

Suburb News

Hampstead Garden Suburb
Residents Association



Busker Chris Harvey charmed the Proms at St Jude's crowd, see page 16



One young girl is as pleased as Punch at the RA Summer Fair, see pages 4 & 5



Newcomer Elke Karskens impresses with her first attempt from seed, see page 21

A scorched but spirited Suburb summer

EDITOR: SHELLEY-ANNE SALISBURY

It's been another very busy summer in the Suburb with a fabulous Proms and LitFest (p16) plus a wonderful summer fair in Central Square (pp 4 & 5). And we had a Royal Visit to boot! The award winning Kids' Gardening Club and Caroline Broome (The Garden Girl) were graced with a visit from HRH Prince Edward, Duke of Edinburgh (pp18 & 19).

As temperatures continue to soar, how can we ensure our Suburb stays verdant over the coming years when heatwaves are set to become commonplace? Luckily, Patricia Major has some helpful tips to keep hydration up (p21).

I was really delighted to see the SNY team from the Archer Academy offer up book suggestions (pp12 & 13). A bug bear of mine (one of many to be honest) is that Gen Z onwards just don't seem to read books. With the constant pull of computer generated

entertainment and social media I guess it's a losing battle but oh what a joy they're missing. Thank you to our new SNY team!

Talking about computer generated distractions, it seems Trump isn't the only one engaging in revisionist history, as one Suburb resident recently discovered. He used ChatGPT to edit an old sepia photograph of Willifield Green and was presented with a more sanitised version of the original. All rather unsettling (p24).

Summer may be over but there's still plenty of Suburb activities to enjoy as we start to head into the (hopefully) cooler months. Keep an eye out for these in the monthly eNews which is emailed to all paid up members of the Residents' Association. Do sign up if you haven't already – it's easy (see our new RA advert, p3) and enjoy the benefits of being part of this unique community.

Have a good Autumn and see you in December.



Who you looking at? Peregrine falcons roost on St Jude's, see page 9 (Photo: Michael Eleftheriades)

Garden Suburb Infant and Junior schools to merge

FRANCINE BARSAM

Like many primary schools across London, Garden Suburb Infant and Junior Schools are navigating a shifting landscape. Across the capital, a trend of falling birth rates and families moving

out of the city has led to a noticeable drop in school-aged children, a city-wide demographic trend that is putting real pressure on school budgets.

I caught up with Abi Hayes, Parent Governor, to discuss how the schools are taking a proactive, strategic step forward. A formal proposal is underway to bring the Infant and Junior schools together as a single, unified primary school in January 2027, subject to a final decision by Barnet Council.

The school community has already begun laying the groundwork by unifying its leadership. Eileen Bhavsar will step up as the headteacher across both schools. Described as a passionate and highly motivated leader, Eileen will head a strong, experienced team teaching from Reception through to Year 6. This comes alongside a poignant moment for the community. This term, the schools said a fond, grateful farewell to several long-standing colleagues whose combined service spans decades. Among them are Infant Headteacher Sarah Sands and Deputy Head/Co-Headteacher Sarah Jowsey. Both leave with the warmest wishes of the families and children they have dedicated so many years to nurturing.

Despite its growth, the school proudly retains a close-knit village feel. It is a nurturing environment where children are known as individuals, often greeted by name right at the school gate. That tight

community spirit embraces a remarkably rich diversity, around 80% of the pupils have English as a second language. This unique community is evident in events like the annual international food fair, where parents set up stalls showcasing dishes from around the world.

The school is also celebrated for its exceptional provision for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), offering high-quality teaching, tailored support and specialised sensory rooms.

The school's holistic approach is built on strong relationships between staff and students, paired with high expectations for every child. The results speak for themselves: this year the school received formal recognition from Education Secretary Bridget Phillipson who wrote to praise their academic results for disadvantaged pupils, which ranked in the top 25% nationally.

The focus on building well-rounded individuals is visible in the school's wrap-around care – offering everything from chess and science clubs to dance and Taekwondo. In July, the Year 6 leavers wowed audiences with a production of *Cats*, notable for featuring every single child in the year (see photo overleaf).

The merger will allow the school to unlock further efficiencies and space. The campus boasts enviable green spaces, including sports

(continued on page 2)

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Better policing for Barnet – what does it mean for the Suburb?

SARAH SACKMAN MP

This summer we bade farewell to Keir Starmer as Prime Minister. His legacy has been restoring the UK's reputation on the global stage, in particular standing up for Ukraine and bringing the UK closer to the EU.

Domestically, we've seen falling NHS waiting lists and a stabilisation of the nation's finances. But for me, perhaps, his greatest legacy will be his track record on anti-semitism – rooting it out from the Labour party and protecting the British Jewish community.

In his final days as Prime Minister, Starmer announced a record-breaking investment of a quarter of a billion pounds in policing for the Jewish community, exemplifying

leadership through deeds not just warm words. Our pocket of North London, which is home to a large and diverse Jewish community, is a primary beneficiary of this funding.

In recent months, our local policing has been stretched, with resources rightly pulled to protecting Jewish community spaces. With this announcement, our neighbourhood police can return to their normal beat, flanked by hundreds of extra police officers.

Golders Green will be home to a new community policing hub. Local residents will remember the closure of the Golders Green police station in 2014. Our neighbourhood policing provision has never been the same since. But, under this Government, that will change so all our local communities can feel safer again.

After the horrific attacks against the community in Golders Green in recent months, I called for the temporary uplift in policing to be made permanent. I am pleased that, together with the Community Security Trust and local residents, we have been listened to. But our work is not done. The new uplift must translate into a change in policing that residents feel is tangible and effective. Reports of crime, whatever form they take, must be dealt with, visibility in hotspot areas must increase and strong communication between neighbourhood officers and residents enhanced.

But, above all, our Jewish community – your neighbours and friends – must feel safe to go about their everyday lives free from fear.



A positive police presence at the HGSRA Summer Fair (Photo: Michael Eleftheriades)



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Schools to merge

(continued from page 1)

fields, a vegetable garden and two nature gardens. Thanks to funding from the Suburb Trust and the Residents Association, the nature garden has undergone significant improvement. Also, a second library is to open on the Infant side of the school, funded entirely by parent and community fundraising. The school is already planning climate-resilient upgrades to ensure the classrooms are comfortable during increasingly hot British summers.

As the Suburb schools look forward to an exciting new chapter as a single primary school, they are welcoming applications from prospective families across the area. If you are a prospective parent interested in booking a school tour with the headteacher, email admissions@gardensuburbprimary.co.uk or if you would like to support the school financially, please contact the school office admin@gardensuburbprimary.co.uk.



Garden Suburb Junior School Cats production (Photos: School staff)

But the end of an era for Suburb Preschool

For generations of Suburb families, Hampstead Garden Suburb Preschool has been where children have made their first friends, built their confidence and taken their first steps towards school. In July, after more than 60 years at the heart of the community, it closed its doors for the final time.

Parents, former pupils and friends of the preschool were invited to a farewell gathering on its final day.

For Manager Sam Hobbs, who has led the preschool since 1999, the closure is deeply personal. During our chat, it was impossible not to be moved by her passion for the preschool. Reflecting on its history and having to say goodbye, she became emotional, "It's just heartbreaking," she said.

The preschool cared for children, aged from two to five years, where they learnt through play, before moving on to local primary schools.

The closure, Sam says, is due mounting financial pressures.

Much of the preschool's income comes through Barnet Council's funded childcare scheme, meaning there is little opportunity to increase fees. At the same time, operating costs continued to rise. Of course the closure will impact employees too.

One of the biggest challenges has been the rent. "We rent the premises from the church," Sam explained. "Three years ago our rent was £568 a month, today it's £1,686 a month."

The farewell event gave former pupils, parents, staff and friends the opportunity to share memories and celebrate the enormous contribution Hampstead Garden Suburb Preschool has made to the lives of local families.

The closure of the Preschool is a poignant reminder that even long-established local institutions are not immune. For many residents, this is not simply the closure of a preschool, it is the loss of a place woven into the fabric of the Suburb.



Sam Hobbs with members of the Suburb Preschool team (Photo: Francine Barsam)



Photo: Michael Eleftheriades

My Summer Fair encounter

PATRICIA MAJOR
RA EVENTS COMMITTEE

A highlight of the Residents Association Summer Fair was encountering our local MP Sarah Sackman. I recognised her instantly. Sarah asked me if I could help one of her children choose a plant for a north-facing garden: one that would grow and flower with little attention from anyone. I sold Sarah a *thalictrum delavayi album* which will grow well in a north-facing garden with a little afternoon sun, doesn't get eaten by slugs and snails, doesn't need staking and its flowers nod delightfully in the breeze. In fact, a child could grow it.

Sarah also asked who was the organiser of the Summer Fair. I told her it was Adrian Hodgson, Chair of RA Events, and his team. They are very keen to keep the fair as a non-commercial event; a place where local organisations could raise much needed funds and the local community could come and enjoy a family-focused event. Sarah asked me to give her compliments to the Events team.

Sarah introduced her family to me. We had a lovely chat about silly nicknames and Latin names of plants.

Sarah and her family told me how much they were enjoying the fair and showed me the coconuts they had won. I can honestly say

it was such a real pleasure to meet them all.

Of course it is always enjoyable to sell plants to everybody else too and I am very grateful for your support and returning custom. I do hope the perennials so many of you purchased have survived the heatwaves!

The proceeds from my plant stall are donated to the Vegetable Club at Garden Suburb School. This coming Autumn I am hoping to help refurbish and relocate the vegetable beds at the school – they are certainly in need of a lot of attention. I feel very passionately that children can benefit greatly from experiencing a practical teaching experience in the garden.

Let's keep the Suburb filled with trees



Photo: Colin Gregory

This year's Residents Association crowdfunder aims to raise money for an additional 20 of the many missing street trees in Hampstead Garden Suburb. We need your support to preserve and enhance our beautiful street tree landscape. Every £250 pays towards one sponsored tree and Barnet Council subsidises the rest of the cost.

The Residents Association also contributes £6,000 towards the cost of trees. Every donation, large and small, helps.

Colin Gregory

To contribute please either scan the QR code or visit: <https://sponsor.treesforstreets.org/crowdfunder/lets-keep-hampstead-garden-suburb-filled-with-trees-2>.



