

Joan Hannam 1916-2016



Joan Hannam was one of the oldest residents of the Suburb who was just short of her 100th birthday when she died in May. The following are some extracts from an address given by her grandson David Johnson at her funeral on June 7 at the Free Church.

How do you sum up a life spanning (almost) an entire century? Born on Thursday 22 June 1916, when Asquith was prime minister. In the midst of the First World War, Britain was recovering after the Battle of Jutland. The Battle of Verdun was raging in France and the Arab Revolt was in its infancy. London was under threat of German Zeppelin attacks. Parry had just written Jerusalem; something so ingrained in our culture and yet composed in Joan's lifetime. The Free Church was a new-build; six years old. St Jude's a mere five.

The Suburb was always central to Joan's life; she was celebrated in the Suburb centenary as its longest resident and remembered walking between the local villages of Hampstead and Highgate on farm tracks. She was born in Addison Way, then lived on Brim Hill, in Falloeden Way, in Oakwood Road and eventually in The Orchard. She participated enthusiastically in many Suburb activities, continued to enjoy Fellowship House into later life and was presented with life membership of the Horticultural Society due to her long service.

Although she was brought up attending church at St Jude's and could remember seeing the new Walter Starmer murals being unveiled in 1929, she was an active member of the Free Church for most of her adult life and took her turn as a deacon as well as organising the bazaars and coffee after church.

At Hendon County School in the mid-1920s, Joan was told very unkindly that she couldn't sing, which led to her tacit participation in hymns for the

rest of her life. But she excelled at school, was the only girl allowed in the science classes and was taught Latin in order to sit the Oxbridge entrance examination. A school leaver during the mid-1930's Depression, she came top in the Civil Service entrance examination, was offered a job, and decided to take it rather than try for university.

It was in the Civil Service that she met her beloved husband Fred. They both worked for the Ministry of Health where, in May 1937, Fred saved her a seat next to him to watch George VI's coronation procession. They dated, and were separated as office romances were prohibited. Freddie proposed in 1939 and they married quickly under a special licence in difficult circumstances.

Having lived through the First World War, both sets of parents were concerned for the couple's future. Joan had to resign from her job, as the Civil Service didn't allow married women in those days.

Like so many of her generation, Joan's life was changed by the War. She was bombed and seriously injured during the blitz. Taken for dead, it only became apparent that she wasn't when she sat bolt upright in the ambulance and vomited. She remained deaf in one ear for the rest of her life.

In 1941 Freddie was posted to Singapore and taken prisoner by the Japanese. Joan didn't know until 1945 that he was alive. Yet she somehow always maintained a notably positive outlook, finding the best in all situations. She shared a home with her sister Rene and enjoyed helping to care for her nephew baby Ian.

Then she was recalled to the Civil Service and worked in the Ministry of Supply. From 1942, Joan worked on the top secret Operation PLUTO – an ambitious operation to lay oil pipelines across the English Channel, supporting the Allied invasion of Normandy in June 1944.

Working closely with Arthur Hartley, chief engineer with the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, Joan was part of the team that developed a method to lay submarine pipelines in absolute secret, allowing the invading Allied forces in Europe to be supplied with precious fuel. Serious stuff!

When Fred did return from Burma, 90% disabled, Joan nursed him back to health. A testament to Joan and Fred's happy, positive outlook is the fact that, when he was deemed fully fit, they were overjoyed to celebrate the loss of his disability pension.

At the end of the War in Europe, Hartley promised Joan unconditionally that he'd do anything for her as thanks. When Joan was expecting her first baby Kathy, she couldn't get a pram due to post war rationing and export. She mentioned this to Hartley and promptly received a Silver Cross bassinet that was so posh she was embarrassed to use it!

After the war Joan dedicated her time to her family. Once the children were old enough, she started working for the Family Planning Association, fighting to get family planning included in the NHS, an aim achieved in 1974. After she retired, she concentrated on helping with her grandchildren, on community life and looking after Fred.

Joan was a uniquely clever and quietly accomplished lady with a sharp wit and a thirst for knowledge. Supremely self-effacing, she had more reason than most to feel proud. She had a clear analytical mind and she kept herself up-to-date with what was happening in the world right up to the end of her life.

Everything that was said about Joan at the service in the Free Church by her family members and Minister Ian Tutton was perceptive and well-deserved. Joan was an illuminating presence in the world around her and her family have lost a mother, grandmother and great-grandmother, but they have inherited a legend and unblemished memories – as have all who knew her.

