

# Dying Matters: Let's talk about it!

Death, dying and bereavement are subjects that we tend not to talk about; they are one of the last taboos of our society. Many of us feel uncomfortable broaching these subjects with our loved ones, feel we should avoid offending the recently bereaved by talking about their loss and feel too young to plan for our own end of life. This lack of openness is hampering the care given to those approaching the end of their life, isolating those faced with death and dying as well as isolating the bereaved.

Hampstead Garden Suburb Free Church took part in the National Dying Matters Awareness week in May and organised a series of events to stimulate debate and try to start transforming attitudes towards dying, death and bereavement. The awareness week was launched in a very poignant way in an informal themed service around Dying Matters on the 13th May. "Part of what we need to do in getting ready for our own death is to put plans in place: wills, power of attorney, advance care plans (health document expressing your wishes for your future care), funeral plans," says Mireille Hayden whose role is to support the local community in these matters. "To launch the awareness week I ran my own funeral! I



Even children need to learn about people dying

had already put plans in place so it was just a case of a final rehearsal for my final moment! I was really nervous but found that the audience were really touched by this event and it stimulated a great deal of conversations, which was exactly what I was after."

Further events included a study group on the Theology of Death and Dying led by Rev Ian Tutton on the 14 May with a chance to discuss any End of Life Care issue with Dr Judith Tobin, Macmillan Palliative Care GP for Barnet. "Dying Matters week was the opportunity to start lifting the taboo," says Rev

Ian Tutton, "we wanted to give the local community the chance to come together and discuss these difficult issues in a meaningful way."

One to one discussions about any end of life care issue were also offered throughout the week and a discussion group was led on "Loss and Bereavement: poetry and Myth."

"A really worthwhile awareness week, with a very positive impact and a great level of engagement from all the local community! We'll definitely continue running these events in the future," concludes Rev Ian Tutton.

# Theodora Bodger 1922 - 2012

The Suburb has lost a great character with the death in August of Theodora Bodger.

Born in Ghana, her father was a Methodist minister, the smallest of eight children her diminutive stature belied her energy and creativity throughout her life. Arriving in the UK during World War 2 she trained as a nurse. She had lived on the Suburb first in Asmunds Hill and then in Oakwood Road since 1963. She was the school nurse at the Henrietta Barnett Junior School where Georgina Malcolm remembers her as "a lovely kind

person." Theodora was even kind to complete strangers who, being George Orwell fans, often knocked at her door asking to visit the house where he had lived in the thirties. Most of her career was spent at the Royal Free. It was after her retirement as a nursing sister that Theodora became better known on the Suburb for caring for the elderly in their homes, dressmaking for a favoured few, creating amazing stained glass in classes at the Institute, a talented cook, she catered for local occasions including a packed memorial



dinner for Tony Mandelson, many functions at St Jude's and not least for her skill as a gardener making her Oakwood Road garden a favourite with garden visitors.

RICHARD WAKEFIELD

## Local help in later life planning

The Suburb's Heathfield practice has invited a specially trained volunteer to raise awareness of the need to plan for end of life care, provide useful information on the topic and be available for more in-depth discussions and planning.

Ann Kessler, in addition to her training through Gentle Dusk, has been a ChildLine counsellor for more than 17 years, she is a good listener and is keen to support practice patients: "By talking about it we can begin to explore what matters to you, and how to put plans in place."

For further information please visit the Heathfield practice at [www.mysurgerywebsite.co.uk/index.aspx?p=E83008](http://www.mysurgerywebsite.co.uk/index.aspx?p=E83008) and Gentle Dusk at [www.gentledusk.org.uk](http://www.gentledusk.org.uk).

## Hamlet in the wet

July was a wicked month for rain and the Garden Suburb Theatre had a wet time in Little Wood. Brave actors and braver audience.

The Theatre produced an interesting and largely successful production of Hamlet, staged amid a dramatic set, created by Jo Eggleton-Rence and David Rence, made up of a castle represented by impressive sails. Shakespeare's text was severely cut to focus on the relationships; so the political element disappeared.

On reading the programme it was plain that many of the new actors had a lot of experience. Indeed, Hamlet was played by Steve Maddocks, trained at the Webber Douglas acting school, works alongside his wife running their own drama school. It certainly showed. He spoke Shakespeare's lines beautifully. It was a clear and thoughtful interpretation.

