

**Suburb  
Style editor  
Deborah  
Warland,  
talks to  
residents  
about some  
of their  
favourite  
things**



**Deborah  
Warland**

## SUBURB

### Teenager

featuring Danny Kessler

*Danny Kessler was born on the Suburb and educated at Akiva Primary School and then Haberdashers' Aske's. He lives in Maurice Walk. He has just been offered a place at Balliol College, Oxford to read Physics and Philosophy and now has to decide whether to accept their offer or that of Durham University. Danny was eighteen in October so 'bad to endure a particularly sober Centenary party back in the Summer!'*

I am now a proud member of the Hampstead Garden Suburb Horticultural Society (HGSHS). It was at the Centenary celebrations, a few months ago, that I came across Marjorie Harris' stall on Central Square. I was in a good mood – Waitrose had just given me some free organic fruit, and Starbucks still had free samples of coffee available – so I was feeling pretty receptive towards the HGSHS, and entirely up for planting geraniums and even going on scavenges around the Heath looking for mushrooms. I was browsing through their propaganda, when a slightly tipsy gentleman came up to me and asked me if I wanted to join. "How much is it?" I enquired, having just spent a fortune on ice-cream. "Only five pounds for the year," he said cheerily, handing me a leaflet.

I'm the kind of chap who enjoys reading the small print on the bottom of adverts. I spend hours in the bank squinting at the tiny letters before deciding whether or not I want to obtain one of their cheap pens. Either way, it was a lovely afternoon so I sat down on the quad and made sure whatever on earth I was joining was a good cause. It turns out that it's free to join, if you're under 18. I was delighted about this because it's not often one's ID saying you're 17 comes in handy. The man looked slightly surprised when I claimed my free membership, because apparently the last member who took advantage of this incredible offer was the young daughter of the chairman and she quit aged 4 when she decided that it just wasn't cool. I pressed on, undaunted, and a few weeks later I received my purple membership card, which I've now laminated, and a booklet of events and gardening ideas.

How many seventeen year olds are members of their local Horticultural Society? It can't be many. I'm reasonably sure the man who suggested I should join in the first place was either joking or so incapacitated that he mistook me for a talking silver maple tree. But that's neither here nor there, the question I have been asked is: why are HGS children not involved in their local community? We're a lovely bunch, we really are. It's probably a product of a middle-class upbringing and a healthy respect towards Dame Henrietta Barnett, but children from the Suburb are invariably charming, polite on public transport, prone to overexcitement whenever we see early 20th century domestic planning – we're great!

So why don't you see flocks of young, happy HGS people running about the place, composing sonnets in perfect iambic pentameter, or re-enacting scenes from Euripides over in Big Wood? First thing to say is that it's not from a lack of



my trying. I once burst into song near the playground of Little Wood, and three children started crying. Philistines. Anyway, the real reason I believe that there's no community spirit amongst the youth is because there's no real focal point. We might all meet up at our local church or synagogue, but beyond that there's pretty much no contact. Some headway was taken by the good people of Café Toulous and Parkview in the Market Place – if I wanted to meet up with a local friend, there's a place down the road that'll serve us a croissant and, of course, Temple Fortune is veritably bursting with coffee shops – but this isn't enough.

What I'm suggesting is going to sound radical to the Victorians who decided to colour-code each hedge and front door on the Suburb, but what we young people need is a good gastropub. Not some sleazy joint nor some café which limits its choice of drink to latte or espresso but an actual, classy gastropub. It could perhaps replace some of those long-since closed British Bathroom Centres in Marketplace that we seem to be surrounded with. It needs to sell classy meals on the side, and after 9 o'clock turn into a respectable pub like the Bald Faced Stag up in East Finchley.

It'd be perfect! Both the H2 and the 102 would go straight there. It would be a place where people would just walk down the road and meet with their friends; whether they're doing their A levels or returning for the university

holidays. What's more, people would get to meet each other, local groups (like the dear HGSHS) would be able to hold their monthly meetings there, the Suburb Trust would become more than a faceless authoritarian bureaucracy dedicated to tearing down your neighbour's shed. It'd be a living group of people who could hold meetings in public – we could all reunite to watch England lose the Ashes on Sunday afternoons, or celebrate Dame Henrietta's birthday on May the 4th.

A few ideas have to change – I'm told we can't have a pub on the Suburb due to some stubborn teetotalers in the 1910s who decided to spoil everyone else's fun too – but the point remains: Hampstead Garden Suburb is surely small enough for everyone to share one local meeting place, but large enough to sustain a local pub. It desperately needs this focal point, where people will be able to relax outside of their houses and bond as a community. Look at Golders Green, and how people gather together in the evening at their pubs and cafés, or at East Finchley. We're just a disorganised group in the middle that only seems to show its strength once every hundred years. Time and time again, we've seen that a shopping area and some evening restaurants will bring people together and revive an area that is so unused to seeing 17 year olds about that they let them into their Horticultural Society for free.

If you build it, people will follow. I'm so keen on the idea; I'll even design the garden. What do Suburb News readers think about my idea?



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## SUBURB

### Film Star

featuring Beans Balawi

In Style passim we have been following the career of budding Suburb star, Beans Balawi. Now aged ten, Beans is attending the Westminster Abbey Choir School. He can currently be seen in the latest BBC costume series, Lark Rise to Candleford which also stars Dawn French, Brendan Coyle, Julia Sawalha and Liz Smith

