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Conservation area at risk

by Stephen Williams, NNA committee member for planning

OUR CONSERVATION AREA is at risk from inappropriate development on a major scale. With the high values of property in Hampstead, developers have shown an ever-increasing interest in our area. Camden is currently faced with a very high level of applications, some seeing the loss of original buildings and others seeking a major increase in their size. In some cases building has occurred without permission. In parts of our neighbourhood, development has reached a stage where the majority of properties will no longer be the original Victorian and Edwardian buildings that the conservation area was established to preserve.

Current government planning policies seek to encourage development using such terms as "... authorities should look for solutions rather than problems", going on to say "decision-takers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible". Councils are being asked to work proactively with applicants.

Under this pressure we see an understaffed and pressurised Camden planning department succumbing far too often to inappropriate applications.

Recently at 14 Netherhall Gardens, a council officer used the device of 'minor material matters' to approve a developer's application to increase the height of a large new development of flats by an extra storey. Adding an

extra floor is not a minor amendment. His decision avoided full scrutiny of the application. When local residents saw the extra height of the building, Camden refused to place an enforcement notice to stop the construction even though planning had not been granted. Acceptance of major amendments to buildings after the approval of the development without full scrutiny



▲ 14 Netherhall (left) as seen from Maresfield: the roof of the additional storey dominates Otto Schiff House

leaves us vulnerable to unscrupulous developers seeking to achieve additional gain with multiple addendum applications as the building progresses.

At 2 Maresfield Gardens, which has been a moribund building site for seven years and subject to similar creeping enlargement with serial planning applications, the council has approved extensions at the rear to a point where the garden will now be almost completely covered by buildings and light wells. This acceptance of extensive back garden development can be seen elsewhere around here. If it is allowed to continue, we will lose the gardens at the rear of our homes and with them the green open space, which is an essential element of the character of our neighbourhood.

Flagrant disregard

We face developers carrying out major construction work without planning approval, such as at 45 Maresfield Gardens, and the council allowing work to proceed while seeking the submission for retrospective approval. Residents in No 45 and nearby were appalled.

continued overleaf

NNA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Wednesday 29th March 2017

Danish YWCA, 43 Maresfield Gardens

7.00pm RECEPTION: drinks and canapes

7.30pm AGM: 2016-17 overview, election of officials, questions, any other business

8.15pm GUEST SPEAKER Professor Eamon McCrory

'From Maresfield Gardens to Kings Cross: what next for the Anna Freud Centre?'

Eamon McCrory is Professor of Developmental Neuroscience and Psychopathology at University College London and Director of Postgraduate Studies at the Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families. His research uses brain imaging and psychological approaches to investigate the impact of childhood maltreatment on emotional development and mental health. He is director of the UCL-Yale MRes (Master of Research) in Developmental Neuroscience and Psychopathology and is also a Visiting Professor at the Child Study Centre, Yale University.

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Conservation area at risk

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Amendments were achieved after over a year of vigorous lobbying of Camden by residents, but much unapproved development was subsequently let through. The application for a change of the crossover and loss of a resident's parking bay has only recently been stopped on appeal but there is the prospect of further applications.

Camden has strong powers to place enforcement notices on unlawful developments but has been reluctant to apply them. This is not unnoticed by developers and it inevitably encourages their flagrant disregard of planning controls.

As in the rest of Hampstead, we see widespread applications for new basements, often two or three storeys deep, which risk damage to adjacent buildings, affecting ground water and resulting in years of misery for neighbours. We see at 9 Maresfield Gardens the owner of the ground floor flat applying to carry out major structural changes, including a new basement, whilst people on the first and second floors remain in their homes.

No 59 Maresfield was granted permission for a development with three basement levels plus a swimming pool.

After much pressure from residents in Hampstead, Camden sought to include additional planning controls on excessive basement development but belatedly; it is only just being implemented and many have doubts as to whether it will be effective in curbing such developments.



▲ 20 Maresfield: the style we are trying to preserve

In Nutley Terrace we see an application for a small coach house to be increased by 300 per cent by extending out at the front and rear as well as upwards and down into the ground. Camden looks favourably on such development, though approval has yet to be given.

