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Europe's 'school run capital' saved from A.N.Other school

Belsize Park parents lost the hard-fought battle for a Free School in premises linking Maresfield Gardens and Fitzjohn's Avenue last month when the Department for Education failed to endorse their application and Camden Council opted to sell the houses, much to the relief of residents who do not want another school of any type in these roads. Linda and Stephen Williams report



LAST FEBRUARY NNA members read in the *Ham&High* that a group of parents in Belsize Park were seeking to get a 'Free' primary school approved and funded by the Department for Education (DfE) in former hostels in Maresfield Gardens and Fitzjohn's Avenue owned by Camden Council.

There had been no consultation with local residents about another school being sited in what has been termed the 'school run capital of Europe' and as a result a letter of concern on behalf of the NNA was sent to the council and local MP Glenda Jackson. The council had already earmarked the empty buildings for sale and there had been no formal application by the Free School campaign. At that point we could do nothing further.

In June the *Ham&High* reported that the application for the school had been submitted to the DfE and would be heard in September. The NNA immediately canvassed its members for their views. Over 95 per cent of the response was strongly opposed to another school here.

Led by NNA Schools and Planning Committee member, Stephen Williams, a campaign was launched in opposition to the new school, with members urged to voice their views to the council, the Secretary of State for Education and his

Department, and the local papers. Again there was a big response.

It was clear that our streets are already overrun with schools (at least 11 in very close proximity), with consequent traffic, safety and noise issues; but members were also concerned to preserve the neighbourhood's residential nature, so many of its houses being increasingly taken over for institutional use.

Not a 'Free' issue

Above all, the objections were to the establishment of yet another school in this location; whether it was to be 'Free', state or private was not at issue.

As the Belsize Park parents gathered pace in their campaign to stop the sale of

the council buildings before the DfE made their decision on the school, so did we. We worked closely with the Fitzjohn's Avenue Residents' Association, led by Farokh Khoroooshi, and with local councillors, and were allowed to send deputations to the critical council meetings where decisions were being made; at these we were able to explain the strong reasons for the overwhelming opposition from residents of the roads in question.

The Belsize Park campaigners did seek to consult the NNA but not before they had already made their submission to the DfE. Given that they had committed themselves to a school in our neighbour-

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SALE PREVIEW, FASHION SHOW AND GIFTS Wednesday 7th December 2011, 7-9.30pm

A PRIVATE pre-Christmas evening arranged specially for NNA members and friends will be held on December 7 at 59 Hampstead High Street to celebrate the 20th anniversary in Hampstead of the fashion boutique Jane and Dada. As well as free food, drinks and a goodie bag, guests will be treated to an informal fashion show, clothes at sale prices before the sale starts and a 10 per cent discount on non-sale items. The shop sells coats, suits, dresses, skirts, trousers and tops, but there will also be a good stock of Christmas present-worthy scarves, shawls from Kashmir, gloves and hats. For catering purposes please email susannelawrence@gmail.com indicating the likely number of guests.

For more about the shop and what's in store, see the J&D story, page 2 ►

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► **School battle** *continued from page 1*

hood without ascertaining residents' views, there was little point in us meeting them until the council and the DfE had made their decisions.

Having received unexpectedly high bids for the premises, and needing money to put back into other housing and social projects at risk due to budget cuts, Camden Council finally decided on September 7 to sell the buildings, a decision upheld three weeks later by its Scrutiny Sub-Committee.

The NNA asked this sub-committee to recommend to the full council that they seek, as a matter of urgency, a suitable alternative location for a primary school in Belsize Park and subsequently wrote to our local councillors to that effect. Frognal and Fitzjohn's Ward Councillor Andrew Mennear supported our proposal at the meeting and there have been signs that councillors are now actively talking to each other and seeking premises for parents who want to send their young children to a local school in Belsize Park.

This was an occasion where the NNA successfully fought a controversial local issue on behalf of its members and worked closely with the Fitzjohn's Residents' Association to oppose these buildings being used for school purposes. We have also forged good links with our local councillors, which will stand us in good stead over other issues that might arise in future.

**The J&D story***by Susanne Lawrence*

AN ART HISTORIAN who came to London from Genoa for a month's holiday, co-founder Dada loved it so much here that she quickly abandoned thoughts of teaching in Italy and got a job at Liberty's. It was not long before she and fashion buyer friend Jane acquired a shop of their own – in Pimlico. They then

moved to trendy St Christopher's Place and, when the lease there was up, the pair opened a Jane and Dada in St Albans, which Jane runs, and 20 years ago last spring the shop in Hampstead where Dada rules the roost.

