

Suburb Christmas and New Year celebrations



(Above and below) St Jude's Midnight Mass



MICHAEL ELETHERADES



MICHAEL ELETHERADES



MICHAEL ELETHERADES

The Suburb gathers at St Jude's for the start of the New Year celebrations, with Andrew Glendinning and Susie Gregson in party mood



CESAR RODRIGUEZ-DURAN



(Above and below) St Jude's Nativity

MICHAEL ELETHERADES



MICHAEL ELETHERADES

From the Garden City to the machine à habiter (and back again): the case of Le Corbusier

This was the title of the talk given by Dr Mervyn Miller the Life President of the HGS Trust in the latest of the series of winter events for members organised by the Trust and held in the Henrietta Barnett School Hall in December.

The title of the talk, although certainly not snappy, was definitely an intriguing one; what could possibly be the connection between this Swiss pioneer of the Modern Movement and the Garden City Movement, which inspired our Suburb?

Dr Miller took those present along the route which provided the answer.

We started in Liverpool where we learned of John Brodie, who was at the fore-front of using reinforced concrete in pre-fabricated housing, and how he used the technique in buildings in 1905 for the Cheap Cottages Exhibition in Letchworth Garden City where examples of this kind still exist.

His influence in Letchworth is also evident in the Grade II listed, and recently restored, Spirella factory built between 1912 and 1929 in brick-clad concrete, and designed by Cecil Hignett.

As always developments in one sphere of human activity

have a ripple effect around the world, and early in the C20th a French lawyer and journalist, Georges Benoit-Lévy created the 'Association des Cités-Jardins de France' after having investigated and written about Port Sunlight, Bournville and Letchworth.

And so it was, with these ideas spreading across Europe, that Charles-Édouard Jeanneret-Gris, architect, urban planner, interior designer, painter and sculptor, who adopted the pen name Le Corbusier for his journal of contemporary aesthetics, L'Esprit nouveau, came to be commissioned in 1917 to design

lodgings for the cité-ouvrière at Saint-Nicolas-d'Aliermont in Normandy.

We were told the designs for this village outside Dieppe featured the kind of high roofed semi-detached cottages, which would not be out of place in Letchworth or our Suburb; a reflection of the illustrations of the Suburb he had seen while doing architectural studies.

Although the project foundered a couple of years later on differences between Le Corbusier and the contracting company, it served as a starting point for his work around the ideas of the Workers City and the Garden City, which came to be realised in 1924 in the Cité Frugès at Pessac, a suburb of Bordeaux.

Dr Miller told us of his visits to Le Corbusier's Garden City. With its reinforced concrete structures, very different to our Suburb, but born of the same movement. The concrete buildings featured concepts such as balcony gardens, added shutters and sun decks.

He said there were none of the Section 19 powers the Trust has, but there had recently been

la Cité Frugès at Pessac, Bordeaux



la Cité radieuse, Marseilles

sensitive restorations of the houses after a long period of neglect and modification. The Cité Frugès has been a French equivalent of a conservation area since 1998 and was adopted as a UNESCO World Heritage site in July last year.

Le Corbusier's ideas on urban development led him to imagine concepts such as the vertical garden city. From the 1920's onwards he worked on his notion of the 'unité d'habitation', which we would recognise as modernist residential housing blocks.

His idea of the 'unité d'habitation' finally came to be realised between 1945 and 1952 in Marseille where the first of his buildings of that name is sometimes known as the 'Cité radieuse' and represents one of the initial inspirations of the Brutalist movement.

In a parkland setting and built on large pillars with duplex

flats, which cover the width of the building, it incorporates a communal roof terrace, shops, a hotel, and sports, arts, education and medical facilities along with a gastronomic restaurant. It is even now a popular place to live.

Dr Miller took us from the Garden City to the machine à habiter with Le Corbusier, who said, "La maison est une machine à habiter, mais aussi le temple de la famille."

There was a wealth of information given to us by Dr Miller, and the knowledge that there is plenty more to be discovered if one cares to do so.

Let us hope that those who today are re-using the names Garden City, Village and Suburb for contemporary developments in this country remember where they come from and how they evolved.

TERRY BROOKS



litchfields

800 finchley road hampstead garden suburb london nw11 7tj

t | 020 8458 5000 | litchfields.com

offices also in highgate & crouch end

hampstead garden suburbs leading estate agent for over 25 years

Please help make *Suburb News* your newspaper. Articles, letters and news items welcome, send to the publisher with High Res pictures at rapublications@hgs.org.uk

EDITOR: Terry Brooks, rapublications@hgs.org.uk

WHATS ON EDITOR: David Littaur, dvdlttr@googlemail.com

Views expressed in *Suburb News* are not necessarily those of the publishers the Hampstead Garden Suburb Residents Association.

Deadline for the Spring issue is April 1, for publication on April 29

The RA website is www.hgs.org.uk