Hampstead Garden Suburb Residents Association

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RA HIGHLIGHTS



ADRIAN HODGSON – CHAIR, RA EVENTS COMMITTEE

On Sunday 7 June the 2026 Residents Association Summer Fair was another typically traditional event frequented by residents from all corners of the Suburb who brought family and friends to enjoy all the fun of the fair on a perfect summer's day.

The dog show was as popular as ever, kindly hosted by All Dogs Matter and judged by local resident, Kelly Brook. There were the usual queues for the donkey rides courtesy of another Kelly from Kelly's Donkeys, and the children were captivated by our very own Professor James's delightful Punch and Judy shows. He was joined this year by a fellow circus performer – bubbleologist and balloon modeller – to keep the children entertained between shows, as well as having their faces painted, playing fairground games provided by the Guides or making something for their parents at the Arts and Crafts table.

It was the perfect weather for Uncle Doovy and his Kosher Ice Cream van who kindly donated some of his profits to Hatzola NW community ambulance service. Hatzola brought one of their ambulances to Central Square for all to see and learn about their amazing work in support of all local residents. On a similar theme a local family ran the coconut shy to raise funds for a publicly accessible defibrillator on the Suburb.

Barnet Band provided their usual high-quality repertoire and we were treated to some old school Morris Dancing by a local side called London Pride. The barbecue sold out for the second year running and the Pimms and Church bars did a roaring trade as neighbours and friends enjoyed the atmosphere in the remarkable setting of Central Square.

In total the fair raised over £5,000 for the community groups – representing a new high – and we must also recognise the generous support of our sponsors Litchfield Estate Agents, Repaircare London, Lola's Cakes and, of course, the hard work and dedication of our small but perfectly formed volunteer Events Team, without whom the Summer Fair would not be possible. Thank you everyone for your support and we hope to see you all again next year.





All photos taken by:
Michael Eleftheriades

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Revd Em and Rabbi Marc visit the NOVA Exhibition, an in-depth remembrance of the massacre at The Nova Music Festival on October 7, 2023 (Photo: HGSS)

Letters of Faith

RABBI MARC LEVENE & REV D EM KOLLTVEIT

Dear Revd Em,

Thank you again for joining me at the NOVA Exhibition a few weeks ago. I was genuinely moved that you came. We didn't experience every part of the exhibition side by side but simply knowing that you had chosen to be there meant a great deal to me and our community. In a world where it is all too easy to stand at a distance from another community's pain, your presence was a powerful act of friendship.

Afterwards, I found myself thinking about time. Not because the exhibition was about time, but because it reminded me how precious it is. We spend so much of our lives rushing from one commitment to the next, filling every spare moment and measuring our days by how much we manage to achieve. Yet standing in that space, reflecting on lives so brutally cut short, I was reminded that life is not only about how much we do, but how intentionally we choose to live. That thought brought me back to one of the greatest gifts in Judaism: Shabbat (the Sabbath).

One day each week, Judaism asks us to stop and we find that most daily activities can simply wait, from emails to shopping to anything in between. It is a weekly reminder that our worth is not measured by our productivity, but about the meaning we invest into our lives.

I certainly don't always find it easy. Like many people, I can convince myself that there is always one more phone call to make or one more thing to finish. Yet every Friday evening, Shabbat gently reminds me that beyond my immediate surroundings, the world can manage without me for twenty-five hours. There is something wonderfully humbling and ultimately liberating about that.

I wonder how the Christian understanding of Sabbath speaks into our increasingly busy world. Does it offer the same invitation to rediscover who we are beneath everything we do? And how can our faith communities encourage people not simply to work well, but also to rest well?

With warmest wishes,
Rabbi Marc Levene, Senior Rabbi, HGS Synagogue

Dear Rabbi Marc,

Thank you for including us in the visit to the Nova Exhibition. I thought it was an important moment for Jewish and Christian relationships in this area, and it left me with many questions about how we move forward together as people of the Abrahamic faiths. Later this year, St Jude's will be hosting a large interfaith day of music and I really hope that you and members of your community will join us.

Thank you also for raising the topic of Sabbath. I must be honest: I don't think this is something Christians navigate well. As clergy, we often speak about the importance of rest and downtime, yet within the Christian tradition there is also a strong emphasis on active service, which many people mistake for a reward system that earns points in heaven. I greatly value your wisdom that our worth is not measured by busyness which aligns with my belief that God's love and grace is freely given – at no cost to us. This idea can be difficult to grasp at times, especially when we are feeling unlovable or unworthy.

Thank you for reminding me of the importance of Sabbath and how putting our feet up can also be an important part of our spiritual lives and wellbeing.

In friendship and hope
Revd Em, Vicar, St Jude-on-the-Hill



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Garden Suburb Community Library Adult Reading Challenge

MARC HULL

For several years our Community Library, in conjunction with The Reading Agency, has run a Reading Challenge for children during the summer break. It has become a very successful event and our regular young members are always extremely keen to sign up with the hope of winning one of our special prizes.

This year is The National Year of Reading and libraries all over the country are committed to promoting more reading across all age groups. We provided an Adult Reading Challenge which proved very successful with 32 applicants and a very interesting new connection between our volunteers and members. Each of our five winners won an Amazon voucher.

You can see the results in the happy faces and we hope this new event continues from year to year.

We are very pleased that our small community library provides such a diverse range of activities and events, including free children's activities on Tuesday and Thursday mornings. Please always view our website for activities and events, where you can also become a member: <https://gardensuburblibrary.org.uk/>.



Agostya Vellora



Debra Howard



Malti Sharma



Katja Miarka



Molly Parry

All above photos: GS Library Volunteers

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for under 4s and their carers

Garden Suburb Community Library
15 The Market Place, NW11 6LB
(entrance on Hill Rise)
gardensuburblibrary.org.uk
020 8458 3301

On Tuesday and Thursday mornings the Garden Suburb Community Library runs regular free sessions for the young folk and their parents and carers. Details are in our poster shown here.



Photo: Marilyn Grossman

Dame Jenni Murray a personal reflection of a neighbour

MARILYN GROSSMAN

I first met Jenni on the bus back from the Phoenix Cinema roughly ten years ago, where we had both enjoyed the film of the NT production, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*. She had just recently moved to the Suburb and we chatted about the play. One Sunday afternoon, I heard a knock at the door and, cautious as ever, called out "Who is it?" "Jenni" came the answer. "Jenni who?" I responded. Mortified to have left her on the doorstep, I opened the door to welcome her

in, together with the then three chihuahuas. We spent a marvellous two hours chatting over coffee. I found her to be an incredibly thoughtful and supportive person, who later regularly visited me to find out how my then hospitalised elderly mother was getting on.

We also met at the St Jude's Proms to which she so generously contributed, and went together to the Alyth Synagogue annual quizzes. We walked our dogs together in Northway Gardens and had truly enriching conversations about her then upcoming publication, *A History of 21 Women*.

She joined me at my campaign breakfast at Romeo and Juliet Café the day before the Coronation, to participate in the Q&A Session with Sarah Sackman, now our MP.

I last saw her on Boxing Day last year when she had kindly invited me for tea with the two new chihuahuas and cat. She was clearly unwell but made little of it.

Like countless others, I was deeply shocked to hear of her demise in March. Not only a national treasure, but a thoroughly decent, kind and generous-spirited Suburb neighbour. A very real loss to many in a great number of ways.

SUBURB NEWS LOSES A LONG-TERM FRIEND

Diana C Iwi, the widow of the late Quintin Iwi and formerly of 5 Meadway, has recently died. For many years she contributed articles to Suburb News about Suburb rainfall and she was also a prominent member of the local Liberal party and a stalwart at St Jude's Church.

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Bringing pain and posture relief to the Suburb

MARTIN UNDERWOOD

I have recently moved from the Cotswolds to Hampstead Garden Suburb, where I am developing a local practice for people living with persistent neck, shoulder, back and posture-related pain.

The last time I spent much time in the London Borough of Barnet, I was walking into Hendon Magistrates' Court as a criminal defence barrister. Coming back years later feels like a very different chapter. Then I was combining my legal career with playing semi-professional rugby. Long hours at a desk, sustained pressure and years of sport contributed to recurring cycles of neck and back pain.

I tried exercises, stretching, strengthening and different treatments, but nothing lasted. Eventually, the pain became so limiting that I had to stop work for nine months. That difficult period

began a search for more lasting answers and led me to the Alexander Technique. I began to recognise how much I was bracing, compressing and working against myself without realising it. I now liken it to trying to drive with the handbrake on. Learning to change those patterns has been one of the most important things I've learned in my life.

The results inspired me to complete three years of full-time training as an Alexander Technique teacher. I have since expanded my work to include many movement techniques, breathwork and the neuroscience of pain. I deliver Live Well with Pain training alongside specialist pain physiotherapists, psychologists and GPs.

After living in the Cotswolds, I expected returning to London to be a significant adjustment. Instead, the Suburb has felt like what a friend described as a 'soft landing'. It's a real hidden gem. The beautiful green spaces, architecture and

sense of history make it clear that people have cared deeply about this place for generations. I feel very privileged to live here, and I hope to make the local landscape part of some of my work with people.

I moved partly to become part of a stronger community. This part of London is thriving with people working in movement, rehabilitation and persistent pain and it feels like an exciting place to be learning and collaborating at a time when our understanding of pain is developing so quickly. I am currently working with swimming specialist Steven Shaw, exploring how experiences of support, freedom and coordination in water can help people move with greater ease and confidence on land. I am also collaborating with local consultant rheumatologist Dr Benjamin Ellis and CamPain, a peer-to-peer support group, to strengthen links between persistent pain professionals and community-based support.

Persistent pain is rarely explained by one thing alone. Many factors can play a part. It's about learning to understand your body differently, rather than simply reacting whenever pain appears.

I help people notice where they brace, how they distribute effort through the body and how they respond to discomfort. They can then explore easier and more confident ways of sitting, standing, walking, working or exercising. It is often a few small changes that make the difference. As coordination and confidence improve, movement can begin to feel less like a battle.

My developing local work will include individual sessions, small groups and collaborative projects connecting movement, pain education and community support. Pain can gradually shrink people's lives so my aim is to help people feel more able to move with less fear, less strain and more ease.

For more information visit www.martinunderwood.com.