Devotees will know that Dada's style is quite distinctive, both in terms of her stock and her personality. Some find her too assertive, but she is a real godsend for her many loyal customers and undeniably an iconic Hampstead 'character'.

She carries timeless classical pieces, predominantly from the Continent, as well as quirkier and vibrantly colourful tops and dresses that make a refreshing change from standard frock shop fare. One of her regular suppliers, Aventures des Toiles, produces collections inspired by artists and actual paintings.

Not only do the clothes suit all ages, but a unique selling point is the size range - from the skinniest mini to plus-sizes without the frump factor. Prices are pitched well below designer levels. Come and enjoy a rummage on December 7!

Netherhall Gardens street party

THE WEATHER on the morning of September 4 was awful – heavy rain and cold – so my heart went out to Netherhall Street party organisers David Caden and Giorgio Broetz. I know from my own many years experience of organising NNA open air events that weather can cause the most stress.

I spent the morning gazing through the window and feeling glum. But other things seemed to be going very well: the road had been closed, parked cars moved and a small shelter erected for the musicians. My spirits lifted at the sight of children zooming up and down on bikes and scooters, absolutely loving the freedom of the traffic-free road. Then, just in time, the rain stopped, and we were walking down to find our table.

Chatter and laughter was accompanied by live jazz and singing. Malcolm on guitar and Kathryn on flute, part of a band called 'Hats off Gentlemen', were joined by Jojo Bacall on drums; kids' parties specialist Neal, who organised all the music and equipment, sang songs especially for the children; and another partygoer did some impromptu singing.

Food brought by the partygoers was abundant and shared around, there were two barbeques, giving out delicious aromas, neighbours introduced themselves to each other over pots of tea and other beverages and I think it quite likely that some new friendships were formed. To complete the picture, by 4.30pm, the sun came out and it turned into a lovely evening. We in the NNA know just what effort goes on behind the scenes to

organise such an event, so our hearty congratulations go to David and Giorgio on a wonderfully successful afternoon.
*Report by
Patricia Whitehouse*



Come back Keats!

Novelist and Ham&High restaurant critic Joseph Connolly reflects on a long lost Downshire Hill foodies' favourite and some current Hampstead haunts

KEATS. Nothing to do with the season of mists and mellow fruitfulness, but it is the legendary restaurant in Downshire Hill to which I allude. It must have closed about a thousand years ago, and yet it seems quite mysteriously to be remembered with fondness, this sometimes bordering upon a frothing mania – and not just by the decrepit, but also foodies who I feel sure could hardly have been born at the time when Keats reigned supreme as the closest Hampstead has ever come to having a destination restaurant.

And, excellent though it was, I wonder now that we all are so much better educated and infinitely more demanding when it comes to eating out, whether Keats would be quite so feted.

The premises later evolved into a very mediocre gaff called Byron – and just as one was braced against a future incarnation being dubbed McGonagall or Pam Ayres or something of that sort, the poetic line ended abruptly, and this sometime epicurean shrine descended into a succession of very forgettable places, the most recent in my memory being The Bombay Bicycle Club.

Yet still to this day I get asked about Keats. But also, “Why isn’t there a top class restaurant in Hampstead?” And, “Do you get recognised when you go to all these places for the *Ham&High*?”

Actually, I don’t much, for all that my picture is in the paper every week. Restaurateurs seem to be too lazy to bother reading reviews – unless they are tipped off that they are the subject of that week’s feature. But I never announce that I am coming for the purposes of a review, I never canvass for nor accept free meals, and therefore never expect nor receive special treatment.

Plenty of premises

As to why Hampstead still has no must-go-to restaurant ... well that really is rather a question. Certainly it is not for the shortage of suitable premises: I have always thought that the old Jack Straw’s Castle would be a stupendous spot for a top class restaurant – the highest point in London, and they’ve even got a car park! I always believed too that the Freemason’s Arms, just opposite the

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▲ Good places to eat: Villa Bianca with excellent food, professionally served with a smile, and The Wells with its upstairs dining room and best-run kitchen

Heath at the bottom of Downshire Hill, would scrub up into a really fine arts club – one more facility in which Hampstead, very oddly, has always been lacking. As it is, the Freemason’s is just a big pub with a pretty miserable eatery attached, and a pleasant garden jammed with desperate smokers.

