



## Commons Visit

The vote on the success and enjoyment was unanimous when over 100 supporters of the North London Hospice visited the House of Commons in January. John Marshall and his personal assistant Rosey welcomed the group in the Jubilee Room to the function organised by the North London Support Group. A super buffet was arranged and the guests were given a full tour of the House with time to hear the debate before rejoining the coaches to return to HGS.

The picture shows John Marshall MP chatting to the Chairman of the North West Support Group, Dr. Chris Donovan, and Co-Vice Chairman, Mrs. Susan Gregson.

Gillian Newman

## Theatre Club's Patron

Hampstead Garden Suburb resident, the actor Donald Sinden CBE, has agreed to become Patron of the HGS Residents Association's popular Theatre Club.

With around 150 members, the club arranges regular visits to the West End, fringe and out-of-town shows as well as to the Royal Shakespeare Company and the National.

Sinden, one of the prime movers

in the establishment of the Theatre Museum in Covent Garden, has recently had an exhibition of his collection of theatre memorabilia at the Hendon Church Farmhouse Museum.

The HGS Theatre Club would welcome one or two new members to its Committee. Please telephone Ruth Gumb on 455 6490.

Phyllis Oberman



John Timbers

## GWEN WATFORD

Gwen Watford, the actress, died of cancer on February 6th. Born in London in 1927, she was brought up in St Leonards, Sussex, where she had the good fortune to attract the passionate support of her headmistress, Dorothy Catt, one of those spinster teachers in the Jean Brodie tradition. Against the wishes of her parents, Miss Catt firmly propelled her into the theatrical profession when, in 1945, she joined Anthony Hawtreys company at the Embassy Theatre, Swiss Cottage, as an Assistant Stage Manager and budding actress at the salary of £3.50 a week. Long years of galley slavery in weekly rep followed, and it was not until 1955 that she made a major breakthrough as the Queen in THE QUEEN AND THE REBELS at the Theatre Royal, Haymarket.

She made her television debut as the Virgin Mary in the series JESUS OF NAZARETH, and soon became so popular that, for at least a dozen years, she and Billie Whitelaw were regarded as the leading ladies of the new medium. She won the Best Actress of the Year Award twice during this period, but, whenever it was possible, she returned to her roots in the theatre - the only medium in which an actor can hone his craft by constant repetition. She had a notable season at the Old Vic in 1960 as Titania, Lady Percy in HENRY IV part I, and as Schiller's MARY STUART.

In recent years she spent most of her time in the theatre, playing The Countess in ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL for the RSC, in A MAN FOR ALL SEASONS at Chichester and the Savoy (with Charlton Heston), in Jeffrey Archer's BEYOND REASONABLE DOUBT, THE CABINET MINISTER (with Maureen Lipman) at the Albery,

A WOMAN OF NO IMPORTANCE at the Haymarket, and, finally, a national tour of Alan Bennett's TALKING HEADS, directed by the author. Increasingly her theatre work was regarded as that of a great actress, and her early death has robbed playgoers of at least ten more years of joyous creations.

Fortunately enough remains of her television work for future generations to be able to savour her talent - Charles Wood's series DON'T FORGET TO WRITE, David Mercer's LET'S MURDER VIVALDI, Rattigan's THE WINSLOW BOY with Emma Thompson and Ian Richardson, Alan Ayckbourn's RELATIVELY SPEAKING, among them. Equally admired for her searing emotional truth as for her brilliant sense of comedy, she was known by her profession as the most immaculate and helpful of colleagues. She was, in fact, very greatly loved.

Gwen lived with her husband, Richard Bebb, and their two sons in Temple Fortune Lane for 31 years. She dearly loved the Suburb and all its unique amenities, but she was never involved with its politics, as her spare time was entirely devoted to charitable work for her own most dearly loved profession as Chairman of the Theatrical Ladies Guild and as Vice-chairman of the Combined Theatrical Charities.

Her Memorial Service at St Paul's Covent Garden on March 22nd was attended by over 600 people who heard readings and memories of her by Sir John Gielgud, Dame Judi Dench, Barbara Jefford, Barbara Leigh-Hunt, Richard Pasco, Margaret Wolfit, Julian Fellowes, Donald Sinden and Diana Coupland - the last two, of course, well-known Suburb residents.

Richard Bebb



## Abbeyfield - The Suburb's best-kept secret

One of the Suburb's best-kept secrets is Abbeyfield House. Opened nearly 11 years ago, it is situated in Homesfield, a leafy close off Erskine Hill, and is home to a group of the 'active elderly'. This quiet location is ideal for the residents, but it means that the House remains unknown to most people living on the Suburb.

The Suburb Abbeyfield Society is one of many similar charitable organisations which run a total of about 1,000 houses nationwide offering affordable homes for approximately 8,500 elderly residents. Each local Society is self-supporting and firmly rooted in its own community while having links to the national Abbeyfield organisation. The Suburb Abbeyfield offers supportive care in a warm house with the main meals provided by the resident housekeepers. Rooms are furnished by the residents themselves with their own possessions, and all have some sort of ensuite facilities. Main meals are served in a bright double-aspect diningroom and there is a equally

cheerful sittingroom. However, all rooms have the facilities needed to allow residents to prepare their own breakfast and make tea etc., when they want it.

Abbeyfield House can accommodate 13 residents, but there is an additional furnished room providing short-term accommodation for residents' guests or for elderly people needing, for example, somewhere to convalesce or to stay while relatives are on holiday. Most of the current residents have lived there happily for over five years but, at the time of writing, there is a vacancy.

We arrange an Open House regularly and the next will be a coffee morning on Saturday 14 May from 10.30 to noon. You are cordially invited to come and see us at a time when the beautiful garden should be looking at its best. Meanwhile, if you would like more information about life at Abbeyfield - long or short stay - please contact Mrs Dawn Orr (455 1636) or Mr Michael Milner (458 1110).

Norma Milner

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