In some areas the intensity of these developments has resulted in the majority of the properties being altered or replaced. This is most clearly seen along Nutley Terrace at the junctions with both Netherhall and Maresfield Gardens. There are applications for several new buildings along Nutley Terrace, as well as the current large development of new flats in the grounds of Otto Schiff House at 14 Netherhall Gardens. An application for demolition of the original house at 26 Netherhall and erection of a new much enlarged building with three basement levels was recently refused, but a fresh application has now been submitted.

Some, like the recently completed block at 11 Netherhall and the rebuilt South Hampstead High School, may individually have merit but the sheer number of them must inevitably alter the character of the area. We have written to Camden on this point but received either a negative or no response.

Camden often takes on board the Government's wish for councils to "... seek to approve applications". Nearby in Daleham Gardens we see approval given for new PVC windows, a material alien to Victorian and Edwardian buildings.

Future threat

We are now facing several potential large developments. With the Anna Freud Centre moving to its new headquarters in King's Cross, their three large buildings in Maresfield Gardens have either been sold or will shortly be sold with the prospect of change to residential use. Southwell House with its extensive garden stretching back from Fitzjohn's Avenue to Maresfield Gardens has been on the market and advertised for development potential. And there are other locations offering opportunities for developers and further threat to our conservation area.

Camden seems to attach little weight to the NNA's representations on planning issues, placing our comments on the same level as an individual rather than recognising that we represent the residents of the whole neighbourhood. Our local councillors, notably Gio Spinella and Siobhan Baillie, have frequently lent their support but often with little success.

Residents are attracted to our neighbourhood because of its leafy character and fine Victorian and Edwardian houses. Current Government policy and the frequent failure of Camden to enforce planning and conservation controls, combined with the attractive opportunities to demolish and redevelop new 'high end' residential properties, place us at great risk of losing our neighbourhood unless we as residents join together to urge Camden to retain its character. **NNA**

Cycle superhighway update

by Jenny White and Andy Wilkins,
NNA representatives on the 'Re-think CS11' group

TRANSPORT FOR London published its updated report on the proposed Cycle Superhighway between Swiss Cottage and the West End (CS11) on 16 December 2016 (<https://consultations.tfl.gov.uk/cycling/cs-11>) after months of opposition by local groups. It has announced a partial scheme – deferring a decision on Regent's Park until the summer but pressing ahead with construction work at Swiss Cottage.

The work at Swiss Cottage will start this autumn and finish next year. It will have knock-on effects on the rest of the scheme because TfL's modelling didn't anticipate a staged implementation. The ultimate effect will depend on what is decided on Regent's Park. Closing some of the park gates at certain times is the default option but TfL is considering if there are other ways to reduce through traffic and improve safety. A 20 mph speed limit is planned.

TfL's update quotes a figure of 60 per cent allegedly in favour of the scheme. This gives a distorted view as it ignores

the number of people who petitioned against it. It is also heavily weighted by people from outside Camden (ie the cycling lobby). As is clear from a map in the report showing responses by postcode, a very large majority of those on whom the scheme will have an immediate impact are against it.

A group of committed individuals from Hampstead and St John's Wood (Re-think CS11) has been campaigning to try to persuade TfL to make changes to minimise the damaging effects, while urging the two councils, Camden and Westminster, to oppose them. The group is taking legal advice on the options open.

Alternative dismissed

The Swiss Cottage gyratory is at the heart of the plans, creating a public space behind the Odeon cinema. This will force the current five lanes of traffic into two, pushing drivers on to residential roads to avoid congestion.

An alternative scheme, which would have preserved the cycle lanes but

reduced the public space, was dismissed. Camden is backing TfL even though it's on a major highway, next to a car park and opposite another public area behind the library.

TfL has made a few concessions, modifying or reversing a couple of banned turns to allow a left turn from Finchley Road into College Crescent (but only for buses and cyclists); also right turns from College Crescent into Finchley Road and from Finchley Road into Hilgrove Road (not currently possible because of the gyratory). They claim this will ease the amount of traffic forced on to residential roads and help local journeys west of Swiss Cottage.

But this means slower journey times the other way going east along Hilgrove Road, so TfL is looking at banning the turn at the busiest times.