Martin Underwood in action (Photo: Rich Hall)

ESA Academy – calling all creatives

REVD EM KOLLTVEIT,
VICAR OF ST JUDE-ON-THE-HILL

In September last year, my son Saxon was incredibly lucky to begin his studies at Elstree Screen Arts Academy in Year 10, and it's been an absolute joy to watch him flourish there ever since. ESA is one of the most extraordinary schools I've come across, and I was truly honoured to accept the invitation to become a School Governor.

What surprises me is how few people realise that Hampstead Garden Suburb is in the catchment area for this brilliant school. It's a non-fee-paying school that specialises in nurturing children with a passion for the creative arts and the cultural industry. As the headmaster, Chris Mitchel, memorably said on our first visit: "If your child doesn't live and breathe for the creative arts, then this probably isn't the right school for them." Rated Outstanding by Ofsted in all areas, the school offers a safe, welcoming space for children who don't necessarily thrive within the conventional schooling setting. It prides itself on exceptional pastoral support, developing learners to break new artistic ground and be truly original. This is a school that is affirming for children from all backgrounds.

Headteacher Chris is an inspirational character and I've watched Saxon transform from a boy who was deeply unhappy throughout much of his secondary school experience into a confident young man who genuinely loves school and has now found his tribe.



Saxon in his comfort zone (Photo: Revd Em Kolltveit)

The curriculum is wonderfully broad, covering textiles, art, music, media studies, science, maths and English. As pupils progress into sixth form, their individual talents and passions really start to shine through, allowing them to specialise in areas such as music and film production, performing arts and pop.

I'm sure there are quite a few children in the Suburb who would thrive on this alternative educational path, yet whose parents and carers simply haven't heard about this wonderful, life-giving school. If that sounds like you, I'd urge you to come and see it for yourselves.

Find out more: www.academy.elstreescreenarts.com.

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Congratulations to Revd Em and Are on their joint 50th birthdays!



Photo: Michael Eleftheriades

New Suburb residents fly the nest

JUDY MARCUS

You may be aware that last December a bespoke nesting box was installed in the brick tower under the spire of St Jude's to encourage peregrine falcons to nest there. After obtaining archdeacon consent and some funding, St Jude's collaborated with specialist architects, steeplejacks, bird-camera manufacturers, WIFI providers and in-house volunteers, resulting in the successful installation of a nesting box high up in the brick tower under the spire of the church. These efforts were coordinated by David White, St Jude's Fabric Committee head and an avid bird watcher. I met with David to find out more.

David's view is that peregrine falcons are an asset to the Suburb, since these birds of prey are effective in reducing the high number of city pigeons, commonly found inside the church building. Quite by chance, a pair of peregrine falcons had been sighted roosting on the brick tower at the time David was seeking the necessary permissions to install a nesting box. Clearly, St Jude's tower was the right place to put a bespoke bird box.

Soon after the bespoke bird box was installed, a pair of peregrine falcons arrived. They may well have been the same two falcons as were originally spotted inside the tower. The falcon pair used the nesting box to lay four eggs. Three eggs hatched and three healthy chicks emerged.

Cameras had been installed in the nesting box and a webcam was set up. Residents could watch the baby falcons getting ready to fly. David described watching one of the youngsters on the ledge flapping its wings like crazy as if it was saying "I want to take off!" The chicks experimented with early flying experiences and David together with Michael Eleftheriades, a local experienced bird watcher (and, like David, well known Suburb photographer) tried to spot them and take photos when they could. Michael has seen them trying to catch a dead pigeon dropped from their parent's claws mid-flight.

David thinks the parents may well come back to the nest year after year. However, the fledglings, once they have mastered the art of flying and hunting, won't return – even if they do, they'll be chased away by their parents. They have to find their own territory and eventually a mate.



A plea for the peregrine



Photo: David White

We have been blessed as the nesting platform at the top of the tower was adopted by a breeding pair of peregrines almost as soon as it was installed. We hear their presence has brought much interest and pleasure to many. Three healthy chicks were raised this year and we hope to reproduce this result in future years. We do, however, have to maintain it and because our only means of access is with the help of steeplejacks, it will cost around £1,700 each time we access the platform at today's prices. Please can we call upon you to help us meet this cost by building up a Peregrine Fund in the St Jude-on-the-Hill PCC Stewardship account: Account No 64628068 and sort code 30-93-50. We will revisit the platform this year to improve the cameras and top up the pea shingle.

David White, St Jude's PCC



Photos: Michael Eleftheriades



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OUT & ABOUT



Keeping Hampstead Garden Suburb safe

Tips from the Suburb's dedicated ward officer

Photos: Francine Barsam

FRANCINE BARSAM

Hampstead Garden Suburb remains one of London's safest, most pleasant places to live. However, like any part of the capital, it is not immune to crime. I caught up with John Chuter, a dedicated ward officer with 17 years in policing, to talk about local trends and safety tips. Deeply invested in the neighbourhood, John is exactly the kind of reassuring presence that makes us all feel safe having him on our side.

VEHICLE CRIME LEADS CONCERNS

The biggest ongoing issue is theft from motor vehicles. Opportunistic

thieves target anything visible, from laptops and loose change to parcel shelves and wing mirrors. Officers advise leaving nothing on display inside cars and using physical deterrents like steering locks.

KEY SECURITY ADVICE

While local burglary rates currently remain low, simple precautions make a major difference:

Home Security: Keep homes looking occupied when away using light timers, radios, secure locks, and visible cameras. Ask trusted neighbours to collect post.

CCTV & Doorbells: Video footage helps police establish timelines, descriptions, and travel routes.

Doorstep Caution: Never open the door to unexpected callers. Use

door chains or video intercoms to stay safe.

Observe, Don't Confront: If you spot suspicious activity, observe safely from a distance, note key details, and report it.

COMMUNITY INTELLIGENCE MATTERS

Every report builds a clearer picture, helping police track patterns and target patrols. Residents are also encouraged to sign up for Met Engage (www.metengage.co.uk), the Met Police's community

messaging service, to receive local safety updates.

John, who has spent seven years working in the Suburb, loves the strong bond he has built with local residents, emphasising that community teamwork is crucial for keeping the area secure.

When he isn't busy patrolling the neighbourhood and helping protect the community, John likes to unwind and relax by practising reformer pilates, playing a round of golf and enjoying a bit of gardening.

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In this series Suburb News spotlights the Suburb’s local independent shopkeepers

SIMONE HALFIN

Relaxing on the terrace of Passioni with Alessia and Denis, owners of this idyllic Market Place restaurant right opposite the entrance to Lyttelton Playing Fields, is a pleasure not to be missed, especially in the sunshine. Alessia told me she comes from Rome, as do her parents and grandparents, Denis, her husband of 21 years, was also brought up in Rome but originally came from what was then Yugoslavia. Alessia’s father ran a restaurant in Rome where she got her love of food from, but political problems and the mafia made her decide to come to England, initially just to learn the language. She told me with a laugh she loved the English weather, as she is fair skinned and burns easily. Alessia and Denis live locally and walking round one day during Covid noticed a sign for two restaurants for sale, the other one being in Muswell Hill. They bought both five years ago but sold Muswell Hill after a short time to concentrate on building up Passioni. I had to ask what it was like working together every day, and Alessia smiled and said sometimes you had to put on a bit of an act if you had a little row at home! They have a son and a daughter; both help sometimes in the restaurant but apparently are very shy – hard to believe with such sociable parents!

Passioni is a traditional family restaurant. They have seven members of staff and Alessia teaches everyone how to follow the recipes she learnt at her father’s restaurant, recipes that she said were not in a book. She wouldn’t give me the secret ingredient that went into several dishes though. Her great-great-grandmother was a chef, so it runs in the family for sure. Lasagne is her favourite but customers also like the chicken and mushrooms in a cream sauce, and schnitzels.

I am always fascinated by the décor and unusual cushions and artefacts in the restaurant, as well as the appetising food and wines for sale. Apparently some of the china, especially the tiny espresso cups which come from the Illy coffee makers, are designed and sold as art pieces. Even the milk jugs and cutlery are unusual. Alessia explained Italy is known for so many things – art, culture, music, wine, cars etc – and wanted their restaurant to reflect some of these things, which indeed it does.

They occasionally put on special events such as jazz evenings, where local artists play, private parties, Valentine’s Day, Mothers’ Day, and hope to do more in the future. They also have various groups who meet regularly at Passioni – a walking group, cycling group, book club meetings – one run by U3A and another book club for young mums, as well as many regulars dropping by for their morning coffee or early evening drinks as well as food.

Opening hours are 8am weekdays until last orders at 9pm and Saturday 9am-10.30pm and Sunday 9am-5pm.



The big red “NO” stamp?



Photo: HGS Trust

Shortly before I started at the Trust in January last year, I posted about my new role on LinkedIn. A contact who knows the Suburb quickly appeared in my direct messages, joking that I would now be in charge of the Trust’s big red NO stamp. It made me laugh, but I have found myself thinking about it from time to time. Where does that reputation come from?

The Trust’s purpose is to preserve and maintain the character and amenities of Hampstead Garden Suburb. That matters because the Suburb is special. Its houses, buildings, gardens, trees, hedges, open spaces and planned layout all form part of a remarkable place, created more than a century ago but shaped by the generations who have lived here since. It is also a living community. Families grow, houses need repair, expectations change and residents quite reasonably want their homes to work for modern life.

Many Trust decisions are not simple yes or no questions. They involve judgement. We need to consider the Scheme of Management, the design guidance, the character of the individual property, the wider street scene, the impact on neighbours where relevant, and the long-term interests of the Suburb.

The figures may surprise some people. In the year to March 2026, the Trust received 165 applications for changes to properties. Of those, seven were refused. That does not mean every proposal was accepted exactly as first submitted. Much of the most useful work happens before a decision is made – giving advice, asking questions, suggesting amendments, and working with applicants to reach a proposal that can be supported.

In my experience, the best applications start with early conversations. Trust consent is needed for external changes to Suburb properties and most proposals that change the external appearance or significantly alter garden landscaping require a formal application. If you are thinking about an extension, new windows or doors, a loft or garage conversion, changes to your garden, or anything else that may alter the external appearance of your property, please speak to the Trust before your plans are fixed.

We are happy to give free pre-application advice. That advice is not itself consent and we can only advise on what is likely or unlikely to be supported. But early advice can save time, reduce frustration and help avoid designs heading in a direction that is unlikely to be acceptable.