This summer I reviewed a very silly place called Ping Pong – stodgy dim sum and bum-numbing seats – and (I am sure coincidentally) two weeks after the appearance of my rather dismissive review I heard that Ping Pong was destined for the scrapyard ... and that this very impressive, two storey High Street corner premises had been acquired by Richard Caring.

Now this, I thought, can only be the best news for Hampstead. I am a great aficionado of Caring and all his works: The Ivy, J. Sheekey and the Dean Street Townhouse are three I very much favour. He also owns ... oh, pretty much everywhere in London you’ve heard of, actually, with the exception of The Wolseley (which is still my favourite London restaurant, along with maybe Wiltons). So, then – Scott’s, Daphne’s, Le Caprice, Annabel’s, Harry’s Bar ... all Caring’s. Could this then be the moment when finally, after all these decades of pining for Keats, Hampstead once more is to be host to a shining jewel ...?

Well no, as it turned out. This could have been a one-off star, but Caring chose to make it a branch of his ever-expanding Côte chain. Now Côte is a good thing – I praised the Highgate branch when it opened – and a cool, classy, reliable and very reasonably priced brasserie can only be a boost to



Photos: Nigel Shindler

the village. But a destination restaurant it ain’t. Oh well.

All that said, there are good places to eat. I think that The Wells has the best run kitchen, with its upstairs dining room at weekends Hampstead’s best bet. Also still up there is Villa Bianca in Perrin’s Court – appallingly noisy when it’s full and rather too expensive, but generally excellent food served professionally, and with a smile.

Bargain pub lunch

The Holly Bush used to be dreadful, but now – new owner, new chef, new staff – is very good indeed, particularly for warming winter food; as is the modish Horseshoe in Heath Street. The great bargain pub lunch remains The Flask in Flask Walk, and the Garden Gate in South End Green is also very good value. And near to that is Fratelli La Bufala – great and hearty food in an authentic atmosphere.

To be avoided, though, is The Old White Bear, which used to be a fine and comfortable pub, but is now jarring and ugly with very poor and shoddily served food at stupid prices. Also the 50 year-old Le Cellier du Midi in Church Row, a rather shabby and misguided self-satisfied time-warp of a place where nothing has changed for decades, though not at all in a good way: provincial hotel food of the 1970s, ambitiously priced.

But after all the lunches I’ve had – from the sublime to the uneatable – still I remain an indefatigable enthusiast. The concept and practice of lunch is, to me, a lasting thing of beauty. And as we all know ... a thing of beauty is a joy forever ... Keats.

NNA

Keeping Freud's flame burning

Alex Bento has been caretaker of 20 Maresfield Gardens since Anna Freud lived there. As retirement approaches, he tells Ruth and Richard Stone what the house has meant to him

MANY residents of Maresfield Gardens owe their sense of security to Alex Bento. He has been protecting the Freud Museum - the house and its contents - for 25 years. His is the friendly watchful eye that misses nothing that goes on up and down the road. He has been a one-man Neighbourhood Watch scheme, since long before such schemes became official.

So, what brought Alex to Hampstead from his native Portugal back in 1971? At the time Portugal was struggling to hold down its colonies in Africa, he explains, and he wanted to avoid conscription to the army.

He and his wife Maria found work in the Otto Schiff House in Nutley Terrace, where he stayed contentedly as caretaker for 12 years.

Meanwhile, soon after their arrival, they needed a nursery for their young daughter Gina. This being Hampstead, they found their way to the Anna Freud Nursery, round the corner in Maresfield Gardens. Here "for £1 a week and a piece of fruit every day" normal toddlers were taken in to act as a balance for the disturbed and unhappy children with whom Anna and her colleagues worked. Gina's much younger brother Daniel followed her to the nursery in due course.

The next stage of Alex's involvement with the Freud family happened gradually. The nursery was run by Manna Friedmann (now aged 97 and living in the United States). But Manna's other role was looking after an increasingly frail Anna Freud and her maid Paula in 20 Maresfield Gardens. She would ask Alex if he could help out with a few jobs in the house, such as changing light bulbs and performing small repairs.

Before long he became indispensable. For a while he took care of the house in the evenings while Anna Freud was still there. She died in October 1982, and by the end of that year he had left Otto Schiff and moved into the Freud house as resident caretaker.

