

Suburb Style



Suburb Style editor, Deborah Warland talks to local residents

A MAN FOR ALL SEASONS

featuring David Littaur

In 1998 David and his wife Joyce decided to 'downsize' from their house in Highgate where they had lived for 50 years. They were uncertain where they wanted to buy so decided to stay in a small hotel in Swiss Cottage and wait until they found the right place for them. Three months later the ideal house came up, on the Suburb, right opposite the Heath Extension and they have lived there very happily for the past 14 years.

They have a daughter Glen, who is an Occupational Psychologist and a son Gavin – a Philatelist, Postal Historian and Musician. They often visit Norway to see their granddaughter Rachael and her two children Nora aged nearly 9 and Max who is 4.

David's mother was an amateur musician who played the piano and David imitated her but as he says, "I only used two fingers! I never really took up music as a child." At 11 he attended Clifton College in Bristol where there was a formidable Director of Music called Dr Douglas Fox who had lost an arm in the First World War so was forced to play one armed. David says "when I told him that I wished to learn the saxophone he replied in an irascible manner – but that's not an instrument, you will play the violin, and so I did." He attended his first concert in 1936 when he saw the famous Austrian violinist Fritz Kreisler at the Albert Hall with Sir Thomas Beecham conducting.

In 1939 there then followed what I refer to as 'David's South American adventure'. He was taken to Buenos Aires in Argentina for a family holiday. He adds "four days before landing we realised that behind us was a German U boat but, although it was a haunting presence, it disappeared without harming us." A few days after landing, war was declared. Since a return passage to England was unavailable, the family stayed in Argentina for 3 years and during this time occurred the first naval battle in the Second World War and the only episode of war to take place in South America – the Battle of the River Plate. The German pocket battleship Admiral Graf Spee had been raiding commercial boats since the start of the war so the Royal Navy despatched cruisers to hunt the German ship. In the ensuing battle the Graf Spee was damaged and her fuel system crippled. Two of the British boats shadowed her until she entered the port of Montevideo. As it so happened David's family went on holiday to Montevideo and witnessed the ensuing drama, the Graf Spee which had come in for repairs was told it had to leave the port within 72 hours so the Captain of the boat took it to sea and scuttled it rather than have another battle with the British.

David returned to England in 1942 and after a couple of years at Clifton he subsequently volunteered for the RAF and trained in Canada as a navigator. Following his demobilisation in 1947, he worked as an Estate Agent and later in a firm of Valuers and Assessors; he married Joyce the following year. He goes on to say, "in 1950 I started as a part time student at the Guildhall School of Music,



The dapper David Littaur

learning conducting, but four years later I decided to take up music studentship full time. My heart had always taken me in that direction and the wonderful Norman Del Mar, with whom I studied conducting, was a great influence in my doing so. I also studied the viola, timpani, trumpet and piano."

David soon formed a Student Orchestra, and conducted choirs and other orchestras on a freelance basis – including the London Philharmonic, the London Symphony Orchestra, the New Philharmonia and the London Mozart Players. During this time he gave broadcast concerts for the BBC and made several recordings.

from the world. After school, she studied Occupational Therapy and worked in hospitals. She was dismayed to encounter rules and regulations which seemed rigid or unreasonable and says, "I wanted things to be fair. Maybe it led to my Quakerism." She married Vas who was an Engineer/Inventor and they bought a house in Erskine Hill where they have lived ever since. When they moved in there was scant electricity or plumbing and they had no furniture: "We had no money, no nothing. Really, we had a ball!"

As a child, Lisa joined the Brownies and says of her first visit to a church for a Church Parade service, "I loved the bits between the words." Aged eighteen, she started going to church regularly and discussed confirmation with the vicar but they agreed she should wait as she felt uncomfortable with parts of the creed. In her twenties and thirties Lisa looked into different religions but eventually decided she would just have to 'have a religion between me and God'.