Of course, not every proposal can be approved. There will be times when the Trust has to say no, or ask for significant changes. In a place people care about deeply, there will also be different views about where the right balance lies. But the aim is not to stop change. It is to manage change carefully and consistently, so that individual homes can evolve while the distinctive character of the Suburb is protected for everyone.

So, no, there is no big red NO stamp. The real work is quieter and usually more constructive: listening, advising, weighing things up and helping residents make changes that work for them and for the Suburb. A good place to start is the Design Guidance section of the Trust website, where you can find the main Design Guidance for the Suburb, as well as supplementary guidance on specific subjects including retrofit, windows, security and other common types of work. If you are not sure where to begin, please contact the Trust office on 020 8455 1066.

Will Hawkins, Chief Executive HGST

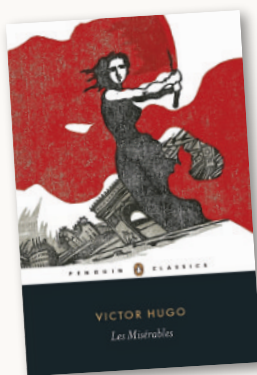
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In this edition of Suburb News Youth, we welcome a new group of Year 10 students from The Archer Academy who have compiled a list of the favourite books they have read this summer, some of which they have already swapped among themselves. As summer passes into autumn and darker evenings we hope that this list from a wide range of genres and times will contain something for everyone to get engrossed in. Why not let us have your opinions and/or recommendations for a future issue of Suburb News Youth



Les Misérables

by Victor Hugo

One book that we highly recommend is Les Misérables by Victor Hugo. This book may seem long, but once you get absorbed into the story it is impossible to escape. The novel is set in 1815 France and follows the life of an ex-prisoner, Jean Valjean, and his journey moving on from his past and changing himself for the better. Alongside this, we see the experiences of those living in poverty in Paris and the history of the 1832 Paris barricades. Les Misérables explores a range of themes, such as social injustice in 19th century France and human suffering. The story is a perfect encapsulation of what makes a person good. It is melancholy at times (hence the title) but still heart-warming as well, and this is why we love it so much.



Little Women

by Louisa May Alcott

Another classic we believe everyone deserves to read is Little Women by Louisa May Alcott. This book explores the narrative of four March sisters: Jo, Beth, Amy and Meg. This book was also made into a film in 2019 featuring the famous quote, "Women, they have minds, and they have souls, as well as just hearts... and they've got ambition, and they've got talent, as well as just beauty." We see the women grow from childhood as they navigate journeys through families and love. We like this book as it reflects how women were stereotyped in the 1800s and the time it took for women to be accepted into the workplace. It is emotional and beautiful and a timeless tale for all ages.

By Amika & Leonie, Year 10, The Archer Academy



The Bell Jar

by Sylvia Plath

The next novel we recommend is The Bell Jar by Sylvia Plath. The Bell Jar is particularly popular with young adults, as Esther's representation of mental health struggles and expectations of a young woman are seen as relatable within our youth. Esther (the protagonist) describes her experiences in 20th century America and her descent into depression as the novel progresses. It is written as a semi-autobiography, as it presents some of Sylvia Plath's own struggles through the narrative of Esther Greenwood. We think The Bell Jar can help a better understanding of mental health and reduce stigma and discrimination towards those who may have mental health problems in their lifetime.

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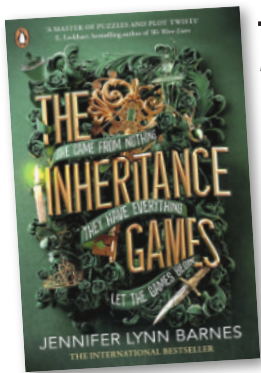


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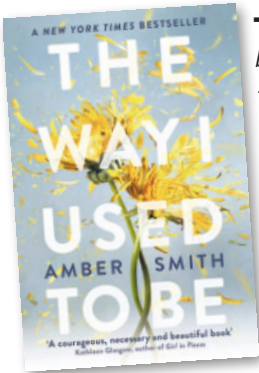


The Inheritance Games

by Jennifer Lynn Barnes

Avery Grambs is determined to keep her head down and get through school. She wants nothing more than to go unnoticed. That becomes slightly difficult when she inherits one of the largest fortunes known to the world. The death of Tobias Hawthorne leads to Avery's predicament. To sustain her claim, she is sent to live at the Hawthorne mansion, where she meets Nash, Grayson, Jameson and Xander, the late Hawthorne's four grandsons. Plunged into a world of wealth, Avery enlists the brothers' help when she discovers all is not as it seems. After all, why would a girl who's never met the great Tobias Hawthorne inherit all his wealth? The book's short chapters, packed with plot points, create high tension for the reader, meaning you won't want to put this story down. It is perfect for fans of mystery and those who like their romance plot on the side. Jennifer Lynn Barnes has a PhD in psychology, which is clear in the depth of her characters. You'll never see the plot twists coming and if you're looking for a series to get stuck into, The Inheritance Games is definitely your next read.

By Darcey & Elizabeth, Year 10, The Archer Academy



The Way I Used to Be

by Amber Smith

The Way I Used to Be is an emotional book which explores the main character, Eden's, trauma after she was raped by a family friend at the age of 14. Through each chapter, we learn how Eden is affected and haunted by this significant event and her constant need to change, and how she navigates ages 14-16 doing so. This book is heavier on the less apparent details that provide more of a catharsis rather than a strong twisty plot. The book is around 400 pages and has short chapters, so it is easy to get through. If you want to dwell on a sensitive story, this is the book for you.

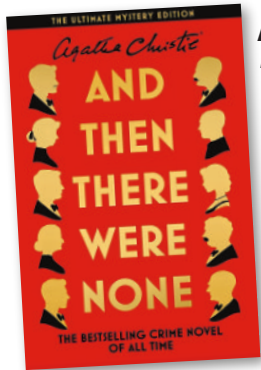
Trigger warnings: rape, sexual assault, domestic abuse, alcohol abuse, drug use, depression, suicide.



Once Upon a Broken Heart

by Stephanie Garber

Whilst this is not Garber's first series, it is most certainly the most popular. Once Upon a Broken Heart follows the character, Evangeline Fox, and her attempt to win back the boy of her dreams. To do this she makes a deal with an immortal fate, Jacks, not realising the dangers and consequences that this will lead to. As Evangeline searches for love, there are others who have a different agenda for Miss Fox, including Jacks. Stephanie Garber excels at her world building, transporting readers into the story themselves. The book is perfect for readers who love romance and fantasy and want a female protagonist with a kind heart (and pink hair). The book is just over 300 pages long and will make an excellent addition to anyone's bookshelf.



And Then There Were None

by Agatha Christie

And Then There Were None by Agatha Christie is a classic for a reason. It is incredibly thrilling and (literally) impossible put down – a fact that is evidenced by one of us staying up terribly late to consume the book. It follows ten strangers who are lured to a remote island by the elusive U.N. Owen. On the first night, every single one of them is individually accused of a crime that they have long put out of their minds. The ten strangers then start to die off, one by one, in accordance with the fictional poem Ten Little Soldier Boys. As more people disappear, those who remain set out to find the cause of their predicament but eventually fall to whatever or whoever is claiming the lives of the guilty strangers.



So I Met This Guy...

by Alexandra Potter

So I Met This Guy... by Alexandra Potter is a hilarious piece of women's contemporary fiction that follows Flick, a young reporter with high aspirations and Maggie, a 49-year-old woman who had her heart broken and savings stolen by romance fraudster Theo. After Flick finds Maggie homeless in an old campervan, they decide to team up to catch Theo and force him to accept the consequences of his actions. This results in the girls going on a gut-bustingly funny, heartwarming and thrilling trip to Europe to track down Theo and force him to face the consequences of his actions. Along the way, they meet a variety of quirky and iconic characters. We love this book because it is hilarious, but also heart-warming and raises awareness of real-life problems that people face.



I Shall Never Fall in Love

by Hari Conner

Listed as a top ten title for teens on the American Library Association's Rainbow List, which celebrates stories centred around LGBTQ+ youth, I Shall Never Fall in Love by Hari Conner is a beautiful graphic novel set in 1818. The story revolves around three friends – Eleanor, George and Charlotte – who are all navigating the difficult social expectations of the time as they come of age. The book explores the experiences of LGBTQ+ people, and people of colour in the Regency era. Conner's drawings are stunning, detail-orientated and show off their artistic talents. It is a perfect book for those who enjoy comedy, historical fiction and romance. Conner's rewrite of a 'happily ever after' is an undeniable page-turner.

By Emmeline & Sophie, Year 10, The Archer Academy



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Courtauld lecture on wall art conservation at St Jude's



Admiring the stunning Lady Chapel wall paintings (and below)

JUDY MARCUS

In June, postgraduate student art conservation experts from the renowned Courtauld Institute treated a Suburb audience to a talk on their pre-restoration preparatory work on the wall paintings in the Lady Chapel at St Jude's Church. The Courtauld Institute features as the world's leading institution for the study of the history of art in the 2026 QS World University Rankings. The students described their investigative work over six weeks between January and March this year on the huge wall paintings created by the English artist Walter Starmer between 1919 and 1929.

Their investigations are the first phase in a much larger project, a long-term undertaking over several years to conserve and restore this important artistic and historical treasure. St Jude's PCC has signed a memorandum of

understanding with The Courtauld Institute of Art, enabling the Lady Chapel to be adopted as a fieldwork station for the Institute's postgraduate MA course in the conservation of wall paintings. This partnership ensures that the collaboration between St Jude's and one of the world's leading conservation schools will continue into the future.

The paintings feature many characters who, unusually, are all women, including significant biblical figures alongside more recent women dedicated to public service and social reform. Among them are the famous First World War nurse Edith Cavell, poet Christina Rossetti, social reformer and women's rights campaigner Josephine Butler, philanthropist Angela Burdett-Coutts, Scottish doctor and suffragist Elsie Inglis, anti-vivisectionist and suffragist Frances Power Cobbe and Agnes

Weston, who devoted her life to the welfare of Royal Navy personnel.

The choice of these women reflects both religious and social history. Walter Starmer was originally commissioned in 1919 to decorate the Lady Chapel as a First World War memorial. A local women's committee, chaired by the suffragist Mabel St Clair Stobart, funded many of the depictions of contemporary women. Their intention was to commemorate the vital contribution women made to the war effort while also reflecting the contemporary campaign for equal suffrage.