We asked Alex for his memories of Anna's maid Paula, who had fled Vienna with the family in 1938. He said that she always baked cakes for the nursery children. After Anna's death she



▲ Alex last summer at the Museum's 25th anniversary party with (left) Freud's great-granddaughter Jane McAdam Freud, daughter of Lucian and an artist in her own right, and (right) Alex' daughter Gina da Silva

returned to Vienna and Alex remembers helping her to pack for the journey.

Alex told us that it had always been Miss Freud's dream for the house to become a museum to honour her father's memory. After her death the New Land Foundation in America, which had supported Anna's work, took over the house and work began on preparing it and the vast amounts of its precious artefacts, for the transformation from a home to a museum.

Bento family empire

Alex's contract required that the house be guarded 24 hours a day. To begin with the local priest introduced Alex to Leslie Shepherd who shared these responsibilities with him for many years.

By now, however, as many neighbours know, Alex is the head of a small Bento family empire.

This consists of Gina, who has worked at the Anna Freud Clinic for 20 years, her husband Francisco, who is responsible for 20 Maresfield Gardens, and Daniel's wife Silvia who works with Gina at the Centre. As for Daniel himself, well, back in 1993 when he was only seven, his schooling became a matter of some concern and Maria took him back to Portugal to continue his education there. However, he recently completed college and has now returned to join the family outfit maintaining the museum.

It took four years of painstaking work before the museum could eventually

open, but it has just celebrated its first 25 years, amazingly almost to the exact day of the 25th anniversary of the Freud Museum in Vienna.

It was largely left to Alex to draw up his own job description. He says that he has looked after number 20 "like my own house!" He and Francisco have decorated the exterior three times in 25 years. They also take care of the beautiful gardens which gave Sigmund Freud such pleasure in his last year, and continue to delight neighbours and visitors today.

Behind the scenes

Perhaps the greatest recognition of Alex's unique contribution came in March 2011 during the BBC TV programme 'Behind the scenes at the Museum'. Lisa Appignanesi, chair of the trustees, was talking about two lost items, Freud's greatcoat and a painting by Lucien Freud. "They're not lost at all", Alex said on camera, and proceeded up to the attic.

At the end of her life Anna had been taken out in her wheelchair wrapped up in her father's coat. Since then, Alex has had it cleaned once a year and carefully stored. It is now on display - yet another object that brings the Freud story to life.

We asked Alex how he views the house at the present time. He is conscious of its conflicting roles - both a place of learning and scholarship with a substantial and valuable archive, and also a popular museum, open to all-comers, with many commercial activities including talks, shows, publications and a shop selling serious but also fun products like Freudian slippers. He acknowledges it is sometimes hard to reconcile the two sets of interests.

But he speaks enthusiastically of Carol Seigel, the director for the last two years, giving her credit for successfully developing three strands of the museum: the house and its contents; the large archive collection at the top of the house; and the many exhibitions by artists who take Freud and his work as their inspiration.

Alex is clearly a man of strong likes and dislikes. With people he approves



◀ **Freud Museum at 20 Maresfield**

to the one which commemorates her father's residence in the house.

He would like to see Anna's bedroom in the eaves at the top of the house restored. Photographs of the room, taken when she lived in it, were brought out for the 25th birthday celebrations of the museum in July (2011). They show an ascetic space with simple contemporary furniture. It makes a fascinating contrast with the more opulent tastes of her father.

Vast archives

What he would really enjoy is "more exhibitions using the vast archives in the house". "The coat has come out of seclusion; it's the first thing people ask to see. But there's so much more", he says, "in the way of objects, photographs, letters and other papers."

What of the future? In 2010 Alex suffered a minor heart attack. That made him begin to think of retirement. He presently works part-time, with his family now fully trained up (by him) and capable of continuing in his footsteps.

He plans ultimately to return to Portugal, to the home that he and Maria own 80 kilometres from Lisbon, but he will find it hard to leave Maresfield Gardens for good. Maybe he will plant an English garden there to remind him of Freud's roses that he has tended so well over so many years. NNA

of he is constantly teasing and gently mocking. We are newcomers having lived opposite the museum for only 11 years, but we take it as a compliment that a little wobble on the bicycle elicits a call from the other side of the street: "Have you passed a driving test for that thing?"