Also fine were Ian Grant (Polonius) and Shane Sweeney, a fiery Laertes. Indeed, the Polonius, Laertes, Ophelia (Emma Jane Sullivan) family relationships were well conveyed. The Suburb Theatre's long-time stalwart, John Musker, an actor who is always interesting, brought out the flaws and weaknesses of the domineering Claudius. The one mystery in Nick Hasting's excellent production was the decision to have not one ghost, as in the original script, but four! Frank Turnbull, a tall actor with a fine sonorous voice, made a very impressive ghost but the other three seemed only to get in the way.

The costumes were of the usual high standard. Whoever had the job of seeing they were dry and fresh for each performance following the nightly downpours deserves a medal.

LÉONIE STEPHEN

## Open meeting - RA's changes in light of Henrietta Barnett School buildings

On 11 October the Residents Association held its open meeting to discuss its published proposals for process change in the light of Dr Harris's Independent Enquiry into the RA role in the Henrietta Barnett school extensions. While the purpose was to discuss the 'way forward' proposals, inevitably there were audience feelings expressed regarding the roles of both the RA and the Trust, including the need for more modern displays of plans for key developments.

A positive development was the Trust's email list for those who wish to be notified of its 'wider' consultations on significant proposed developments.

The Trust had authorised the RA to suggest to the audience that they were welcome to register their personal email addresses "for the purpose of the wider consultation list" at [mail@hgstrust.org](mailto:mail@hgstrust.org) (including their home address in the email) and would, in due course, be notified of the proposed Annemount application. That registration facility is available

to any Suburb resident, whether or not a member of the Trust. Carol Boulter noted that the relationship of RA to Trust was mentioned in the Harris Report, and came up several times in the meeting. She recognised that it was important for the RA to work with the Trust, but also to monitor it, and Richard Wiseman in the chair noted that some residents still had difficulty distinguishing the two bodies. Ivor Hall was keen that the RA's two representatives on the Trust's Property and Plans committee should be aware that they represented others.

Dr Harris made two contributions, firstly to note the importance for the RA Council of clarifying the point at which a standing committee has to refer something to it and secondly the importance of not tearing itself apart in responding to the report, the ability within a voluntary organisation to disagree without falling apart - she was optimistic from the tenor of the meeting. She also identified key points in her report.

The RA's proposals comprised a wholehearted response to each provision in the "Ways forward" part of the Harris report. The meeting referred to the published grid of matters for change and their timing, and was supportive of the detail. There was a reference to notes submitted by three people who could not attend, two of whom called for an RA apology for not requiring wider publicity of the school proposals in 2008. Richard Wiseman, in the chair, pointed out that the RA Council had accepted Dr Harris's report without demur, which was a form of acknowledgment. The meeting seemed happy to move on from that point.

Annemount, the long established Holne Chase school, has applied to Barnet (but not yet to the Trust) for permission to expand its premises, leading to correspondence on the local chatline. Some of it in favour (great school), others

concerned re traffic and possibility of over-development (doubling of internal floor space, partly in a basement pencilled in for music rooms, partly in a two storey extension and expanded single storey extension).

Fellowship House reopened in September with an even greater range of activities. In addition to the current Zumba Gold class on Friday afternoons, there is now a second class at lunch time on Mondays. A Pilates class has also just started at 9am on Wednesday mornings.

For Fellowship members there is a new fortnightly class on Basic Computing for the Older & Wiser. We try to provide one to one help for basic computing

## Focus on Fellowship

problems such as email and surfing the net. Details of all the activities are included in a new Activities leaflet which can be picked up in the entrance to Fellowship House, the Gallery, the Suburb Library or at reception in the Temple Fortune Health Clinic.

During the Jubilee, Fellowship provided a fantastic barbecue and drinks party for over 150 people and locals Michael and Ros Berg put on a marvellous Punch and Judy show. One guest

said it was the first Punch and Judy show she had seen 50 years!

Fellowship wishes to thank the local branch of Waitrose in Temple Fortune who generously supported the party. Our thanks go Charles Brewer, Vicky Warner and Tharmini Umashanger and all the friendly staff who helped the Fellowship team.

Membership of Fellowship Club is available to all who have reached the young age of 60 and for whom there are a whole range of free activities. In addition there are now classes on painting, art, literature, zumba and pilates for which you do not have to be a member, they are open to everyone as, of course, is the Garden Suburb Gallery, housed in Fellowship House, where there is always something interesting to visit.

PETER FALK

## Annemount to build

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