Flats in The Orchard

Are you looking for a home? Are you over 60, and in good health? Do you live in the Suburb, or have relatives who do?

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Please make enquiries to The Manager, The Orchard, Hampstead Way, NW11 6YN, 020 8455 3223.

New courses at HLSI

A new autumn range of courses has been announced by the Highgate Literary and Scientific Institution, which is situated in South Grove in Highgate, facing Pond Square.

Its popular language courses now provide for a wider range of levels, with Italian being available in four classes from beginners to advanced conversation. The other language courses are French, German, Spanish and a particular favourite, Latin for Pleasure.

Richard de Friend, the Chairman of the Education Committee, himself a Suburb resident, said, "We are aware of the concerns which have arisen following the departure from the Suburb, and the subsequent difficulties, of the much-loved Institute. We are very proud of the quality of courses and lectures which we can offer at the HLSI. While we cannot match the full range of courses which the Institute once provided, we hope that some of our offering will appeal to Suburb residents

and fill some gaps. I hope it might also complement the Community Learning Network.

"The HLSI is in some ways North London's hidden secret. But it is easily accessible by public transport with the 143 and 210 buses stopping only a few yards away."

Courses at the HLSI are open to anybody although members receive reduced rates. Membership, which currently starts at £87 a year, provides access to a members' room with newspapers and all the major periodicals, as well as

one of London's best libraries with over 18,000 books and an active new acquisitions programme.

It offers the opportunity to attend weekly lectures and occasional debates on current issues as well as the literature and topical science for which the Institution was founded over 175 years ago. There are also organised activities including a Film Club and an Opera Circle.

And the good news is that new members are welcome. Further information can be found on the website – www.HLSI.net.



Crime & Pavements

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care at night in unlit spaces. The importance of neighbours looking after each other cannot be over-estimated; keep those net curtains twitching!

And talking of neighbours and twitching net curtains, one resident, Michael Levy, told the meeting about using 'WhatsApp' on a smart phone to create or join a local neighbourhood watch group for your street or flats. It is like an instant messaging service, which connects all its users, who can then pool their observations. It has been very successful and the report on the opposite page of a thwarted burglary comes from his local group.

...AND PAVEMENTS

With crime dealt with, it was time for those with enough remaining stamina to take part in the next item on the agenda: the state of our pavements. It was for Barnet, represented by Mario Lecordier, Interim Lead Strategic Commissioner for Highways and Transport, and Dean Cronk, Highways Officer, to explain about pavements and answer for their condition.

Residents told of trips and falls causing injuries, including broken limbs. It appeared that many reports of dangerous pavements are not acted on; a resident in Hill Top had made 16 reports to Fix My Street with no results except empty promises, and the vice-chair of governors at Childs Way related a tale of constant complaints and injuries with no action taken, not even any correspondence.

It appears that a backlog of remedial work has built up, presumably because of the financial pressure that has come from being given more work to do by central government with less money. At the present rate

of repair it would take 100 years to get up to date.

There are criteria for damage which warrants intervention, and inspection regimes to assess damage but resources have to be prioritised. These operations are the responsibility of an organisation called Regional Enterprise (RE) owned by Barnet (51%) and Capita (49%).

There were comments about the use of inappropriate materials for a conservation area and it seems that Barnet had forgotten, again, that is what the Suburb is. And so, again, money has been spent only for more to have to be spent on remedial work later.

There is progress with making contractors pay for any damage they cause to the pavement with photos taken before and after as proof. They are making written claims for damages and testing cases in the courts where no settlement is agreed.

Cllr Rozenberg recommended hazardous pavements should first be reported and then councillors contacted, but scarce resources would still need to be prioritised. Complaints should then be addressed to councillors and not officers.

The meeting was chaired by Harry Simmonds for the Residents Association, who sits on its working

group on pavements. This was set up after the topic was raised at the AGM earlier this year. The working group would like more members and can be e-mailed at suburbpavements@gmail.com. There is also an App at Suburbpavements for residents to post photos or voice concerns.

Harry Simmonds closed the meeting by thanking both the officers and Cllr Rozenberg for taking time to attend. He mentioned there seemed to be some inefficiencies with reported injuries and potentially dangerous paving stones not being dealt with, and that there were too many layers of administration. Barnet should be doing better than it is and councillors should take some responsibility.

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