Those he most disapproves of are people who show a lack of respect for the love of his life, which is the Freud house and the two main occupants of it when it was their home – Sigmund and Anna Freud.

When pressed on these negative attitudes, Alex for the only time in

our interview showed real anger. He was very specific about "anti-Semites and anti-Freudians" who profess to be helping, but end up undermining and attacking the work of the museum. He contrasts them with so many visitors, often from abroad, who are making what for them is almost a pilgrimage.

Alex of course is one of the very few people involved in the running of the museum who knew Anna personally. He is keen to see her memory honoured, as well as her father's. He was delighted when the second blue plaque was added to the front of the building in 2002, next

CRIME AND NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

AS PART OF A London-wide reduction in the number of police sergeants, Frogna and Fitzjohns Safer Neighbourhoods Team is now sharing Sergeant Phil Hewetson with the Hampstead Town SNT. Fortunately, there appears to be no present intention to merge the two police panels or to reduce the strength of the team police and support officers.

However, at a meeting of the local Area Action Group where the news was announced, Sgt Hewetson referred to the extra workload, reporting that as from September 1 the number of daily emails, for example, had doubled; and his team were having to attend more public events.

Another change, this time in shift patterns, had been introduced following the summer's outbreak of public disorder; but one unexpected result of the riots was the earlier identification of people wanted by the police.

Shift patterns would change again next summer to cope with the Olympic **NNA NEWS NOVEMBER 2011**

Games and in fact from July 16 to mid-September 2012 most police leave has been cancelled; also during that time the majority of police motorbike riders will be located in London.

For the three months since August, our ward experienced over 20 more crimes than during the comparable period last year. For the area as a whole, burglaries in a dwelling had increased by eight compared with last year, although burglaries from locations such as garden sheds were down by 11. For our ward burglaries were down by three and robberies were slightly down. There was an increase of 21 incidences of theft and handling and 20 of violence against the person. Vehicle crime was up by 19 and included power tools stolen from trade vehicles, although items left in private cars continue to present a problem.

Also discussed at the meeting were the priorities for police help for the next few months. Two are selected at each meeting and this time burglary and motor

crime were again adopted. However, I urged that a greater local police presence should be given to the problems of our three roads, notably coaches blocking the intersection of Nutley Terrace and Maresfield Gardens, traffic congestion in Maresfield, car parking on double yellow lines and vehicle speeds on our three roads, as well as Fitzjohn's Avenue.

The team was left in little doubt as to our views on these matters, and promised to see what could be done by a greater police presence.

Sirens at night, the lack of reaction at times from Camden Council, the danger from shallow roots to large trees on the roadside, heavy lorries using local roads, as well as crime prevention, were among other topics discussed.

The next meeting of the panel will be on Thursday, December 8 at Hampstead police station.

Report by Hugh Isaacs



Glugging with Gluck

*The NNA's resident expert provides a short treatise on red wine
– just in time for the festive season!*

1. Why red?

Red wine is the most luxurious and the healthiest alcohol you can drink. It is the most complex, most civilised, most sensuously perfumed liquid on the planet. It is only surprising that every adult who can tolerate red wine does not know this. Red, and only red, contains more of the antioxidant substances contained in the skins of the grapes. These pass into red wine, thus making it both the colour it is and the health drink it can be seen to be. Not for nothing does the cardiac unit at Swindon General Hospital give its angina patients two glasses of Chilean red a day.

Red wine – outside of the water administered to the desperate desert traveller – is more life-enhancing than any other liquid. It is the nearest we come to liquid Mozart, flowing Keats, mouth-watering Michaelangelo.

2. How was red wine discovered?

Wine was discovered by accident by a woman in a cave. Imagine the scenario: we are in the period long before the iron age, perhaps as long ago as 15 or 20,000 years. The men of the group, perhaps sufficiently culturally sympathetic to call itself a tribe (or whatever sophisticated spoken sounds signified membership of such an exclusive set of individuals), are out hunting. For some time the group has eaten wild fruits and vegetables, becoming aware that mammals and birds eat them and do not fall ill or die.

Fire has been discovered (in the Early Stone Age or Lower Paleolithic). The earliest evidence for controlled use of fire is at the Lower Paleolithic site of Gesher Benot Ya'aqov in Israel, where charred wood and seeds are in evidence in a site dating back 790,000 years.