Social history is important here too. Wall paintings were championed by social visionaries as a way of making great art accessible to everybody and Starmer regarded the St Jude's scheme as his finest achievement.

Artistically, the murals are also highly significant as a rare example of the British Spirit Fresco revival. There are only 18 Spirit Fresco sites in the UK, making St Jude's an exceptionally important survivor, particularly as many comparable works were destroyed during the Second World War. The paintings also have strong local significance. They were created to commemorate those who died in the First World War, and beneath the Lady Chapel foundation stone is a list of the fallen from the Suburb.

The conservation work involves a collaborative effort, with funding support from the Church of England's Conservation Grants Programme, itself funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, while Historic England has contributed specialist photo-grammetric imaging of the chapel. Bespoke scaffolding has also been required to reach the complex architectural spaces designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens.



The Courtauld Lecture received by an attentive audience

Long-standing cooperation between The Courtauld and St Jude's continues through close consultation with church engineers and architects, particularly in identifying causes of deterioration – including water ingress, blanching and accumulated surface dust – and developing measures to help prevent future decay.

After the lecture, time was set aside for a wide range of questions, both technical and non-technical, before the audience was invited into the Lady Chapel. I could make out the outlines of the biblical figures Ruth, Miriam and Hannah, but many of the paintings remain

extremely dark and it was difficult to distinguish several of the ceiling figures. The conservation team explained that after cleaning just a small test area of one mural, they uncovered "shining particles", giving a glimpse of the brilliance that lies beneath the accumulated dirt. It was easy to imagine how the completed conservation will restore both the clarity and luminosity of these remarkable paintings.

It will be fascinating to see just how dramatically the restoration transforms the appearance of the Lady Chapel. The next phase of work is to take place between 8 February and 19 March 2027.



(l-r) Courtauld tutors Sibylla Tringham and Denise Inamoto with the Courtauld post graduate students



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Photos: Michael Eleftheriades

Welcome back to my film review column. In this issue we're looking at an all-time classic, *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, released in 1969 and directed by George Roy Hill

Butch Cassidy and The Sundance Kid



Still from the film © 20th Century-Fox

George Roy Hill presents two characters – Robert LeRoy Parker, known as Butch Cassidy (Paul Newman), and his partner Harry Longabaugh, the 'Sundance Kid' (Robert Redford) – who defy the 'white hat hero' and 'black hat villain' stereotypes seen in many westerns. Butch Cassidy is charismatic and unexpectedly sensitive. He appreciates art and beauty and reveals later in the film that he has never actually shot anyone. In contrast, the Sundance Kid is reserved, stoic and a crack shot with a gun. The contrast between these two characters easily creates one of cinema's most memorable duos.

At its core, however, the film is about the friendship between Butch and Sundance. As the story progresses, they form a deep platonic connection, built on humour, unwavering loyalty and mutual respect. Beneath the light and comedic aspects of the film, there is an awareness that the world they belong to is disappearing and their adventure must soon come to an end, which I think gives the film an emotional depth that lingers long after it ends.

Visually, the film is extremely impressive. Its cinematography captures the vast landscapes of the American West before transporting the audience to the striking scenery of Bolivia. Every frame feels carefully composed, reinforcing both the scale of their adventure and the sense that this is the end of an era.

And, of course, no discussion of Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid would be complete without its iconic ending. Cornered by the Bolivian army, the final sequence builds an almost unbearable tension before concluding with one of the most famous freeze frames in film history. It's a bold, unforgettable ending that perfectly captures the spirit and determination of the two men who come to the conclusion that they must face their fate on their own terms.

Even if westerns aren't usually your thing, I'd still highly recommend giving this film a watch. It's much more than a classic western.

Hampstead Garden Opera passes the baton



Philip Sheffield
(Photo: Julian Guidera)

RICHARD HALL

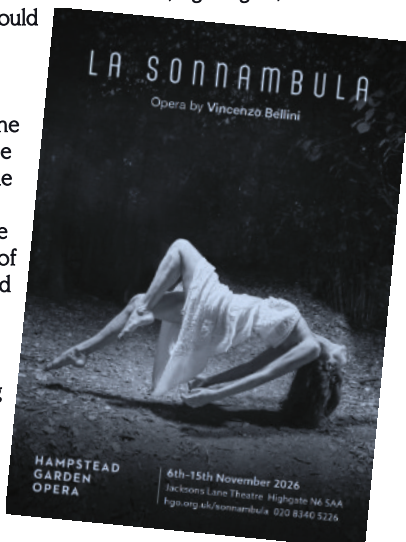
Hampstead Garden Opera, the award-winning North London opera company, has recently changed its leadership. Philip Sheffield, an internationally renowned tenor who had been HGO's Artistic Director since 2018, has taken over from David Conway.

Philip, HGO's General Director, is very proud of the not-for-profit company's achievements, which have made it one of London's most respected independent opera companies. He remains determined that the commitment to advancing young singers should remain at the heart of everything that HGO does.

He believes, however, that HGO – described by the Sunday Times as "an engine of opera development in the UK" – deserves wider recognition. To this end, he plans to make greater use of the full name of Hampstead Garden Opera in place of HGO, in order to better reflect the company's heritage, identity and strong links to North London and the Suburb.

Hampstead Garden Opera's next production, Vincenzo Bellini's

La Sonnambula (the sleepwalker), will be staged at Jackson's Lane Theatre in Highgate from 6-15 November. It will be sung in Italian with English surtitles. Tickets go on sale from September via the website, hgo.org.uk, or the theatre.



Gabriel and the somewhere station

DANIEL MARSH

I've always loved reading to my son, Gabriel. We worked our way through all the classics. I even spend a lot of time finding old, secondhand gems online. The ones with the worn spines and the stories from a different time and different worlds. It made me realise there's something in a truly great children's picture book that speaks to the adult reading it just as much as the child listening.

So, when the idea for a book of my own began to take shape, it felt completely natural. We walk and drive along Hampstead Way a lot. For a long time I'd noticed an unremarkable ventilation shaft, that was easy to miss. Then, one day, I was beside it when a whoosh of air and a very distinct London smell rose from it. I found myself looking it up: beneath our feet, between Hampstead and Golders Green, sits a Tube station that was never finished and never opened! North End station commonly referred to as the Bull & Bush, after the nearby pub. Northern line trains pass through it to this day without stopping. We'd been going past it for years without knowing it was there. That felt like the beginning of a story.

What gave it an extra dimension was that Sir John Betjeman wrote a prose piece I'd read a few years before, about a fictional but very similar incident at the closed

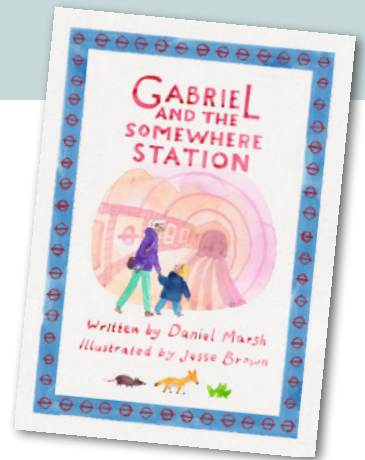
South Kentish Town station. A passenger, a train that shouldn't have stopped and a platform that should have been empty. And then there's the detail that feels almost too good to be true. Frank Pick, the man who shaped so much of the Underground's visual identity, and who commissioned Edward Johnston to create the typeface that still defines the Tube today, lived on Wildwood Road.

All of this fed into the book. Gabriel and Granny take what should be a simple one-stop Tube ride home after a day at the fair on Hampstead Heath, and find themselves stranded at a forgotten station somewhere in between. The only way out is up – two hundred steep and twisting stairs, with a family of talking rats, a fox on the hundredth step, and a frog near the top who cheers them on.

It's a rhyming adventure, but I also wanted it to capture this particular time in our family's life. Gabriel at this age, curious, fearless, full of stories and a love of reading.

The illustrations are by Jesse Brown, a North London artist whose watercolours give the book exactly the warmth and charm I'd hoped for. I've been a fan of his work for years.

Gabriel and The Somewhere Station is available at Daunt Books on South End Road – just around the corner, appropriately enough, from where the story begins. And on Amazon etc.



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RON FINLAY

In the hot summer heat, the Proms at St Jude's Festival in June and July was the cool place to be.

Let's start with the Heritage Walks, which are sometimes eclipsed by the big showpiece concerts. These are the most popular Proms events, after all, with virtually every walk sold out well before they took place. Guide Lester Hillman was whimsical as ever, leading followers along the course of the Fleet River, from Highgate to Kentish Town. Passing Witanhurst House, he pointed out that it is now moving up from second largest to largest private residence in London, as the King decides to vacate Buckingham Palace.

Meanwhile, Alison Barraclough helped people to discover their inner geologist by examining soil samples with hand lenses around the Sandy Heath ponds, before showing how Constable's views of the Heath were affected by the underlying geology.

The tree walk with brilliant new guide Tom Radusin (from the Corporation trees team) had everyone gazing at a tree famously painted by Constable, as he described attempts to keep it standing.

Another oft-overlooked event is the late-night stand-up. Paul Thorne came up with a great line about the demise of the man formerly known as Prince Andrew, who, having lost all his titles, including Duke of York, has now left 10,000 people at the bottom of a ditch not knowing what to do. (You had to be there.)

The Family Festival, generously supported by the Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust, was a great success, with young children flocking to the HGS Community Library stall for singing and storytime and older ones enjoying trying out musical instruments and having their faces painted. As ever, well-known children's illustrator James Mayhew brought the family concert to life beautifully with his illustrations of Peter and the Wolf, while broadcaster Zeb Soanes mellifluously narrated.

At LitFest, thanks to the HGS Residents Association's sponsorship, Gyles Brandreth brought the house down with his anecdotes about

Winnie the Pooh, while Arthur Edward Guinness, Fourth Earl of Iveagh, fascinated the audience with his stories about his family history. Did you know that the Irish harp was trademarked by Guinness so early that, when the Irish state wanted to use the symbol, they had to flip it to avoid infringement?

And so to the concerts. The jazz celebration of the American songbook on July 4th was a rip-roaring success, leading to dancing in the aisles and a fantastic encore. Fantasia Orchestra's Mozart and Beethoven evening was rated another highlight, with Junyan Chen impressive as soloist for Ludwig's Piano Concerto No. 1.