Rethink CS11 is still keeping pressure on Camden not to give approval for its roads until the concerns the council initially had are fully satisfied, particularly on pollution levels and congestion near the Royal Free.

Clr Phil Jones, the Camden Cabinet member responsible for the decision, is known to be a strong supporter of the scheme (he was short-listed for the post of Cycling Commissioner, which prompted questions about a conflict of interest). *JW*

A cyclist's viewpoint

I'M A MAD-KEEN cyclist who lives in Netherhall Gardens. I don't have a driving licence, and my place of work is only a 10-minute cycle from my front door. At work they have purpose-built facilities for securing my bicycle. In short, I am a perfect example of TfL's target market.

Negotiating the gyratory at Swiss Cottage feels like taking my life in my hands as cars zig-zag in front of me as they change lanes at speed. Additionally, the multiple sets of traffic lights result in cars stopping and starting sharply in front of and behind me.

If an experienced and capable cyclist like myself finds Swiss Cottage unsafe, I am sure people considering cycling to work for the first time would give up when they see how dangerous it is. As for children cycling to school, that is something no parent would contemplate.

It would seem, therefore, that something must be done to improve the situation at Swiss Cottage. However, if I was asked if I thought CS11 was the solution to the problem I would have to say emphatically that it is not. The

current plan to block one side of the gyratory to every vehicle apart from buses and bicycles to create a 'public space', alongside banning left turns at various junctions, will only result in cars and lorries taking to the side roads.

More traffic on side roads means increased congestion causing harmful levels of pollution to rise, large lorries attempting to make wide turns at tight junctions risking pedestrians' and cyclists' safety, and cars attempting to travel at speed to negotiate these rat-runs.

In short: does the Swiss Cottage gyratory need improving? Most definitely yes. Is TfL's current proposal the answer? Most definitely not. TfL needs to go back to the drawing board and, when it does, it must consult with local residents and accommodate their justified concerns. *AW*



Councillors Gio, Siobhan and Andrew ►

Rubbish collections

Our councillors' report:

CAMDEN COUNCIL'S decision to reduce waste collections has not gone down well with residents and we are receiving a lot of emails about this. The rationale is to drive up recycling and save money but sadly, in our view, they did not think the plans through properly, appear to be penalising the good recycling areas and the 'savings' have also now been shown to be minimal.

While the contract has been signed, we will continue to challenge the changes, provide information and represent residents' disappointment.

On the positive side, we are working towards creating a plan for a series of one-off projects using Community Investment Levy (CIL) funds, asking residents to decide what is most important. If you see things that need fixing or want items such as benches, street signage or something to beautify the area, please contact us with your suggestions.

Siobhan Baillie, Andrew Mennear and Gio Spinella: telephone 020 7974 2792

Britain's healer of broken hearts

Since coming up with the life-saving concept of the dedicated coronary care unit, subsequently adopted all over the world, Desmond Julian, who celebrated his ninetieth birthday last year, has never stopped questioning the status quo of medical thinking

Over the last 50 years the number of people dying from coronary heart disease in the UK has gone down by more than 60 per cent from some 200,000 a year to fewer than 70,000. While much of this progress can be attributed to the invention of defibrillator machines, advances in resuscitation, the development and use of statins, beta-blockers and aspirin and, more recently, preoccupation with smoking, diet and exercise, one of the key factors has undoubtedly been the specialised coronary care unit – and the man we have to thank for this, Desmond Julian, has been a Netherhall Gardens resident for nearly 30 years.

Until the mid-1960s heart attack sufferers could be admitted to almost any available hospital ward, given morphine and left to rest. In the event of a subsequent cardiac arrest doctors could attempt to restart the heart with a defibrillator, but these were very large and heavy in those days and often could not be got to the patient quickly enough. Equally, closed heart massage (CPR), another recently evolved treatment, had to be administered within four minutes to be successful.

Still a relatively junior doctor, Desmond figured that admitting all heart attack patients to one specialist ward, monitoring them continuously and having the right equipment and staff on standby would increase survival rates. Following a talk about this to the British Thoracic Society, he was persuaded to write an article for *The Lancet*. Published in October 1961 this was the first paper to propose the concept of the specialist coronary care unit.