The inferences to be taken from this discovery are debatable, however. Those seeds may have been burned by a fire created by nature. We are more secure if we date the discovery of fire, in a controlled sense and used creatively by humankind, to a site at Zhoukoudian in China. This is about 400,000 years old.

Whatever. Women were in the cave, perhaps having returned from a fruit



gathering expedition. Fire and water were present. Grapes were left on a rock, or in a cavity in a rock, and the warmth from the fire caused the grapes to ferment. This is because the wild grapes of yesteryear, like the modern grapes of today, attract a parasite called yeast which settles on their skin. When the skin is broken or pierced, or, as today, crushed or pressed, the natural yeast attacks the fruit of the grape, turning its natural sugars into alcohol.

Modern winemakers use selected commercial yeasts to turn the sugar in grapes into red wine at 13/14 degrees of alcohol. In the cave, the grapes would become alcoholised to perhaps no more than 3 per cent. It was sufficient. Eating the grapes, drinking the juice, changed behaviour. Imbibers became mildly yet significantly intoxicated. Thus wine was discovered and with it the god of wine.

All modern winemaking methods proceed from these early discoveries. It is a long leap in time from the Lower Paleolithic to the Early Iron Age but wine was developed during this period. The earliest discoveries, in Bulgaria (ancient Thrace), Georgia, and elsewhere in the Caucasus, confirm that at least 12,000 years ago wine was being made.

Viticulture, the science of growing grapes for wine, had existed in Greece since the late Neolithic period (which is about 12,000 years back). By the early Bronze Age, the period of the Trojan war, cultivation was widespread. (Homer says of the Thracians that they supplied mercenaries to Troy and wine to the besieging Greeks thus profiting

from both sides in the war.) The ancient Minoan civilisation on Crete, the likely site of Atlantis destroyed by an earthquake and subsequent tidal waves, copied Egyptian winemaking ideas and these were transferred to Mycenaean Greece. A wine press, many thousands of years old, was unearthed in Crete at Palekastro. It is also known that Minoan palaces all had vineyards close by to grow wine grapes for royal consumption. Indeed, the cycle of grape growing and harvesting was the basis of the old Greek calendar. Therefore, when we drink a glass of wine, especially red wine, we taking part in a ritual of ancient lineage.

3. What are my qualifications for enthusing about red wine?

I have drunk a lot of red wine since my career began at 9.30 in the evening of 29 May 1964 in Gaillac and I have yet to grow up. Or old. I owe it all to regular applications of red wine (plus a sensible diet and a bicycle).

It is not surprising that I have enjoyed so many sublime red wines and can remember each and every one of them. The hippocampus area in the brain is intimately involved with taste and smell and it is also where long-term memory is sited. Does red wine, drunk sensibly, assist the development of a retentive memory? I would say so.

The cheapest great red wine I have ever written about was £3.49. The most expensive cost £11,000.

The cheapie was Reserve Romanian Pinot Noir 1989, drunk in 1994. It was on sale exclusively at Morrisons supermarkets priced at £3.49 and it changed the life of the wealthy American wine collector at my dinner table. Until that moment, he had believed that only red burgundies costing more than £50 a bottle were worthy pinots. Indeed, until I handed him the empty Romanian bottle, he had been under the illusion that a great Cotes de Beaune was what my decanter contained.

The most expensive bottle was a 1978 Romanée-Conti from the Domaine de la Romanée-Conti. It was bought

by Hollywood actor Johnny Depp for £11,000 in the Mirabelle restaurant in Mayfair in 1999. It is a very rare wine indeed; not many more than 5000 bottles a year are produced. The vintage of the wine Mr Depp consumed was such that it would be in sublime drinking condition (barring a duff cork) and if the wine was as good as it could be then it would have had a concentrated richness, dazzling complexity and the level of polished perfection which Mr Depp provides (I speculate) in his screen performances.

I do not censure the man for buying the wine or for sharing it with loved ones. I wish I had been the actor's guest that night at the Mirabelle so that I might have experienced the wine for myself.

Is it remotely sensible to even ask if any wine is worth £11,000 a bottle? To drink something costing so much money takes guts. It transcends mere thirst. It goes way beyond the understandable desire to find exactly the right wine for the dish on the plate. We are, when we discuss this sort of thing, in the realms of complete romance. Anything goes. We might just as profitably dispute the origins of the 100 years war.

