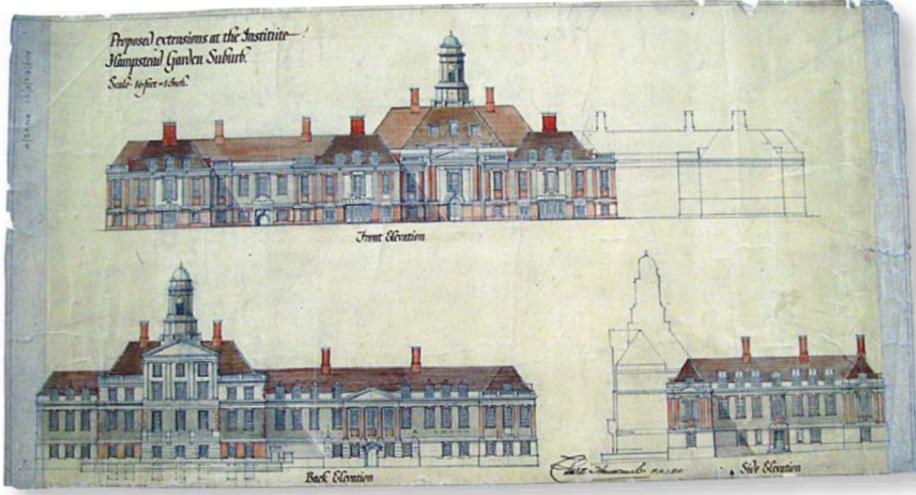


The appearance of the new Henrietta Barnett School extensions has been a subject of heated debate with, generally speaking, what might be called lay residents mostly loathing the new buildings and those who are architecturally educated,

with one or two notable exceptions, much more likely to be in favour. We thought the opinion of a past HB girl who has had the benefit of architectural training could throw a new light on the argument.

Thoughts on the Henrietta Barnett School extensions



I am an ex-pupil of Henrietta Barnett School and I have recently re-visited the school several times. I can whole-heartedly say that I was delighted to see that the new wings have finally been built.

I went to Henrietta Barnett School between 1983-1990 and I loved my time there. I was drawn to accept my place, mostly due to the stunning architecture and surroundings. I loved the walk up to school; to sit in its then beautiful wooden panelled library and to drink in the view from the school and of the school.

However, there never seemed to be quite enough room and some subjects really suffered for it. I had music lessons in the

pitifully small and completely un-inspiring music hut. From my fifth year onwards, I had to spend a lot of time in the ghastly portacabins. I remember them being claustrophobic and oppressive and I couldn't wait to get out of them as soon as possible.

So, on a practical level alone, these wings provide the current pupils with a much needed, fabulous space that contains all the equipment they could want.

On a design level, this is a more subjective and complex area. I'm sure it is just not possible to recreate that style of architecture within today's tight budgets and the current building regulations and planning requirements.

Therefore, taking on board the need to be a bit more contemporary, I personally like the design and I feel that the wings are as discreet as possible for what they needed to provide. I like the odd flecks of grey brick within the red walls, reflecting the school walls, and the use of stylish, wooden contemporary windows. I love the Japanese style wooden balustrades and how it is incredibly peaceful when looking out from those upper open passageways.

After being at HBS I went on to study architecture and one of my favourite architects was the Venetian based Carlo Scarpa. He created a lot of contemporary

extensions and features for the traditional, very old venetian buildings and they worked very well together visually.

I understand and sympathise with the school's neighbours, because any additional buildings will reduce the light and space received between the school and its surroundings.

However, I have been making a commemorative model of the main building of Henrietta Barnett, so I have researched in detail the remainder of the original plans for the school.

I'm not sure how widely known it is, but the original proposals for the school did, in fact, contain wings that were to be far taller, wider and more imposing than these recent arrivals. True, they would have been in the same style, but I'm sure they would have felt more oppressive to the surrounding area.

These new additions are already working well with the existing trees and greenery that surround them and I'm sure that will only get better with time.

I think that this is an incredible achievement that has been much needed and I think Oliver Blond and his pupils should feel very proud and lucky. I wish them many years of enjoyment in using their fantastic new extensions.

SHANA NIEBERG-SUSCHITZKY

Suburb author's royalties for homeless

"Sleeping with the Blackbirds has been written for children in the 14 and upwards age group. And my royalty is going directly to Centrepoint – the national charity for homeless youngsters," says Alex Pearl who lives on the Suburb in Ludlow Way.