The Academy of St Mary-le-Bow may not be as famous as some ensembles, but was a delight to listen to – and watch. You could see that the orchestra members were really enjoying playing with virtuoso violinist Timothy Ridout, and that added to the pleasure of hearing their rendition of Mendelssohn's Italian Symphony, as well as other Italy-themed pieces.

The Fidelio Trio too played their three piano trios with aplomb, while the Scott Brothers delighted audiences with their unusual combination of organ and piano for classics like Grieg's Peer Gynt and Gershwin's Rhapsody in Blue.

The two free 'busking' events in the tent an hour before the main church concert started were an innovation this year and much liked. Particular praise goes to Chris Harvey, brought in at the last minute to fill a vacancy, who wooed everyone with his smooth jazz. On the last weekend, a St Jude's burger and hot dog barbecue in a pink marquee really enhanced the July Fourth and Family festival atmosphere.

Of course, the beauty of Proms is not only that it creates a fabulous community festival, but that it also supports music education and raises money for good causes. The Schools Prom brought together almost 400 pupils from local schools as a superb climax to their weeks of preparation for music on the theme of Planets, Moons and Stars. And Sanjana Shankar, 17, was able, as winner of the fanfare composing competition, to hear her piece played in public by the Fantasia Orchestra.



Chris Harvey



Junyan Chen



Lizzie Ball



Simon Lewis chats to Anthony Seldon at the LitFest (Photo: David White)



All photos (unless otherwise credited): Michael Eleftheriades

For North London Hospice and Toynbee Hall, Proms' partner charities, it was good news to hear that they will share at least £50,000 as a result of this year's festival.

Now planning begins for 2027 – and you can be part of it. Proms is looking for new volunteers to join teams covering LitFest, music planning, education, marketing, operations and fundraising. If you'd like to spend a few hours a month, on average, to help put together another great festival, sign up at <https://www.promsatstjudes.org.uk/volunteering>.

And for everyone, make a note in your diary of next year's dates: 26 June to 4 July 2027.



Lester Hillman on the River Fleet walk (Photo: Ron Finlay)



LitFest Chair Niamh O'Donnell-Keenan and Gyles Brandreth (Photo: Ron Finlay)

SPECIAL LITFEST EVENT Sir Antonio Pappano



Photo: Mark Allen

**7.15pm, Tuesday 8 September 2026
The Henrietta Barnett School**

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Autumn at the Garden Suburb Theatre

COLIN GREGORY

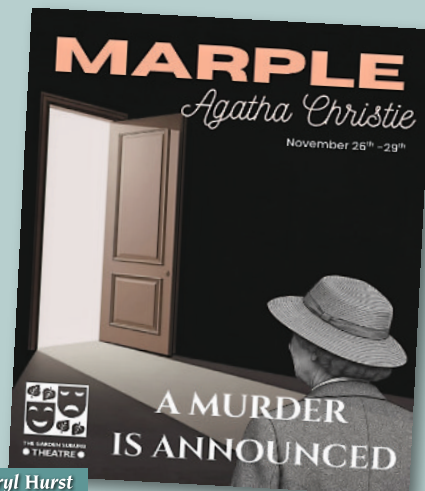
Garden Suburb Theatre's autumn season at Upstairs at the Gatehouse features two of England's most beloved playwrights – William Shakespeare and Agatha Christie. From 8-11 October, Garden Suburb Theatre will be staging *Love's Labour's Lost*, directed by Daryl Hurst. What happens when the King's men, who vow to give up food, drink, sleep, and most importantly, women, are forced to entreat with the Princess of France on behalf of her father? Watch as true love unfolds in this classic romantic comedy. *Love's Labour's Lost* is one of Shakespeare's simplest, funniest and most accessible scripts. In our very abridged version, the play focuses on the central plot: a timeless love story reminiscent of *Notting Hill*, *Bridget Jones* and *Pretty Woman*; it's a classic tale of heartbreak, longing, miscommunication, misdirection and mistaken identity with a modern,

colourful, and spirited production. Performances are at 7.30pm on 8, 9 and 10 October and 3pm matinee on 11 October.

From 26-29 November the Garden Suburb Theatre will be marking the 50th anniversary of the death of Agatha Christie with *A Murder is Announced*, adapted by Leslie Darbon from the novel of the same name, and directed by Debbie Lane. It's Friday 13th at some point in the early 1950s, and a notice in the *Chipping Cleghorn Gazette* states the time and place when a murder is to occur. Curiosity overcomes trepidation and the villagers gather to await the hour. What follows is a classic and ingenious Christie puzzle involving a cast of entertaining characters and two sleuths – Inspector Craddock of the county police and, somewhat to his frustration, Miss Jane Marple, who always manages to be one step ahead on the path to solving the mystery. Performances are at 7.30pm on 26, 27 and 28 November and 3pm on 29 November.



Posters: Daryl Hurst



Tickets for both shows are available at <https://tinyurl.com/bv2j8ahz>

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Duke visits HGS Kids Gardening Club

DOMINIC ROSE

On a hot and sunny Tuesday afternoon in late June, HGS Kids Gardening Club were delighted and excited to welcome HRH Prince Edward, Duke of Edinburgh, to visit the award-winning garden they created next to St Jude's Church in Central Square.

The visit was organised by the London Gardens Society, of which the Duke is patron.

After a huge amount of planning, and tidying, there was a surge of excitement as the Duke's convoy swept into the St Jude's car park accompanied by four motorbike outriders. After a ceremonial welcome by the Lord Lieutenant of Barnet and the Lady Mayor, and an introduction to representatives from the London Gardens Society, the Duke was escorted into the garden which was looking dazzling in the sunshine and buzzing with bees and other wildlife.

I explained the history of the gardening club and the kids garden to the Duke, who was hugely impressed at what has been created over the last two years by over 100 children and volunteers, and introduced him to Rev Emily, without whose support (and land!) the gardening club would not be possible, and Hannah Edmonds, a volunteer who's attended nearly every session of gardening club since the start, whatever the weather.

My children (and long standing gardening club members), Theo (9) and Dexter (6) then took the Duke on a tour of the garden where he met 14 of our members (who had received special permission to miss school for the afternoon) and their parents. He was fascinated to see the pond teeming with wildlife, watch potatoes being harvested, help tie in tomatoes and explore the greenhouse, all of which was showcased and explained to him by knowledgeable and passionate kids aged from two to 14.

The children were especially impressed by the Duke's gardening-themed tie and he spoke to each and every one of them with great interest, forging memories that will last a lifetime.

The Duke was then invited to join the children to plant a Henrietta Barnett rose in the centre of the garden (now marked with a plaque) and

was presented with a number of gifts which he was delighted to receive and take home with him, including a gardening club cap, lavender grown from cuttings, a book written by one of the club members and a HortSoc bag. After some negotiation, he was also allowed to take a jar of the local St Jude's honey with him, despite Noam, aged two, being keen to take it home for her Dad.

Forty five minutes after he arrived, the Duke was waved out of the car park and everyone retreated for some much needed shade and cold drinks, alongside lots of hugs and high fives.

A celebratory gardening club was held later that day – complete with a highly competed royal-themed Great Suburb Bake off, an inflatable obstacle course and a chance to play in the sprinkler. The day was a huge success and a great testament to the hard work, passion and dedication of the gardening club, which has over 70 children registered as members.

The children are now keen to showcase their newest creation – the Forest Garden – situated on the far side of the Inspire Centre, and planted out with roses, cut flowers and dwarf apples. The next Royal Invite is underway!



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All photos: Michael Eleftheriades

A right Royal Visit!

CAROLINE BROOME

On Tuesday 23 June 2026, at precisely 2.20pm, Prince Edward, the Duke of Edinburgh, visited my garden. As record temperatures soared into the 30s, the Duke arrived, suited and booted, smiling and friendly, immediately putting us at our ease.

The neighbours were out in force taking photos, while our neighbour Ian, official photographer for the event, was snapping away. The party came through my hall and living room to emerge onto the colourful Catio, then into the main body of the garden, which was standing to attention in its best finery. And I got the downstairs of our house redecorated beforehand into the bargain!

So, just what do you have to do to get a member of the Royal Family to visit your garden? Well, join the London Gardens Society and enter your garden in the All London Championships, for a start. The London Gardens Society (LGS) is a registered charity that has been established for over 100 years, and its aim is 'to make a permanent contribution towards beautifying London by the growing of flowers and shrubs, thus improving the urban environment.' Originally the Society gave away free seeds to encourage the citizens of London to brighten up the areas where they lived and worked, by growing flowers. This has now been replaced with an annual garden competition.

Prince Edward, the Duke of Edinburgh is its patron, and every June he visits three of its prize-winning gardens. And this June, the Duke came to see the award-winning HGS Kids Gardening Club in the Suburb, our five times Best Small Back Garden – not bragging – and the Leopold Road



Photo: Ian Marsh

Community Garden, winner of the Best Community Garden 2025. But this isn't the first time the Patron of the London Gardens Society has visited gardens in the Suburb.

Founded in 1905, its first patron was Queen Mary. She was succeeded by Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, who served as patron for decades, actively maintaining this role until her death in 2002, when Prince Edward stepped into the role.

In 1979 Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother visited the garden of HGS Horticultural Society members, Betty and Denis Arkell in Westholm, then went on to Asmunds Hill, to the home of the joint secretaries of the Horticultural Society, the two Jeans, Jean Marr and Jean Robertson. The child presenting the flowers to the Queen Mum was Michelle Dyson, the Mayor's eight-year-old granddaughter (see below).

In 2013 Prince Edward, then Earl of Wessex, visited the award-winning gardens of local residents, Diane Berger, Marjorie Harris and Yvonne Oliver, a horticultural triumvirate if ever there was one.

In fact, it was Diane, back in 2015, who encouraged me to enter our small back garden into the London Gardens Society All London Championships. But the real clincher was the prospect of a buffet with drinkies and copious canapes, served at London's beautiful Guildhall after the Trophy Presentation Evening in October. Over a decade later, David is now membership secretary and we are both judges.

Each year the LGS committee asks for proposals for the Duke's June tour. This spring, David put forward an itinerary that started with the HGS Kids Gardening Club in Hampstead Garden Suburb. Having accompanied the Duke on several previous tours, we know that Edward enjoys chatting to young children. He also likes the gardens to be within walking distance if possible, and as Leopold Road is only a hop and a skip from our house, David hatched his plan. The clincher was to be a walk down our road, past the Windsor Castle pub, before arriving at the small community garden. Of all the proposals, David's ticked all the boxes. His proposal was submitted to the Palace and was duly accepted.

