE BOSCOLO TEAM

0845 20 20 208
INFO@BOSCOLO.CO.UK
BOSCOLO.CO.UK