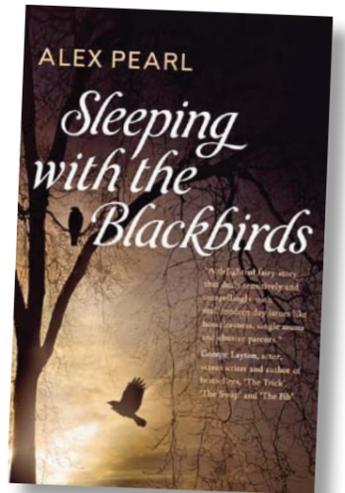
This is an enchanting story of self discovery and the need for tolerance between different species. Through the divine intervention of blackbirds, our 11 year-old hero learns to cope with warring parents, bullying school mates and indifferent school masters. This special relationship springs him into a new world of media hype and the eventual discovery of his long-lost mother. Alex Pearl has written a tale that is heartening and funny with the appeal of a Twain-like children's adventure.

The book can be ordered from any high street bookseller or online retailer including Amazon (retail price £6.99) after September 10.

However, if you can't wait until then advance copies can be bought directly from the publisher, Indepnpress Publishing Ltd by calling 01273 261434 or emailing danny@penpress.co.uk.

Penpress Publishing ISBN No. 978-1-78003-013-5.

LEN BAKER



Centrepoint

Centrepoint was started by the vicar of St Anne's, Soho in 1969 when he decided to open the basement of his church as a temporary night shelter for the increasing number of homeless young people sleeping rough on the streets of London.

Forty years on, Ken Leech's small gesture of kindness has blossomed into a national charity offering thirty three services right across London and the North East of England.

In fact today Centrepoint offers more than just a bed for 825 young homeless people every night of the year. It also provides the personal, social and educational support these kids so desperately need to turn their lives around.

For these hapless youngsters, Centrepoint is a place they can call home, and that can make a big difference to their lives. And for the vast majority it's the only home they've ever known.

CPZs (continued from page 2)

is now a parking problem for the many.

Only a very small percentage of Suburb and East Finchley residents played any part in the establishment of the early CPZs but they have since caused many more people to have had parking zones effectively imposed upon them because of displaced traffic. This latter group now looks likely to be particularly hard done by if prices rise as the Council intends but the rough nature of their position does not mask the fact that there is still a core of early CPZ residents who backed the principle of excluding other road users when the cost of CPZ membership was very low. It would be ironic if this group of residents were to obtain support from the wider community when it comes to a battle to keep their personal parking costs down because it was that same wider community whose cars many of them wished (and still wish) to exclude from large areas around our vital local facilities such as railway stations and shopping centres.

Therefore rather than support a campaign to maintain low parking costs for those living inside CPZs surely it would be more sensible for us to consider the interests of those residents who live outside the current CPZ displacement areas. If the Council has decided to maximise its parking revenue by raising costs for members of existing schemes rather than through expansion of the CPZ programme, residents still living outside the zones might have a better chance of remaining unaffected by displaced parking and by a CPZ parking tax for which there is no cap.

Even if the High Court case against Barnet is successful it seems unlikely that the Council will simply scrap its proposals to raise permit costs. The legal action is based not upon the price rises per se but upon Barnet's justification for the increases. Were the Council to lose it is quite possible it would re-launch the proposals in a year or two's time with a different justification. An expensive legal battle might therefore result in only a Pyrrhic victory with little prospect that the next round of price rises will be the last.

Those residents who thought CPZs were a good idea when they were cheap but who are angry now, cannot say they were not warned. Having used CPZs against those living outside the zones the Council is now using them against those living inside. This should serve as a warning to us all about making a parking compact with a local authority. In the meantime if existing CPZ residents are not happy about paying much higher prices for parking their best bet may be to form themselves into groups and campaign to have their roads removed from the schemes. They could thereby help to bring about a reversal of a process that has created far more parking problems than it has solved over the past ten years. Councillors told us in 2005 that "resident wishes would be paramount" when it came to people deciding about whether or not their roads should be included in the CPZ schemes. Perhaps the affected residents should put that promise to the test before risking many thousands of pounds in legal fees.

GARY SHAW



Zehrah Hassan, Zoe Lai, Natasha Mangalage and Charmian Chong, a string quartet played before the speeches at the opening ceremony on May 16



Former Chairman of Governors Francesca Barnes unveiled a plaque opening the new Design and Technology wing at Henrietta Barnett School. Cllr Andrew Harper was among the guests at the opening ceremony who heard Oliver Blond, head teacher welcome guests to the new buildings

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