The race was on to make our garden the best it's ever looked and to provide tea for the Duke and his entourage. I bought a new dress, had a matching pedicure and baked a Victoria Sponge. Brought out my best china. My nominated guest, Rosie –

because she's so calm, was once Lady Mayoress of Barnet and knows how to behave – baked a plum and almond cake.

All too soon, the Duke's visit to our garden was over. So, while David escorted the party down Church Lane, Rosie and I enjoyed a quick Pimms before following on. Undeterred by the heat, the Duke happily stopped to greet our neighbours, met the local vicar and went inside the church. He went into our local florists, Jenny Mann (who thought David was kidding when he went in to warn them days before), passed the Windsor Castle pub, which had opened early especially, and chatted to locals as he headed to his final destination, Leopold Road Community Garden.

By the time Rosie and I joined the party, Edward had attracted quite a following, sitting with the community members and mingling with the gathering crowd. As school broke out, a group of teenage boys stopped to see what was going on, and said: "Look, it's the King's brother, let's get a selfie!" Whilst in conversation with a couple of students from our local Archer Academy, it transpired that they were about to do the Duke of Edinburgh Award, to which he replied, "Well, that's good to hear, I am the Duke of Edinburgh."

Such a privilege of a lifetime, so many lovely moments, so many happy faces.

So, spruce up your garden, join the London Gardens Society, enter a few competitions, and you too could one day welcome the Duke of Edinburgh into your garden.



Photo: Ian Marsh



Marjorie and David Harris meet Prince Edward in 2013 (Photo: HGS Virtual Museum)



Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother visits 17 Asmunds Hill in 1979 (Photo: Hendon Times)

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Horticultural Society events bloom across the summer

CHRISTINE GEISSMAR

It has been a busy and successful few months for the Horticultural Society, with a packed programme of events attracting members and visitors alike.

The season got off to a flying start with the Society's annual plant sale, where bargain-priced plants proved so popular that most stock sold out. Raffle ticket winners from the September 2025 flower show enjoyed early access before the sale opened to members and then the general public. The event once again highlighted the value of Society membership, with members benefiting from exclusive access and discounted prices.



In late May, members travelled by coach to Oxford for a memorable visit to the gardens of Trinity, Worcester and St John's Colleges. Despite soaring temperatures, the group enjoyed guided tours of both public and private gardens, admiring spectacular planting displays set against the backdrop of the city's historic architecture.

Around 20 members also took part in an Ikebana flower-arranging workshop led by Yuki Yagioka. Participants learned the principles of the traditional Japanese art form, which dates back more than 500 years and uses just five stems arranged according to carefully defined angles and proportions. The emphasis on space, balance and movement produced striking results, with many leaving inspired to continue practising at home.

The Society's popular potato-growing competition reached its conclusion during the HGS Residents Association summer celebration on Central Square in



HortSoc Chair, Laurence Wolff admiring the exhibits

early June. Competitors emptied their grow bags of potatoes into wheelbarrows to have their harvests weighed, with results ranging from a modest 47 grams to an impressive winning crop of 935 grams. Congratulations went to Christine Weatherhead, whose bumper harvest comfortably secured first place.

The Society's 297th Flower Show was another highlight of the summer, attracting a large number of visitors on a glorious sunny day. The weather allowed refreshments to be enjoyed outdoors while visitors admired colourful floral displays, home baking, produce and photography.

Competition entries included homemade lemon curd and marmalade, cheese and chive scones, Madeira cake and Homity pies. Fruit and vegetable classes were also well supported, with first-time exhibitor Annette Conn taking first prize in the raspberry class, proving that newcomers should never hesitate to enter.

The rose classes were especially popular, with four categories including the ever-favourite Sweetest Smelling Rose. Visitors also enjoyed a varied photography exhibition featuring photographs of garden sheds and blossoms. A charity raffle held during the show raised funds for good causes.

More recently Society members enjoyed a memorable trip to Norfolk, including a special visit to the gardens at the Royal Estate at Sandringham where they were treated to a private tour.

Alongside the main programme of events, members have continued to open their private gardens for a series of popular pop-up afternoons and evenings. In return for a small charitable donation, visitors have been able to explore a wonderful variety of gardens while appreciating the enthusiasm, skill and generosity of local gardeners. The Society would like to thank everyone who has hosted or supported these events.

Looking ahead, there is plenty to enjoy during the autumn programme, including the September Flower Show with its popular brass band performance and this time including a bulb sale, a talk on soil science, the Society's AGM and prize-giving in November, and the ever-popular quiz night in December.



All photos: Peter McCluskie

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Light Biscuit is the New Green

a gardener's survival guide to heatwaves

PATRICIA MAJOR

There comes a point every summer when gardeners collectively lose their nerve. The thermometer edges past 30°C, the lawn turns the colour of a digestive biscuit and otherwise sensible people begin dragging hoses around the garden as though they're single-handedly tackling a wildfire.

May I suggest... don't.

This year's fashionable lawn colour is Light Biscuit. It comes with a satisfyingly crunchy texture underfoot and, unlike artificial grass, it will recover perfectly well when Britain remembers it's Britain and starts raining again.

Nor is this the moment to attack the hedges. If you're wilting in 32-degree heat, spare a thought for the privet expected to have a

haircut at midday. Gardening is supposed to be therapeutic, not an endurance sport. And please resist the temptation to plant anything. The soil currently has all the welcoming qualities of a concrete patio. Your new plants deserve a fighting chance.

Heatwaves require a little gardening triage. If you only have one watering can, give it generously to the shrubs, roses and established perennials you couldn't bear to lose. New plantings, however, are non-negotiable – they haven't had time to establish and will need regular watering.

What plants don't appreciate is the gardening equivalent of half a cup of tea every hour. Little and often encourages roots to stay near the surface, exactly where the soil dries out first. Water

deeply, water well and then leave them to get on with it. Containers and vegetable gardens are another matter entirely. They dry out quickly and need regular attention.

As for sprinklers, they're wonderfully entertaining for children and dogs but rather less useful for plants. Much of the water evaporates before it reaches the roots, while your water bill climbs.

Instead, wander around the garden with a gin and tonic and simply observe. Which plants look as though they're enjoying a Mediterranean holiday? Which resemble commuters who've just discovered the air conditioning has failed? Heatwaves are brutally honest. They reveal which plants genuinely belong in your garden and which have merely been tolerating it.

Above all, don't panic. It will rain again. It always does – usually just after you've finally given in and watered everything. In the meantime, think about providing a little shade. Garden fleece is excellent, but so are old net curtains, a forgotten beach umbrella or even freshly laundered sheets pegged to the washing line. We instinctively reach for a hat when the sun beats down. Plants are no different.

Dense planting helps too. A leafy canopy shades the soil, reduces evaporation and keeps roots cooler. Healthy soil, rich in organic matter, behaves like a sponge, quietly storing moisture for when it's needed.

While you're waiting for cooler weather, turn your thoughts to spring. Bulb catalogues have a habit of arriving just when nobody wants to think about daffodils, but now is exactly the time to choose them. Darwin and Fosteriana tulips, daffodils, alliums, species tulips, camassias and snake's head fritillaries all reward a little forward planning. There's no need to buy hundreds. Gardens, like good wine collections, are built gradually.

My own thinking about dry gardens owes much to Tom Stuart-Smith, whose emphasis on

healthy soils and watering only while plants establish is both elegant and sustainable. At the other end of the spectrum, Erol Reuben Fernandes demonstrates just how beautiful drought-tolerant planting can be. Their work reminds us that resilient gardens don't have to be joyless ones.

Perhaps that is the real lesson of these increasingly hot summers. The old gardening mantra – the right plant in the right place – has never been more relevant. Maybe

it's time to think less about watering and more about planting shade. A small multi-stemmed tree or generous shrub can reduce temperatures dramatically and a garden filled with living plants will always be cooler, richer and kinder to wildlife than one dominated by paving.

And if I may end with one final plea... Please don't replace your lawn with plastic grass. A crunchy, biscuit-coloured lawn has far more life in it.

Autumn at the Free Church



Harvest 11am Sunday 4 October

Concert in Aid of the Dennis Scott Unit, Edgware 7.30pm 10 October

Annual Bereavement Service 3pm Sunday 1 November

Annual Church Bazaar 11am - 2pm Saturday 14 November

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Beginner's Luck?



New HGS resident Elke Karskens with her first attempt at growing from seed – impressive! (Photo: Tim Botterill)

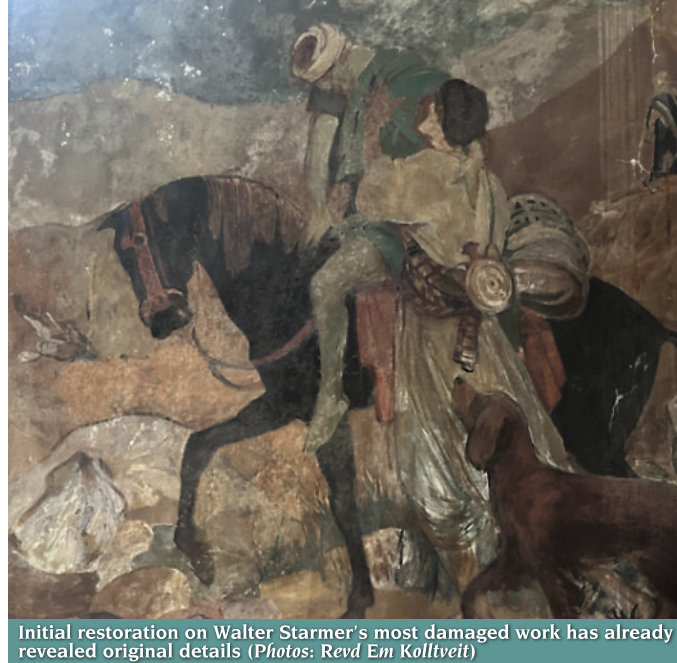
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Initial restoration on Walter Starmer's most damaged work has already revealed original details (Photos: Revd Em Kolltveit)

The magic of discovery

JUDY SMITH

As Chair of the HGS Virtual Museum, it never ceases to amaze me that there are corners of our remarkable neighbourhood that reveal themselves that I knew nothing about. And in recent weeks I have discovered

two more – although I'm sure that you all knew about them.

