

Mr 'Suburb'

Richard Wakefield was really 'Mr Hampstead Garden Suburb'. He gave freely of his time to the RA, the Institute, the Suburb Gallery. He was an ever-present at any Suburb event with camera at the ready. He and his family also worshipped at St Jude's.

Richard was also responsible for *Suburb News*, which I believe is one of the best, if not the best, publication by a Residents Association. Under his guidance it became essential reading for anyone interested in what was happening in the Suburb.

Richard was an effective Chairman. He chaired the first Election hustings in 2001. Their success has ensured that we now have hustings at every election.

In his latter years Richard was dogged by ill-health. However that did not lessen his commitment to the Suburb. He and his camera were still ever present. The last time I saw him was when he came to Fellowship to check on the progress of the Gallery. I was very touched when he phoned me only weeks before he died asking after my health.

In the 1990's the Suburb was racked by two controversies – the Eruv and the future of the Institute and Henrietta Barnett School. Although protagonists were happy to impugn the motives of others I never heard anyone bad mouth Richard. He was universally respected.

When there was some talk of re-examining the future of grass verges I will always remember Richard's comment – 'we are the Garden Suburb'. This reflected his life long commitment to the Suburb. Others came and went but Richard remained steadfast to the end of his life. When I told a friend that he had died their immediate reaction was one of shock because they had seen him at a Suburb event just before his death.

We already have the Michael Rowley Lecture. I hope that Richard's unique contribution to the Suburb over many decades can be marked in a tangible way.

This gentle man was a true English gentleman.

JOHN MARSHALL



Richard, working on another issue of *Suburb News*

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The Fleet Street years

In 1970 I joined C P Wakefield, a small advertising agency in Fleet Street, wedged between the imposing buildings that housed our national press. I was twenty and working in Fleet Street was about as exciting as it could get. Its history was ubiquitous – at the east end, Ludgate Circus, looking up Ludgate Hill to the imposing St Paul's Cathedral – at the west end, the Royal Courts of Justice with the famous and infamous continuously appearing on the steps explaining their battles within to an ever-eager press that hadn't had far to travel. All around so much history – The Inns of Court, St Bride's (another Wren creation), Wynkyn de Worde (William Caxton's apprentice), Dr Johnson, Sweeney Todd, Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese (where we celebrated Richard's 70th), El Vino's (the journalist's watering hole) – it seeped into your very being.

But in the 70s the hustle and bustle of Fleet Street was real and vivid. Massive open lorries constantly delivering gigantic rolls of newsprint to feed the insatiable appetites of the noisy letterpress printers endlessly spewing out the news and gossip of the day. Politicians and celebrities diving in and out of cabs. Delivery lorries setting off in the early hours to the four corners with the latest news. Here I was to meet Richard for the first time.

Richard had recently taken over his father's agency after his untimely death. A few years later, when my own father died young, I vividly remember Richard and I sharing our emotions – deep sorrow, but anger too, at our fathers leaving us so abruptly and unprepared. Richard wasn't one to share his emotions lightly, unlike me, who wore my heart on my sleeve.

As a child, Richard suffered from a congenital disorder which left him with a limp, at that time quite severe. Wakefield House was a tall building comprising offices flanked by stairs either side; there was no lift. Richard mastered these stairs with aplomb, preferring the western flight for ascending, the eastern for descent. His office was in the middle of the building. The advantage for

us minions was that, depending on which way he left his office, we knew whether he was coming up to see us or going down to someone else. This gave us notice of potential, impending admonishment and, there being two staircases, the means of a quick exit!

To us young, impressionable employees there was an air of mystery about Richard. Suave and sophisticated, a house in Hampstead and a luxury flat in Paternoster Square next to St Pauls, always jetting off to clients abroad, spotted with a stunningly beautiful French air-hostess sitting beside him in his open top sports car. There was definitely something 007 about Richard which earned him the nickname of 'Tricky Dicky' in the agency. Not that any of us would have had the guts to call him it to his face!

Romance was to catch up with me at Wakefield and I was to marry a girl I had met there. As a wedding gift, Richard kindly organised our honeymoon at a luxury hotel in Jersey. Jersey Tourism was Wakefield's largest client at the time and we were treated like royalty. It was a very generous gesture which has never been forgotten.

My time at Wakefields was filled with many happy memories and although I left to further my career, a few years later Richard asked me to return to run his Creative Services department which I did with much zeal. It was my first managerial role.

Later our paths were to cross again when I rented an office from him to start my first art studio in the early 80s. And yet again, in 1995, when he asked me if I'd redesign and produce *Suburb News*. We worked together on nearly 70 editions and the last, issue 120, I had emailed him a final proof for his approval on the day he died.

I will remember Richard with great affection. Never once did I hear him complain of the many ailments that afflicted him over the years. He fought for what he believed in; he lived true to his principles. He was strong, courageous and unpretentious. The very best kind of man.

TREVOR HUTTON



Richard, the Fleet Street ad exec

Richard and St Jude's

Richard was an active member of the St Jude's congregation and served for many years on the church council. His special gift, of course, was for publicity and design, and he encouraged us to think closely about the ways in which we present ourselves to our own community and the wider world. One of his small, but important, roles at the church was taking photos of new worshippers for our information board so that we would quickly be able to link names with faces. As he always seemed to have his camera with him he became the semi-official recorder of the life of the church, and many of his images appeared in the '*Suburb News*' and our own magazines, the '*Gazette*' and now the '*Spire*'.

His interests were broad and deep. He had a keen knowledge of ornithology. If I spotted some unknown (to me) species in the garden, a telephone call to Richard would usually soon confirm that it was just some thing quite commonplace: It's a jay; they're blue. He knew about art, and was instrumental in acquiring for the Trust the William Isaac Aston album of watercolours 'Impressions of the Garden Suburb Hampstead 1923-1925' before it was broken up and the pictures sold separately. The dealer, a friend of mine, reported a nice man with a limp has been in and bought them all.

Richard soon involved me with the Residents Association after my arrival here as vicar twenty years ago. We worked closely every year on the Michael Rowley memorial event, which

combined a talk on some aspect of Suburb life or history with a slap-up tea party. I hope we find a way of similarly memorializing Richard's enormous contribution to the Suburb.

Richard also encouraged me in my own exploration of Suburb lore and history. He delighted in hearing of references to the Suburb in obscure works of literature and biography. When we were planning to celebrate the centenary of the consecration of St Jude's in 2011 he turned my notes and jottings into the professionally designed and handsome 'Centenary Book' he thought the church and the Suburb deserved. At the very end of his life I was working closely with him on a companion volume about Walter Starmer, the painter of the murals in the church. This will now be my small memorial to Richard.

REV ALAN WALKER



Richard, his camera momentarily replaced with a glass of champagne, at a Proms at St Jude's event

If any reader feels prompted to send in a few words of their appreciation of Richard from their personal experiences they are more than welcome to do so. These would be then be considered for publication in future issues of *Suburb News*. Email the editor at rapublications@hgs.org.uk.

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