In his recent book, *The heart healers: the misfits, mavericks and rebels who created the greatest medical breakthrough of our lives*, renowned American cardiologist James Forrester likened the Julian approach to that of Henry Ford: Ford's "revolutionary out-of-the-box idea had been to bring his

cars to the workers" rather vice versa. Desmond Julian "was proposing to do the same for heart attack victims."

Two years later, in Kansas City, "Julian's imagined unit suddenly burst forth" at more or less the same time as Desmond himself, then working in Sydney, was setting up what, according to the British Heart Foundation, was the world's first coronary care unit.

In his self-published autobiography, *In circulation*, Desmond claims to be unsure when and why he decided on a career in medicine, albeit his father was a GP, later specialising in homeopathy.

Old schoolfriend George Melly, the jazz singer, critic, broadcaster and lecturer, writes in his own autobiography that he, Desmond and another doctor's son, set up a 'dissecting club' in reaction to the model aeroplane club formed by a boy they considered "bumptious". Melly's father's cousin, a well-known anaesthetist, provided the boys with a small dissection table and a set of rusty surgical knives, and they practised on rabbits and pigeons purchased from the local fishmongers and poulterers.

Desmond, however, says he did not have the manual skills to be a surgeon and preferred to look after people who were conscious. He chose cardiology because he thought he was more suited to being a specialist than a GP, claiming "I like to know a lot about a little rather than a little about a lot." In fact, of course, many would argue that he knows a lot about a lot!

Born in Toxteth, Liverpool, in 1926, Desmond was the youngest of three children of Irish parents. Frederick Bennett Julian had studied medicine in Cork, graduating in 1916, and the following year went to France with the Royal Army Medical Corps where he was temporarily blinded by mustard gas while treating wounded men in the trenches. He was invalided out and awarded the Military Cross.



Desmond's mother graduated in maths and history from the National University of Ireland and then gained a teaching diploma from Trinity College, Dublin. She got a job as a teacher in Cork and found accommodation as a paying guest of the Julian family.

"It is not difficult to understand," writes Desmond, "why she fell for this tall distinguished doctor with a Military Cross, who was an international level hockey player, a great raconteur and wrote good poetry." They married in 1918 but two years later moved to Liverpool when the Black and Tans set fire to Cork and it became uncomfortable to stay there as Protestants.

Religion

Desmond's parents attended the local Baptist church every Sunday but his mother was particularly religious and was also a teetotaler and an ardent pacifist. Desmond describes himself as agnostic but as a child never questioned his parents because, though devout, they were very liberal – "and wise". He went to an Anglican prep school and regularly to Sunday school, where he was lucky enough to be taught by Derryck Guyler, who later became a well-known radio comedian and then TV actor.

At 13 he went to a Quaker boarding school where the attitude to religion was entirely different: we were "taught that every human being is uniquely valued

and should be respected, and that we all have within us an 'inner light' that illuminates our lives."

He finally turned his back on conventional Christianity following the tragic death of his first wife due to a car accident, when their children were tiny.

Many decades later, however, looking to re-energise that 'inner light', he happened to read an article eulogising a service at the Unitarian Chapel on Rosslyn Hill and went along one Sunday with Claire, his second wife.

They found the minister's sermon both profound and witty and soon felt at home in that community.

"There is no creed to which you have to subscribe and the mantra is 'An open mind, a loving heart and a helping hand', which I find most appealing. An important attraction is the quality of the music" (ranging from Vivaldi to Buddhist chants to jazz) "that forms an essential part of the service."

Musical influences

Desmond's father had been passionately fond of music and was an accomplished pianist. Wanting his children to share his enthusiasm, he played some of his large collection of records after lunch every Sunday and tested them, the first to get the right answer being rewarded with money for sweets. They all learnt to play instruments, in Desmond's case both piano and violin. However, he later lost interest in his violin playing and, when his father mentioned this to the celebrated violinist Fritz Kreisler with whom he had become friendly, Kreisler said: "Do you think he should give it up?" Desmond promptly did!

Another of Desmond's friends was Dennis Rattle, who was a brilliant jazz pianist. Before long, however, Dennis "was outshone by his son Simon, who eventually persuaded even the Berlin Philharmonic to play jazz!"

