

# Sheila Seepersaud Jones, 1941-2013



Artist, nurse, anti-racism campaigner and long-time suburb resident Sheila Seepersaud-Jones died in October from pancreatic cancer at the Marie Curie Hospice in Belsize Park.

Sheila was a colourful and eccentric character who was often seen zipping around the area with pink highlights in her hair and wearing garments in all colours of the rainbow. She lived in the suburb for more than forty years, first in Midholm and then in Brookland Rise. Sheila was born in 1941, one of six in a village in British Guiana. As she slept in her hammock in a small clapboard house with a picture of the Queen on the wall she dreamed of exploring her other mother country. When a British representative from the Department of Health arrived in Guyana scouting for candidates to fill our nursing shortage Sheila saw her chance to expand her horizons. In 1964, knowing no one in England, she travelled by Dutch cargo ship from her home in the tropics to arrive 18 days later at Southampton in the snow. She trained to be a nurse at the Royal Hospital Chesterfield

and then as a midwife at St Mary's Paddington and the Central Middlesex Hospital where she met her future husband. After a series of posts in London teaching hospitals Sheila continued nursing part time and was still, aged 70, up at the crack of dawn commuting across the city to vaccinate school children in Tower Hamlets.

Not content with filling her time as a nurse and mother, when her daughter Emily was born Sheila enrolled to study pottery at The HGS Institute. Her talent and enthusiasm as an artist led to a coveted place on the Sculpture degree course at St Martin's School of Art, much to her enduring pride.

In the mid-eighties she joined the GLC to work in the anti-racism movement. Sheila always remarked that although she had embraced a life of freedom and friendship in England, she herself had not always felt welcome in her adopted home, especially in the early days after coming down to London. At a time of simmering tensions, just after the Brixton riots, Sheila felt passionately that she should play some small part to help reduce the under-

current of racism. She worked hard commissioning murals, running school workshops and organising multicultural events to help raise awareness.

Later, Sheila refocused her energies on her sculpture and with characteristic gumption and drive managed to convince the HGS Trust to allow her to build a studio in her back garden. The bricks were sourced from derelict buildings and the Suburb style of architecture rigorously applied. She spent many happy years in her studio repeatedly turning new creative ideas into colourful ceramics. Her training as a sculptor combined with her early experience of bright tropical colours led to wonderful three dimensional work now to be found in many homes locally and around the world. Sheila featured in one of the earliest Suburb News and was a frequent exhibitor in the Garden Suburb Gallery.

She also found time to act as a volunteer on the Africa desk at the British Museum. Children (and adults) from all over the world were delighted to handle selected items from the collection brought to life by Sheila's enthusiasm.

With an insatiable appetite for promoting art and encouraging other budding artists, Sheila became one of the founding members of the 'East Finchley Open', the increasingly successful forum for promoting the work of artists in the area. Her kiln was fired up just before her last day at home and the resulting work was sold to benefit the hospice at a celebration of her life as an artist in Soho on 10 October exactly two weeks before she died.

Her 'Just Giving' website, to benefit Marie Curie, is still open at [www.justgiving.com/SheilaSeepersaud-Jones](http://www.justgiving.com/SheilaSeepersaud-Jones).

Sheila is survived by her husband Richard, their daughter Emily and two grand-daughters Esme and Amity Bo who gave her great pleasure as her life drew to its end.

RICHARD JONES

# Michael Darke 1923-2013

Michael Darke, who has died aged 90, came to the Suburb in 1936 when he was thirteen and eventually moved away in 1968 to take up an appointment as head of environmental design at Manchester College. In subsequent years he returned frequently, had many friends and clearly felt very much at home on the Suburb. He was an architect and designed two important Suburb buildings, The Orchard and, with Kenneth Williams, Fellowship House which sadly was only on part of the site of the bombed Club House.

Some would consider it unfortunate that they were built when they were, in 1950/60s style but they remain good examples of the period.

A keen sportsman and captain of the HGS Tennis Club, he chaired the Sports and Social committee of the 1950 Suburb Festival which was held to mark the end of the war years and 'to keep alive and active the ideal of the founders—good neighbourliness and community enjoyment'. In

1957 he acted as Hon Sec to the 1957 jubilee. It was a very ambitious affair opened by the Lord Mayor of London and visited by Princess Margaret who during a day on the Suburb unveiled a plaque on the Institute wall and, using Henrietta Barnett's spade, dug the first sod of the new Fellowship House. Michael won a competition for the design of the jubilee logo and designed the map for the programme which is still used in the RA Directory more than half a century later.

CHRIS PARRY/RICHARD WAKEFIELD



# Please be a Fellowship volunteer driver

As many of you may know, every Tuesday afternoon at Fellowship House there is a talk for members and Suburb Residents on a variety of subjects. There are some members who would love to attend but would be unable to do so unless they had a lift. We therefore have a rota of volunteer drivers to help them but we urgently need some more people. It only involves a once-a-month commitment on a Tuesday afternoon to take them to Fellowship at about 2pm and return them home at about 4pm – you might even enjoy staying to hear the talk yourself, with a cup of tea included!

So if you feel you can help once a month on a Tuesday afternoon please do get in touch with Gill Read, tel. 8455 9523, who will be happy to give you further details.

# Dorothy Unwin

Dorothy Unwin, who died before Christmas, was a life long Suburb resident. Her family lived in Oakwood Road where she was born and, when she was 13, moved to a new house in Howard Walk where she lived until 2011. She taught at Garden

Suburb School. Dorothy was made an honorary life member of the Residents Association in 2004 when she finally, after 30 years, gave up being a membership representative and ward organiser. She was a valued member of the RA Council.

# Fellowship AGM

At the Fellowship House AGM last November, the report and accounts for the year to July were accepted. The accounts show that, largely due to Eileen Whelan's generous bequest, reserves as at July 31 were £290,495 and that there were 276 members.

The meeting was attended only by members of the governing committee. No individual member who was not also on the governing committee was present. The notice of meeting, report and accounts had, while copies had been placed in the foyer, not been circulated to members.

John Hewson, who had said in April that he would step down at the end of the year, was re-elected chairman with Louise Scheuer as vice chairman. Peter Falk resigned as a trustee and treasurer and a new treasurer was sought. Pia Duran had also resigned as a trustee.

David Levey would be taking over the administrative duties previously handled by Peter Falk.

RICHARD WAKEFIELD

# Tony Thornley

Past vice chairman and chairman of the Trust in the eighties, Tony Thornley has died at 92. A partner in KPMG, he used his accounting talent on various Suburb bodies to great effect.

As well as keeping the Trust accounts in order for many years, he was treasurer for the Orchard and raised funds for the launch of Abbeyfield on the Suburb.

# Freshly baked bread for the Suburb

Robert Paul, who grew up in Hampstead Way, is one of the founders of artisan bakery, Poppy and Rye, which has launched a weekend home delivery service bringing fresh breads, pastries and cakes straight to your front door.

He says, "It's surprisingly difficult to get fresh, handmade, baked goods delivered to your door. Poppy and Rye offers the convenience to enjoy the finest artisan breads, flaky pastries and

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