4. Is it possible to find good healthy reds at humane prices?

Yes indeed. And in Camden. Waitrose has three delicious screwcapped southern French 2010 reds each priced at £4.99. They are La Rectorie Cotes du Ventoux, Reserve de la Perrière Corbieres, and Montgravel Cabernet Sauvignon/Merlot. They are serious without being solemn, rich without being jammy, and smooth without being characterless.

Majestic has a gorgeous red in Mas des Montagnes 'Classic' Cotes du Roussillon Villages 2008 (£6.99). It has burned cherry and raspberry fruit with black olive and a hint of tobacco.

Sainsbury has an overwhelmingly sexy Italian: Taste the Difference Amarone delle Valpolicella 2008, a rich red with hints of coffee and liquorice. It is made from raisins, so it has unusual vivacity, power and complexity. It may even pass on those heroic qualities to anyone who drinks it. This makes it a bargain, even at £15.79 a bottle. **NNA**

Malcolm Gluck will be holding a winetasting for NNA members on Friday 25th November, 6.30 to 8.30pm, at Linda and Stephen Williams' house, 16A Maresfield Gardens. Signed and dedicated copies of Malcolm's wine short story collection "Chateau Lafite 1953 and Other Stories", Pen Press, normal price £7.99, will be on sale for £6.00.

PEOPLE HAVING tree work done frequently make poor choices. This is often because either they are ordering the work reluctantly, under pressure from neighbours, on the insistence of an insurance company or after a storm with a tree leaning dangerously or a branch fallen off. At such times they are tempted to choose the cheapest option available. Others can be misled by a cowboy 'tree surgeon', who may claim already to have council permission for the work.

In this context it might be useful to describe some common tree pruning techniques and the terminology used.

Raised root – plate or root-pad A tree's roots normally spread out from the trunk quite shallowly under the soil, and a tree blown crooked by a high wind may show this circular plate or pad of roots lifted on one side under the turf or soil. A tree in this condition will usually be dangerous and liable to fall.

Crown reduction The cutting back of all the branches in the crown or canopy resulting in an overall reduction in length of all branches; this makes the tree's crown smaller and usually 'tidier', but not necessarily less dense. Indeed, over time, the new growth encouraged by this pruning will often result in a denser crown.

Crown thinning The removal of some of the smaller secondary branches in the crown, while retaining the main framework of branches at its original size. This 'opens up' the tree to let in more light and reduce wind resistance.

Crown cleaning/clearing The removal of dead, dying, damaged or diseased or overcrowded branches.

Crown lifting The trimming of all the lowest branches in order to raise the height of the lowest parts of the tree, to ease walking under low branches.

Crown balancing Pruning the canopy to remove excess bulk on one side to correct top-heavy or uneven growth.

Pollarding The removal of all branches leaving just the trunk, usually cut off at 2 or 3m above ground. New growth in response to this is in the form of a spray of young straight branches, giving a brush-like appearance. Treatment must be repeated regularly to maintain shape.

Topping The removal of all smaller branches, rather like pollarding, but at ends of big main branches instead of the main trunk. A popular technique in recent years used by councils for control of street trees. Freshly done, it can appear drastic, but new growth is usually rapid.

Felling The complete removal of the tree, usually followed by treatment of the stump to prevent re-growth.

Stump grinding The use of a special (and big) machine to grind up the remaining tree stump on site, allowing the ground to be used again immediately. Often useful in a small garden, but of course denying valuable wildlife habitat.

Finally, a word about dead wood management. As indicated above, leaving a tree stump to rot away naturally is much better for wildlife, providing homes for literally hundreds of species over sometimes decades if the stump is big. Likewise, the removal of dead and dying wood from the crown of a tree is seen as essential management in a street or urban environment, for obvious health and safety reasons. If you have the space, ask your tree surgeon to leave all the larger cut trunks and branches, in longish lengths, in a pile at the bottom of the garden. This will become a wildlife heaven for years to come. **Noel Brock**

Council cut-backs

NNA member Stephen Williams comments: One subject of a 'Meet the councillors' meeting earlier this year was the heavy and unsightly pruning of trees in public highways in Camden. This has been done by pruning back all new growth every two or three years (topping) which results in a lollypop look to branches which many, including myself, believe produces an unsightly, unnatural look.