Notwithstanding the terrible air raids in 1941 and '42, in which the Julians lost their house, although no one was actually hurt, Liverpool was a good place for music, with many leading musicians stopping off on their way to and from America to play with the Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted variously by Malcolm Sargent, Thomas Beecham or Adrian Boult, the latter becoming another friend of Julian senior.

However, for most of the war Desmond was away at school. "Among the business and professional people with whom my parents associated it was unthinkable not to send one's sons

to boarding school." They selected Leighton Park, near Reading, but could not afford it unless he got a scholarship.

The challenge this posed "was made more formidable by the fact that in the same year my father obtained a degree in philosophy and psychology, my brother won a scholarship to Oxford and my sister did so well in her matriculation that she could go straight to university at the age of 16." Happily Desmond did not let the family firm down and, having got in, proceeded to do well in virtually all subjects other than art.

In due course he got into medical school at Cambridge, and went up to St John's College in October 1943, aged 17. Given the need for doctors during the war, the three-year course was compressed into two and, indeed, notwithstanding an invitation to stay on for a year's research, Desmond was desperate to get on with his career.

In September 1945, he took up a place at the Middlesex Hospital and, "both excited and daunted by the prospect of moving to London", found a B&B in Willoughby Road, Hampstead.

The course started with lectures but it was talking to patients that really turned him on and particularly the opportunity to "refine my senses" so that "by observing carefully, listening to the heart and lungs and feeling the abdomen, I could come up with the diagnosis all by myself. I found this thrilling and I began understanding why I had wanted to be a doctor." He qualified in July 1948.

His first job was at Chelmsford District Hospital, where one of the consultants sparked his interest in diseases of the heart and lungs. He then applied for and got into the Cardiac and Thoracic Surgical Centre in Broadgreen Hospital, Liverpool, just three miles from his parents' home. But six months later he received his call-up papers.

He was duly appointed a Surgeon-Lieutenant in the Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve, and despatched to Plymouth for his induction and then to care for 50 TB patients in the naval hospital. Much as he relished his time there – and not least the free afternoons when he could catch up on reading "those great books that I would never have time to read in later life" and a short spell at sea – he claims he never really felt at home with the hierarchy of the service. He was also eager to progress his career.

A necessary prerequisite to becoming a heart and lung specialist was

membership of the Royal College of Physicians which involved an exam with a pass rate of about 15 per cent. He made it at the second attempt but first, having been out of touch with medicine for two years, he put himself through a three-months' postgraduate programme at the Hammersmith Hospital medical school and then got a six-months' job at the Central Middlesex Hospital, followed by a two-year research post in the Liverpool heart and lung department.

Thereafter the obvious choice was to continue his training at the National Heart Hospital in Marylebone, as this was the UK's premier institution in his specialism. After an enjoyable year there, he was persuaded that he should broaden his experience in general medicine and took a job at the Royal Infirmary back in Liverpool.

Off-duty, he went on walking weekends organised by the English Speaking Union and thus it was that he met then 24 year-old careers adviser Mary. Their relationship peaked on the top of Mount Snowdon and they became engaged and married in July 1956.

By this time he had been awarded a research fellowship at Harvard Medical School and the couple spent an interesting year in Boston, culminating in a month travelling around the States.

Desmond's next job was at the prestigious Royal Infirmary in Edinburgh, and this should have been a good time but was overshadowed by the discovery that a childhood illness of Mary's meant she could not have children. They decided to adopt and this was arranged privately through some relations of Mary's. In October 1960 Mary was able to bring home the baby girl they called Claire.

Emigration

All this coincided with the work experiences that led to Desmond's idea for a small unit specifically designed for heart attack patients, but unfortunately his colleagues were not sufficiently enthusiastic, claiming it would be impractical in the "old Victorian Gothic pile that was the Royal Infirmary". Also, though, his contract would be up in 1962 and he knew there would be no suitable vacancies for another three years. Many of his contemporaries were emigrating to Canada and Australia for similar reasons.

After lengthy consideration, he accepted a four-year appointment as cardiologist at Sydney Hospital, where the plan was to create a specialist coronary

care unit – exactly what he wanted. The family set sail in August 1961.

