

AUTUMN REFLECTIONS

featuring David Simmons

It is now fast approaching the 20th anniversary of David Simmons' arrival on the Suburb, along with his wife Ruth and their two children. David was in reflective mood when he outlined the reasons for the move from rural Potters Bar (over 3 hours of commuting to and from his office every day) to the evergreen attractions of the Suburb, while Bigwood and the Heath Extension provided the ideal space for their Labradoodle – one of the first in the UK – to run around.

David told me that his first memory of the Suburb was visiting Marketplace with his parents who had come to see friends. He added, "As we were coming from Palmers Green, this was quite an adventure. Fallooden Way was not the road it is now, there was a genteel feel to it. I think this was emphasised the day we moved into our house in Ossulton Way. The weather was gorgeous and I walked down the road to the hardware shop which I think was next door to where Barclays is now. The first thing I noticed was that Lux Flakes were displayed in the window – a product I hadn't seen for 20 years or more. I can't remember the name of the owner – perhaps some Suburb News readers would remember (do let SN know) – but he wore a long brown shopkeeper's coat. He told me that his father had bought the freehold many years ago and that, as a young man, he remembered the Chipperfield Circus having its winter headquarters at the top of Ossulton Way. Camels and elephants were a regular sight – alas no more."

David's love of the Suburb's semi-rural location has obviously not diminished over the years and he loves returning to his favourite place – Bigwood. He described to me a visit there with his very young grandson, "He was captivated by the movement and shades of the leaves and when I needed a rest we'd find a bench and listen to the sounds of the forest and, if we were lucky, a woodpecker hard at work. Sometimes I'd take him out of his chair and sit him on my knee and I came to the realisation that nobody looks at you with the intensity of a baby who seems to stare into your very core to get assurance that you are safe and will take care of him. When I asked David which season he liked most on the Suburb, he immediately answered, "The Autumn. Whereas other seasons can – and often do – disappoint, the Autumn is more predictable and it always does what it says on the tin! When it arrives the leaves change colour and fall and Bigwood gives up the secrets it was hiding within its leafy boughs. This is where I would have my memorial bench, in an avenue of big trees. I hope my bench would enjoy many occupants over the years and some would become regulars who enjoyed the changing seasons, particularly in the winter while sipping some warm refreshment."

David went on to say, "In fact, one of my other favourite places is Kings café on the corner of Kingsley Way and Market Place. I am a very proud Jew but lost my faith about 3 years ago. I had an extensive Jewish education so am able to have long and sometimes heated conversations over a cup of coffee and croissants with my religious friends. On a warm day we can get quite a crowd and I relish the fact that we can have a meeting so openly without fear of violence because of our religious or racial identity – there's not too many places in London where I could do that. What makes me very happy about living here is that my fellow Jews of all denominations can walk through the streets on the Sabbath and High Holidays, dressed in their finest and with children and grandchildren in tow without the need to disguise our religious affiliation."

After reporting such a meditative conversation you might be wondering what David's career is. Poet? Psychoanalyst? Curator of artefacts? No, none of the above. He describes it as eclectic. "I went from school academic failure to excellent kibbutznik and clearly, having very little imagination at the time, followed my brother's career and became a Chartered Accountant. If anyone was not meant to be a Chartered Accountant it was me. I am disorganised and terrible with paperwork. However, at 23 I was a partner with beautiful offices in Mayfair and stuck it out for 8 years."

In the sixties there was a very active independent film industry in the UK and we had a number of clients in that field. Slowly it foundered but out of the embers came a thriving music industry so over the next few years I started to act for people like David Essex, Elkie Brooks and Fleetwood Mac and then became a full time music publisher. We went on to work with Johnny Nash, Bob Marley and Don Maclean amongst many others. I sold the company to Filmtrax, who in turn sold to EMI. After that I was independent and a young band approached me and asked me to act on their behalf. They intrigued me due to the impressive hairstyle of the lead singer and the fact that their stage costumes contained an original use of Hebrew letters – this was Culture Club who soon went on to be number one around the world with *Do you really want to hurt me*. Other fond memories include being with Ike Turner when he sang *River Deep Mountain High* in a tiny office – just for David, and enjoying a 3-day party with Motorhead when they were incarcerated in a Finnish prison with more than adequate supplies of vodka. Apparently the Finnish police enjoyed it too! David is now an author and playwright. One of his plays, *Obits* which he wrote with Geoff Morrow (Geoff wrote Barry Manilow's signature song *Can't Smile Without You*) was staged at the Canal Theatre in May and will go back there at Christmas before touring.

To end our talk I asked David if he had any Suburb pet hates. He answered, "Women who drive madly around the Suburb with a mobile phone pressed to their ear; school kids who throw their litter in my hedge and garden and pot holes! After a relatively small amount of snow the Suburb can look like a battle-zone. Very dangerous and unsightly. I even went to see our MP, Mike Freer to complain about them. Being an ex-councillor he had an impressive collection of statistics that told me everything was all right but of course it wasn't. Annoyingly, last year there was relatively little snow so I couldn't prove him wrong but I wait with camera and notebook in hand hoping that we have two months of blizzards and sub-freezing temperatures so that I can promote my campaign for quicker and better road maintenance. My wife says I am morphing into Victor Meldrew – which is probably true." **S**

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David Simmons with family forebears

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