

Donald Sinden 1923 - 2014



HRH Duke of Gloucester returned to the Suburb on July 6, 2000 to attend the Garden Suburb Theatre's production of Shaw's 'In Good King Charles's Golden Days' and 'The Stars' a pageant last produced on the Suburb in 1933. HRH Duke of Gloucester; then Cllr Gill Sargeant, Mayor of Barnet and Sir Donald Sinden, then President of the Garden Suburb Theatre.

The Suburb has lost one of its big personalities with the death in October of Sir Donald Sinden. A famous actor from an early stage in his career he was also a good neighbour and keen supporter of Suburb activities. He and his wife Diana lived in Temple Fortune Lane as did, at the same time in the eighties, the actors Gwen Watford and Violet and Cyril Luckham.

The Garden Suburb Theatre AGM would always have a slot for 'The President'. Sometimes Donald would turn up and fill it. He was a great raconteur and had a seemingly inexhaustible supply of theatrical anecdotes. He would turn out to welcome important visitors, such as The Duke of Gloucester, who came to our Millennium production of The Stars, a revival of our 1933 Little Wood pageant (see picture above).

It was performed along with Bernard Shaw's 'In Good King Charles's Golden Days' which I was thrilled to discover Donald had seen when it was first produced at the Malvern Festival in 1939. HRH quizzed Donald on his acting history, but

Donald would not be drawn on which dukes he had played.

Donald was very enthusiastic when he learned we were performing Dion Boucicault's comedy London Assurance in 2008 as he had happy memories of his performance in the role of Sir Harcourt Courtly, one of the high points in his career. He generously offered to come to a rehearsal to give us some hints. This was somewhat daunting for me as the director, but Donald couldn't have been nicer. He demonstrated his technique for delivering an aside with impeccable comic timing. His bathroom vocal exercises – which start with "Hip-bath, hip-bath" – have been used for a warm-up in all my subsequent productions.

Some years ago I met him on the bus coming home along Finchley Road. He asked me how the group was doing. I told him I was going that evening to see our latest production at Henrietta Barnett School theatre. "Give them my love," he exclaimed in his resonant voice. I am sure he is sending us his love still.

COLIN GREGORY

John Davis 1922 - 2014

John went to Highgate School where he founded the Jewish Circle (still in existence today). He played football, ran races and enjoyed boxing. It is possible that as a child, he suffered from polio which may have explained the curvature of his spine.

Three days after his 18th birthday he joined the RAF as an Air Gunner. After training he sailed to Canada where he learnt to fly Tiger Moths and Harvards and thoroughly enjoyed his experiences. Fully trained, he returned to the UK and flew Hurricanes. He went to the Spitfire Operational Training Unit but was mortified when he suffered from air sickness learning to fly his Spitfire. He was in West Africa in 1942 and went to Cairo where he joined a Kittyhawk squadron. One evening John was knocked down by an army truck and ended up critically ill in hospital fracturing his femur and with an acute cerebral oedema. After lengthy convalescence he realised his fighter pilot days were over and became a Ferry Pilot, based on a house boat on the Nile. They collected Spitfires and flew them to Cairo.

During his flying days, he was known as Titch. He returned

home in October 1945 as a Flight Lieutenant and joined the family dental supply business.

He married Hilde with whom he shared many interests; tennis, bridge, singing and country walking. They had 63 happy years together, living in Ruskin Close and enjoying life to the full.

He became involved in the affairs of the synagogue at Alyth Gardens, took over running the library and was a representative of the synagogue on the Suburb Fellowship Committee.

In 1997 he was persuaded to take over the Litter Picking Team which had become run down after the retirement of its founder Peter Loyd. McDonalds sponsored litter pickers and provided colourful jackets for a relaunch on Central Square attended by MPs, Cllrs, Friends of the Earth and probably 100 Litter Pickers.

He was an RA Honorary Life member from 2004, when Rosalind Josephs took over the litter team.

He took great pride in his family, having two children Susan and Daniel, and four grandchildren who were so proud and close to him.

SUE PACKMAN



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Sue Sigrid Rees 1947 - 2014

On August 18 the Suburb lost Sue Rees, who had been diagnosed with cancer three years before. With her wide interests, unique and bubbly personality and supreme gift for organisation, Sue will be sorely missed by all who knew her. She was born in Minnesota, USA, and met her husband Robert in Australia. They arrived in London in January 1970, newly married, and rented a flat at 63 Bridge Lane (opposite the chapel), before buying their first home in Willifield Way. It was there that Sue acquired the gardening bug and decided an essential requirement for later homes was a south facing garden! They moved to Erskine Hill for a few years, before finally settling in Hampstead Way. Gardening was a passion, and it was in Hampstead Way that Sue created her beloved and beautiful garden and was never happier than when she was sharing it with friends. A prolific collector of choice plants, she gave away cuttings or split clumps freely and many can now be found growing away in other Suburb gardens.

As a long-time member of the HGS Horticultural Society, Sue took over as Show Secretary from Len Potiphar in 1991 and served the society in that capacity till 2000, under the chairmanship of Norman Wheatley. The task entailed an enormous amount of planning before each of the shows (three in those days) but she organised everyone and everything with tact and humour. Every year she kept up with 'Hort Soc' friends by inviting them to lunch in the garden. Sue also ran two very successful book groups for women which included both locals and people from various countries around the world but mainly the US. Their choice of reading was often followed up by well-organised visits to locations of the books they had been reading – settings as varied as Wakefield, Swansea, Guernsey, Dublin, Amsterdam, Paris, Sarajevo, South Africa and others.

As recently as April this year, Sue found the strength to organise and participate in a day trip to the Red House and Danson House in Bexleyheath. She took a group of literary ladies and some 'sewing ladies' from the Free Church to the quilting exhibition at Danson House, the outing being inspired by her friend Tracy Chevalier's The Last Runaway, in which a quilting theme runs through the recently-read story.

Our condolences go to her husband Robert and her sons Joel and Hugh.

An appreciation by Marjorie Harris, Anne Lowe and Joan Rees Phillips

For 26 years Sue ran Literary Ladies, a local book group with its origins in the American Hampstead Women's Club. Over the years, it came to include women of various nationalities (US, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Australia, South Africa, Colombia, Russia, Serbia, Israel and Switzerland, amongst others), as well as locals, sometimes as many as thirty meeting at one time. Sue had a deep, lifelong love of reading and a remarkable gift for engaging people in whatever book had been chosen by the group, informing every meeting with her carefully researched knowledge of the author and then leading a lively and friendly discussion. Sue was a brilliant organiser and often arranged trips, at home and abroad, linked to a book the group had read. Sue established a tradition of hosting the June meeting every year with lunch in her own garden, and she was determined to do so this year. It was a blissfully warm, sunny day, the garden was magnificent and nobody who was there will forget the dignity and courage with which she led her last book group.

An appreciation of Sue Rees from Janet Scharf

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