Desmond was fortunate to acquire as a cardiology colleague Gaston Bauer, someone he could bounce ideas off and who knew how to put them into practice. He helped obtain funding for the necessary equipment and training but finally “all was in place and I no longer had to be on call 24 hours a day.”

This was fortuitous as Desmond and Mary were looking to adopt another child, and in January 1963 three week-old Paul came along.

The Julians made friends with other doctors and had a busy social life. But their most exciting experience was when Desmond was asked to be a flying doctor for a month, albeit his “most successful patient was a pet lamb that had developed an abscess”.

The following year, however, tragedy struck when Mary was killed in a crash on her way home from visiting a friend.

Back home

The couple had had an enjoyable three years in Australia but Mary in particular had been keen to go home to be near her family, so Desmond had already made enquiries and managed to get the job he most wanted – as a consultant at Edinburgh’s Royal Infirmary.

Old friends there put Desmond and the children up for three months and introduced him to a lawyer friend who found them a house and a nanny able to be available during his long working hours and, later, his frequent trips abroad as coronary care adviser to the World Health Organisation.

Ten years on, however, Desmond was getting impatient as the hospital was still slow to implement the many major advances taking place in his speciality.

By now, though, he had made quite a name for himself in the field and was approached by the Dean of Newcastle University Medical School about a new post in the Freeman Hospital which was then being built. He would be Professor of Cardiology and able to have a say in the design of the department and start it from scratch. The decision was made easier by the fact that his sister Pauline and her family lived in Newcastle.

Subsequently, a friend who was moving offered to sell him his 18th-century farmhouse with woodland, paddock and a donkey and, despite the greater distance from Pauline’s help, he could not resist. Although he made a number of interesting close women friends during this period, including a

child psychiatrist and a Labour MP, he remained single until he left Newcastle in 1986.

In addition to setting up and running the new cardiac department, he edited the *European Heart Journal*, wrote textbooks, taught and lectured widely. But, approaching 60, he began to find it increasingly difficult to keep up with the many new technologies that entered the field and felt it was time to move on.

He already had close links with the British Heart Foundation and was offered the job as its medical director, based in London.

As well as raising funds and developing research and community programmes, one of his responsibilities at the BHF was to represent the organisation on radio and TV and for this he was persuaded by its vivacious 35 year-old head of press and PR, one Claire Marley, that he should have media training. More than that, reader, he married her! She moved into his small flat in Frognal and the following year, 1989, they moved to Netherhall Gardens.

He took on various other roles in his later career: President of the British Cardiac Society and Second Vice President of the Royal College of Physicians, both while he was at the BHF.

On his retirement in 1993 he became chairman of Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) for three years and the National Heart Forum for six. The same year he was made a CBE.

Admired by his peers and loved by his students, he has also been the recipient of many other awards.

Doctor, heal thyself?

Ironically, Desmond himself has a long history of heart disease, experiencing his first heart attack at the age of only 57. Following another attack in his early 70s he started to take the currently recommended quartet of ‘preventative’ drugs but after a decade developed various side effects. These caused him to have concerns about their long-term use, particularly in older people less able to tolerate them. Since he retired he has continued to make a significant contribution to the conduct of cardio-

► **Desmond and Claire walking on the South Downs**

vascular trials and it is to be hoped that his ongoing advocacy of well-conducted clinical trials will lead to one which will compare outcomes in those who stop taking these drugs after an appropriate interval with those who continue them.

Desmond’s health, and as we go to press, he remains in hospital following a stroke at new year, was the only reason he stopped skiing at 70. But it did not stop much else.

Having written 23 medical books, he decided to try his hand at a different kind of writing and joined the Hampstead U3A ‘Write your life story’ group which led to his autobiography.

He and his wife, Claire, have shared many interests: walking, theatre and films, books, not to mention a sense of humour. They were lucky enough to travel extensively together, partly in connection with work and partly on holidays, many of them involving walking (in the Cinque Terre, Loire Valley, Costa del Sol and Amalfi Coast). Indeed they calculate they have visited 76 countries together so far!

Other more local activities have included walking on the Heath and in Regent’s Park, and completing the North Downs Way, Thames Path and the Ridgeway, attending plays at Hampstead Theatre and events at Keats Community Library where Claire is a volunteer. They are also active members of Rosslyn Hill Unitarian Chapel, with Desmond playing a significant part, serving both on the board of trustees and as an Elder.