Lisa worked for Barnet Social Services for almost twenty five years as an Occupational Therapist and manager. During this time she says she visited "practically every house in the suburb" to assess for equipment and adaptations. One of her clients was Hannah Perlee who lived in Oakwood Road. They later became good friends and it was through Hannah that Lisa and Vas went to their first Quaker meeting 'just up the road', in North Square. She says "It felt like coming home. This was where I wanted to be. I fell in love with it. The silence was wonderful. It was very exciting."

In her late fifties, she became involved in a wide range of judicial and committee work which she still loves: "I found my métier." She was appointed as a Justice of the Peace, has served on The General Medical Council Fitness to Practice panels, Disability Appeals Tribunals, various professional disciplinary panels and Medical Research Panels.

When her parents came to England, they saw it as "the most amazing place - with the NHS, education system and public libraries." They felt strongly that the family should be part of society and should want to give something back and that is what Lisa feels she is doing.

Quakers have always been represented on the Suburb Fellowship and Lisa has been on the committee for many years now, using her knowledge to advise on issues such as disability access. She was also a founder member of the committee of the HGS Abbeyfield. Of the Suburb, Lisa says "We love Hampstead Garden Suburb. It's green, it's beautiful, it's designed to be friendly. Vas and I love living here. It's our home. It's very, very special." **S**

A WOMAN OF PASSION

featuring Lisa Shend'ge

Listening to Lisa Shend'ge, you immediately sense her passion: for the Suburb, her Quakerism and her work. Lisa is a lifelong Suburb resident. When her parents arrived from Vienna in 1933, they rented a flat on the edge of the Suburb, and this was where Lisa grew up.



Lisa Shend'ge

Lisa recalls a strong community spirit on the Suburb. As a child, she remembers going to the annual Labour Party garden party in South Square at which her father Joss, (the cartoonist for the London Evening Star) drew 'Lightning' portraits and Michael Flanders (of Flanders and Swann) made tape-recordings to raise funds.

Lisa went to King Alfred School and thrived on its progressive ethos. There was a school council system where student representatives had equal votes with teachers and Lisa got her "first taste of committee work" serving on the council from the age of eleven.

To her, the fairness she experienced at school was what she expected
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In the 60s, he toured South Africa for 5 weeks with the Cape Town Symphony Orchestra which included performances of Sibelius First and Second Symphonies.

David went on to say, "in the late '60s I knew that Otto Klemperer was in London, but I knew as well that he had a reputation for being a very demanding and fierce maestro. After some detective work I traced him to the Hyde Park Hotel and rang. His daughter answered the phone and amazingly Klemperer himself phoned back personally to say he would see me at 9am the next morning. We went through the score of Beethoven's eighth together and he must have spent well over an hour with me. A few days later I had a call to say that he'd forgotten something, so I returned to the hotel and spent another hour with him. His knowledge was inspirational." David then became Musical Director of the Philomusica of London, which performed in the UK and on the Continent. He enjoyed working with Richard Baker, the well-known BBC presenter, who introduced many of its concerts. He stayed with them until his professional retirement in 1998. Joyce helped him to manage the orchestra, which he says was "invaluable".

I asked him who is his favourite conductor – "Bernard Haitink for his grasp of scores and style" and composer? "Bach's organ music and Beethoven's Quartets – I remember some magnificent evenings spent in Hampstead Town Hall listening to the Amadeus play them."

On the Suburb David partakes in many activities, "it's funny" he says, "I love being on committees and getting involved. So I help with the St Jude's Proms and as a member of the RA Council. As chairman of the Events Committee, I am involved with RA Events such as the Summer Picnic and New Year fireworks. We also have music on Friday's at Fellowship from 2.30 to 3.30 with tea and biscuits. I care about the heritage of the Suburb."

"I love walking on to the Heath Extension; there's a little pond up there where I would have my memorial bench, and then looking down to the view of St Jude's. I like all the seasons on the Suburb, each one has something unique in its favour. Then of course there is the architecture, the twittens, the hedges, the grandness of Central Square, the woods, the greenery. My only dislikes are the congestion and people who live on the Suburb and grumble about it. Joyce and I have been married for 65 marvellous years and it is wonderful for us to wake up and think how lucky we are to live here." **S**

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