The council argues that trees need to be cut back regularly to prevent excessive root growth. They have to do this to prevent being sued by house owners for damage from tree roots causing subsidence, which in turn is exacerbated by the shrinkable London clay in this area. Some 14 years ago an NNA member successfully took legal action against the council due to problems caused by roots from three trees in the street in front of their house. The council inserted root barrier across the garden, paid for internal decorations and entered into a legal agreement to prune the trees every three years.

Some people in our neighbourhoods mistakenly dispute the legal issue and seek to stop regular pruning of street trees. However, the real problem is the type and quality of pruning undertaken.

Council monitoring of tree surgeons' work in Maresfield Gardens earlier this year left a great deal to be desired. **NNA**

NETHERHALL NEIGHBOURHOOD EVENTS

SIMON MAJARO, best known for his work with the Cavatina Chamber Music Trust, was guest speaker at this year's NNA AGM (**4 April**) at the Anna Freud Centre, where he talked about the book he translated based on his father's journey after World War 1 from Odessa to Jerusalem.

Simon and his wife Pamela continue to invite NNA members to their Cavatina Sunday afternoon concerts for young people, which are now held in Fitzjohn's Primary School; the most recent (**9 Oct**) featured the Brodowski Quartet. They also support the Netherhall House musical recitals, organised by Peter Brown and most recently given by Ben Schoeman, piano (**7 May**), Joao Bettencourt, piano (**4 June**) and the Daiman String Quartet (**29 Oct**).

Still on the subject of music, members were notified of the Hampstead and Highgate Festival and Solti Foundation concert (**21 June**) which took place at Hampstead Parish Church.

Also at Hampstead Church was the last (**9 April**) in a series of Camden's free guided walks round the celebrity-studded churchyard and the ever-popular Hampstead Players' production of 'A Winter's Tale' (**7-9 July**).

A number of events to celebrate this the 25th year of the Freud Museum were drawn to members' attention, including a Viennese tea (**15 May**), an Open Day



Party pic: Frieda Houser

◀ Children enjoy a dance at the Netherhall street party in September

organised by Georgio Broetz and David Caden (*see report, page 2*).

Meanwhile the summer street riots, policing and the Belsize parents' bid for a Free School in Maresfield Gardens were key topics at the combined Froggnal and Fitzjohns and Hampstead Town Forum at the old Hampstead Town Hall (**27 Sept**).

And, just before that, members were invited to a presentation of phase two of the Hampstead 2020 project (**25 Sept**) held at the Everyman Cinema.

Finally, as *NNA News* went to press, LEASE, a Government-sponsored organisation that offers free initial legal advice on residential leasehold matters, was due to hold a meeting in West Hampstead (**3 Nov**), to be hosted by local MP Glenda Jackson, to explain what they do and answer residents' questions.

Coming soon

Sunday 6 Nov and 4 Dec: 2.30pm.

Cavatina concerts, Fitzjohn's Primary School. Email info@cavatina.net

Friday 25 Nov: 6.30-8.30. Winetasting for NNA members with Malcolm Gluck at 16A Maresfield Gdns (*see footnote, p.7*)

Wednesday 7 Dec: 7-9.30pm. Sale preview, fashion show and reception for NNA members and guests at Jane and Dada, 59 Hampstead High Street. Email susannelawrence@gmail.com

on the actual anniversary (**28 July**) and the launch of a fundraising art auction (**20 Oct**) at which the alarm went off during the speeches causing director Carol Seigel's quip, "Someone must have sat on the couch again!", to make the diary pages of the next day's *Evening Standard*.

The Anna Freud Centre held its annual summer party for children and their families (**18 Sept**) and, once again, respective broken leg and slipped disc notwithstanding, Linda and Stephen Williams opened their garden for charity (**12 June**) under the National Garden Scheme. Linda also invited members to view her sister Gillian Osband's knitwear collection (**12, 13 Oct**).

New this year and well attended given the rain earlier in the day was a Netherhall Gardens street party (**4 Sept**)

NNA MEMBERSHIP 2012

IF YOU've not yet renewed your NNA membership, or are new to the area, please join now. It is still only £8 a household for a year or £5 for an individual. The association works to maintain and/or improve the character of the environment, runs social events and provides a 'good neighbours' service. So please fill in this form and return it with your payment to the address below. And if you have a new neighbour, or there are other flats in your building, please spread the word and encourage them to join or notify Patricia Whitehouse: tel 020 7435 0798 or email patricia.whitehouse@hotmail.co.uk

Title: Forename: Surname:

Title: Forename: Surname:

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