Until his stroke this year he and Claire were regularly visiting his son in Berwick and daughter in Newcastle, who between them have produced nine grandchildren and seven, soon to be eight, great-grandchildren. If they are all to follow in the Julian family footsteps, they have a lot to live up to. The term ‘high achievers’ doesn’t begin to go there!

Susanne Lawrence, NNA



South Hampstead's new head

When your predecessor quits after only three years in the job and you learn that her predecessor also left earlier than scheduled in somewhat mysterious circumstances, you could be forgiven for feeling a certain pressure, if not anxiety, on taking over. But, if she is feeling it, Vicky Bingham, who succeeded Helen Pike as South Hampstead High School headmistress in January, is hiding it extremely well.



◀ Vicky Bingham

and cosmopolitan community”.

Once she saw the school for herself, she immediately recognised that “busy, buzzy unpretentious sense of purpose” that in her view characterises the better girls’ schools. She firmly

believes that a school should enable its pupils to excel “without them feeling they are in some sort of pressure cooker; it’s about thriving and leading happy lives rather than being successful per se.”

When she started in January, she was struck by the “charming confidence” of the girls: easy to talk to, full of ideas, quick to put up their hands in class, and determined to get involved. She therefore has no concerns about their future employability but wants to build on what the school has achieved so far.

She is particularly impressed by the weekly off-syllabus sessions which range from Arabic to calligraphy; and has in mind to make global issues and current affairs a key focus of this programme. She also plans to extend the sporting provision, and not least team games which she believes help instil a sense of team spirit.

Helen Pike left last year because a prestigious job came up in Oxford where her partner and three step-children live. Notwithstanding the stresses of managing the school during its major rebuilding programme, she came out smelling of roses and claimed that ‘spending more time with my family’ was no mere euphemism in her case.

Firmly based

Vicky too will have to manage round some construction work, as the school’s old Waterlow Hall is being redeveloped from a gym into a hall that will serve for concerts, plays and assemblies.

However in contrast to Helen Pike’s personal situation, Vicky has a husband firmly based in central London – as head of media for the Church of England, their 8 year-old daughter Izzy is settling down well at South Hampstead’s junior school in Netherhall Gardens and in January the family moved to Pinner, a mere 20 minutes tube-ride away.

Let’s hope, then, that she’s here for the long haul. **NNA**



Grade II listing for St Thomas More’s

THE ROMAN Catholic Church of St Thomas More in Maresfield Gardens, opposite South Hampstead High School, built in 1968 to designs by noted 20th-century ecclesiastical architect Gerard Goalen, has received a Grade II listing. The citation describes it as a good example of a post-war church with a striking design and assured use of structural reinforced concrete.

It is set slightly back from the street, partially concealed from view behind the presbytery and parish hall which, while contributing to the church’s history, are not included in the listing.

The church is actually the third on this site, the first having been converted in 1938 from the studio of successful society portrait painter Philip de Laszlo (1869-1937). This suffered bomb damage in 1943 and was repaired and extended in 1952-53 but still proved too small for the would-be congregation.

The first stone of the current church was laid in October 1967 and a special Mass will celebrate its 50th anniversary this October. (For more background information on the history of the church see *NNA News*, Summer 2004.)

Once the new church was completed, the old one was converted into a parish hall with the original de Laszlo studio becoming a social club and ultimately just storage space. Recently the extension was demolished and it is this which is now being rebuilt to provide a complex of smaller rooms for various parish activities, with completion scheduled for July (2017). Part of the plan was also to restore the studio.

continued overleaf ▶

Classic career

Brought up and educated in Brussels, where her father was working, she read Classics at Keble College, Oxford, and then moved to Cambridge for her postgraduate certificate in education.

Her first job was teaching Classics at Guildford High, a girls school which is regularly one of the UK’s top five for its A level and GCSE results. She spent three years there before moving to nearby St Catherine’s as head of Classics. Six years on she returned to Guildford High as deputy head.

Coincidentally, Helen Pike’s pre-South Hampstead job was at the Royal Grammar School in Guildford, but the two women didn’t meet until Vicky’s briefing day as a candidate for this job.