Firstly, the Spirit Frescoes of St Jude-on-the-Hill painted by Walter Starmer. Yes of course, I have visited the church many times and marvelled at the totality of the painted interior and I knew a little about the artist, mainly from

Rev Walker's writing on the subject – all of which is in the Virtual Museum (hgsvm.org.uk). And I did see that the interior painting needed restoration, but that seems like an enormous undertaking.

Then I discovered that there has been investigatory work going on in the Lady Chapel by Courtauld Art MA students studying the conservation of wall paintings. They have just completed the first phase, and I attended their presentation giving the results of what they have discovered (an article by Judy Marcus on the presentation can be seen on page 14). What I didn't know was how unique this is.

A spirit fresco is a 19th-century mural technique developed by British collector and artist Thomas Gambier Parry. It uses a medium of copal varnish, beeswax and spike lavender to bind pigments to dry plaster, allowing for easier blending and greater longevity than traditional frescoes.

Because it allowed artists to paint on dry walls without the blistering or fading common to damp environments, the spirit

fresco enjoyed massive popularity in Victorian Britain.

Our spirit frescoes were painted in the 1920s which makes them late, but the extensiveness and the subject matter make them unique. We hope to be able to load the MA student's presentation into the Virtual Museum but you can already find David White's (Chair of the church Fabric Subcommittee) presentation to the church community on the Courtauld Preservation Project. Take a look in the video collection in the museum: hgsvm.org.uk.

And my second discovery – although I always knew it was there – was Hampstead Golf Club and its wonderful history. It is many years older than HGS, opening in 1893, and tells a fascinating story of late Victorian enthusiasm for golf on the edge of the urban environment. It was one of the first London golf clubs. It also tells the story of developmental wrangles between the Club and Henrietta Barnett's plans for the Suburb. They are not in the Museum yet – but they will be soon.



Courtauld's interns Iqra Asim and Mariam Baig with Revd Em Kolltveit (Photo: Michael Eleftheriades)

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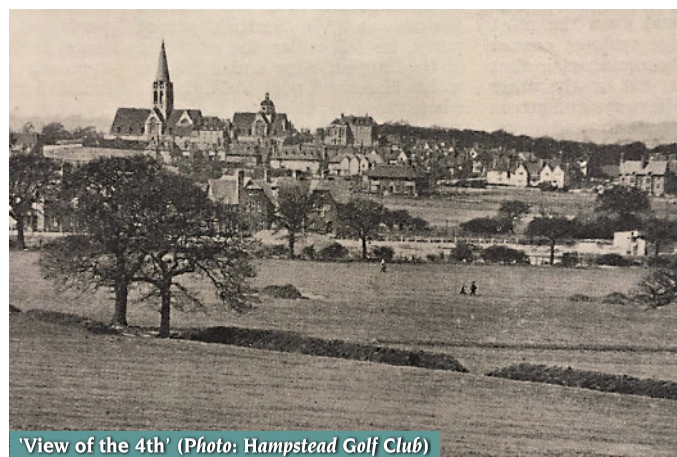
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Painting of Hampstead Golf Course, circa 1905/06. Artist unknown (Photo: Hampstead Golf Club)



'View of the 4th' (Photo: Hampstead Golf Club)



All photos: Suburb Archives

Postcards of the Suburb

ALAN WALKER

The Hampstead Garden Suburb Archive has recently received a donation of two albums of postcards from the family of Kay Graham, formerly of Rotherwick Road. The collection was assembled by her late husband, Conrad. The couple married in 1968 and moved to the Suburb in 1970. As the Archive holds relatively few postcard views of the Suburb, this donation is particularly valuable.

The postcards offer a fascinating glimpse of the Suburb in its early years. Many of the streets appear strikingly empty, although this may partly reflect the limitations of early photography. Long exposure times made it difficult to capture people or vehicles in motion, leaving the impression of a quieter and less populated place than it may actually have been. The image of Reynolds Close is therefore striking. Taken from a distance and from behind, it shows a large open motor car with ladies dressed in rather cumbersome but protective Edwardian motoring attire. The photograph is a reminder that the Suburb was planned just before widespread car ownership and that garages were not included in the original house plans. The Golders Green, Temple Fortune image shows a little more activity with some rather grand, probably chauffeur-driven, motors heading into town while a jaunty two-seater is parked on the pavement outside the Royal Oak. Maybe a Suburb News reader can help with the identification of all these vehicles. The tramlines are a reminder of how most people would have travelled at the time.

Some postcards also preserve details of everyday life that have largely disappeared. One shows washing hanging outside houses, something that was once carefully regulated by tenancy agreements. A typical covenant stated: "The tenant will not hang out or permit

to be hung out on the said premises any linen or other articles except on Mondays and Tuesdays up till 6.00 in the afternoon and on Thursdays and Fridays up till 1.00 in the afternoon."

The captions can be as fascinating as the images themselves. Hampstead Garden Suburb only appears on one of this small selection. This, it seems, was originally regarded more as a description than a finalised title, and it was assumed that, once established, the area might acquire a distinctive name of its own (Suburb News, Winter 2017, No. 129). The local journal, The Town Crier (copies are held by the Archive), carried a lively debate on possible alternatives. Some residents considered Hampstead Garden Suburb too cumbersome but there was dissatisfaction that the postal address remained (until 1920) Hendon, NW4. Among the alternatives proposed, Temple

Fortune appears to have been the most popular candidate for the whole development. Not everyone was convinced, however. Some felt the name sounded too grand, while the more generic Garden City was criticised for failing to reflect the essentially residential character of the area.

More postcards of the Suburb, including the extensive collection of Raymond Lowe, can be seen on the website of the Hampstead Garden Suburb Virtual Museum at <https://www.hgsvm.org.uk>.

You can also find out more about Suburb Archives by emailing suburbarchives@gmail.com.

The Archive is always delighted to receive donations of postcards, photographs and other material relating to the history of our community. Even a single item can help to preserve another small part of the Suburb's story. We are also looking for someone who might help catalogue the postcards.



What are Suburb Archives?

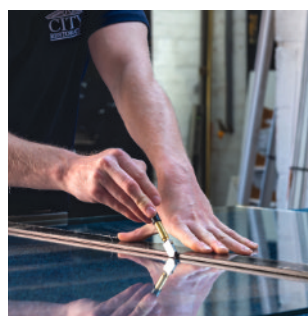
Suburb Archives is a charity that holds a wide selection of material relating to the history and development of Hampstead Garden Suburb, from its conception at the beginning of the 20th century to the present day. This includes books, letters, documents, plans, photographs, audio recordings and even objects. Most of the collection is kept at The London Archives in Clerkenwell but a substantial amount is retained on the Suburb at the offices of the Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust in Finchley Road.

How can I help?

We are looking for additional volunteers to help look after this extensive and valuable collection. Our current volunteer group tends to meet at the Trust offices on Tuesday mornings for an hour or two. Tasks include sorting and describing material, as well as helping to answer queries from researchers. No special experience is required and you will be guided through the tasks that need to be done. It is all very informal and friendly. If you think you may be able to spare some time to help, and learn about the history of the Suburb, please get in touch with our Archivist, Christine Rafferty, at suburbarchives@gmail.com.

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Now and Then?

Suburb Archives Trust's original photo of children on Willifield Green in 1914 (below) and ChatGPT's historical revisionism.



Bringing a taste of Mexico to an English autumn

KARLA ZAZUETA

One of the things I love about living in London is watching the seasons change. As summer fades and the leaves begin to turn, I find myself reaching for the kind of dishes I grew up with in Northern Mexico: slow-cooked, comforting meals that fill the house with wonderful aromas and bring people together around the table.

Mexican food is often associated with sunshine, beach holidays and tacos eaten outdoors. While we certainly enjoy those, what many people don't realise is that Mexico is a vast country with incredibly diverse regional cuisines, and many of our dishes are perfect for cooler weather. Across the country, families cook rich sauces, slow-cooked meats and warming stews designed to be shared.

I grew up in Northern Mexico, where cattle ranching has shaped the food culture for generations. Cooking meat slowly, often over fire, is part of our culinary tradition. One of my favourite dishes is lamb barbacoa, traditionally cooked for hours until the meat becomes so tender it falls apart with the touch of a fork. It is a dish that requires

patience, but the result is deeply comforting and full of flavour.

This lamb barbacoa is traditionally served over a corn tortilla, and while we are talking about corn tortillas and tacos, did you know they are not the same thing? A corn tortilla is the base, a soft, thin flatbread made from corn. It only becomes a taco once it is filled with a topping. In this case, you will be making lamb barbacoa tacos by filling your warm corn tortillas with tender, slow-cooked lamb, salsa and your favourite toppings. Thankfully, good-quality corn tortillas are now much easier to find in the UK, making it possible to recreate, in your own kitchen, the regional dishes I grew up eating in Northern Mexico.

Now that the weather is beginning to change, this lamb barbacoa is the perfect autumn dish. Put it in the oven, let the flavours slowly develop, then gather friends or family around the table and let everyone build their own tacos.

For me, that is what Mexican cooking is all about: generous food, shared with the people you love.

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Photo: Karla Zazueta

Easy Lamb Barbacoa

Serves 4-6

Ingredients

1.2kg lamb shoulder, cut into large chunks; 4 dried guajillo chillies, deseeded and softened; 2 dried ancho chillies, deseeded and softened; 2 garlic cloves; 1 lager beer; 2 tbsp apple cider vinegar; 1 tsp ground cumin; ½ tsp ground black pepper, 1 tbsp sea salt; 2 bay leaves.

To serve

Warm corn tortillas; salsa; chopped onion and fresh coriander; lime wedges.

Method

Preheat the oven to 160°C (140°C fan).

Place the chillies into hot water to soften. Once softened blend with garlic, vinegar, cumin, black pepper and sea salt with a splash of water until smooth. Pass this sauce through a sieve.

Place the lamb in a casserole dish and coat well with the marinade and pour the lager over it. Add the bay leaves, cover tightly and cook for 3 to 4 hours, until the lamb is tender and pulls apart easily.

Shred the lamb into the cooking juices and serve with warm corn tortillas, salsa, chopped onion, fresh coriander and lime wedges.



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