Apart from, unsurprisingly, wanting to become a headteacher, what attracted her to South Hampstead was its academic reputation, what she describes as its commitment to intellectual enrichment (speaker programmes, for example; strength in music and the performing arts) and, not least, its location. She knew Hampstead to some extent as her grandparents had a flat near the Heath many years ago, but she also had a strong sense of the area’s “intelligent

OBITUARY

► In fact the studio is now being refurbished and fitted out for use by South Hampstead Synagogue, which in turn is in the throes of a major redevelopment of its 1960s home in Eton Road, near Chalk Farm. As of this April, the studio is intended to accommodate the synagogue office, and some services and communal activities. The synagogue has signed a two-year lease on the hall.

South Hampstead High School also recently provided the synagogue with space for a small social event, and, indeed, the St Thomas More church itself has used the school premises a few times during the rebuilding of its hall.

New director

NETHERHALL HOUSE, the Catholic male students' hall of residence in Nutley Terrace, has a new director, Dominic Jones, who succeeded Peter Brown last September.

Dominic grew up in Cheshire and studied mechanical engineering to doctoral level and beyond in Manchester and later London. He decided to go into industry to apply his research and joined an engineering company for which he remains a consultant.

In his spare time he plays badminton, reads and plays the piano, so NNA members can expect him to continue the tradition of inviting us to attend the musical recitals hosted at the House.

For more on Netherhall House, see *NNA News*, Spring 2015.

HEIDI HILLMAN (née Krott), who edited the NNA newsletter for 20 years, died in tragic circumstances in February just five weeks short of what would have been her 80th birthday. Having been diagnosed with the early stages of Alzheimer's, she was about to embark on a trip to St Petersburg with her husband Mayer, who had booked it while he thought she would still be able to appreciate it.



her half-sisters on the Kindertransport in 1938 but Irma managed to get a visa to come to London very shortly before the war.

After leaving school, Heidi worked in an editorial capacity for a number of technical and architectural journals. She and Mayer,

then an architect, married in 1964 and, when he decided to switch professions and took a doctorate in urban planning at Edinburgh University, she was able to partly support him. Their first son was born in Scotland, the other when they returned to London in 1970, and Heidi became a teaching assistant at South Hampstead Junior School. In 1976 the family moved to Netherhall Gardens.

Unfortunately on the eve of their departure last October he had a slight stroke and was admitted to University College Hospital. A couple of days later, while visiting him there, Heidi was knocked over by a bus, an accident that caused horrendous injuries, which necessitated an amputation of her right leg from just below her knee.

Heidi continued to help Mayer through his increasingly high profile career as an environmentalist, and in her 60s gained an Open University degree in the history of art. For the last 12 years she was a very active and utterly devoted grandmother to Jasmine, Eva and Rafi.

Four months later, after making a remarkable recovery and learning to adapt to her new circumstances, she suddenly and unexpectedly suffered a colossal stroke and passed away.

Deeply mourned by her family, and not least Mayer, who has been an active member of the NNA from the beginning (see *NNA News*, Summer 2008), sons Josh and Saul, daughters in laws, grandchildren and surviving half-sister Ilse, Heidi was a popular and loved member of the community and will be greatly missed as a friend and neighbour. **NNA**

Born in Vienna in March 1937, she was the youngest of three girls, Ilse and Eva having been born when their mother, Irma, was married to her first husband. The couple divorced and in 1936 Irma married Heinrich Krott, a dental surgeon, and had Heidi. By then, as Jewish citizens in Austria, the family had to leave. Heidi was too young to join

NNA MEMBERSHIP 2017

IF YOU HAVE NOT yet renewed your NNA membership, or are new to the area and have not yet joined, please do so now. It only costs £8 per person for a year or £10 for a family. The association works to maintain and improve the character of the environment, runs social events and provides a 'good neighbours' service. Please fill in this form and return it with your payment to the NNA Membership Secretary, c/o 18 Maresfield Gardens, London NW3 5SX. Alternatively you can join and pay online at www.netherhallneighbourhood.weebly.com. And if you have a new neighbour, or there are other flats in your building, please encourage them to join or notify Andy Wilkins: tel 07930 397675 or email andywilkins1@me.com

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