

- sixty years on



Coleridge Walk today.

with a few belongings for £3 - a week's wage for some. That night, Wordsworth Walk was empty.

Apparently there had been a warning about the type of raid (from Bletchley?). Six mines fell in pairs in the district. Bertie Hart, a full-time warden who lived in Hogarth Hill, had just left the wardens' post on the Green to make a check when through the darkness he discerned a cylinder (8ft x 2 ft) hanging from a large parachute as it drifted towards the middle of the Green. Frozen with fear, he was blown by the blast 200 yards towards Hogarth Hill. Fortunately the soft clay of the Green absorbed much of the blast which went upwards, stripping the roofs and some frontages of surrounding houses. Alas the biggest victim was the much loved Club House, the social centre of the community which later was to look forward in vain to its restoration. Although some thought it was not beyond repair the policy then was early demolition to remove ghastly sights.

The bomb blast from Willifield Green had also reached Lucas Crescent where Gladys' in-laws lived. Her father-in-law was William Hunter, an original resident, founder member of the Free Church and a Director of

Copartnership Tenants Ltd. He and his wife Rose were persuaded to move in with Gladys, her husband Harry and son Douglas in Brooklands Rise until their home had been repaired. Sadly on the night of 1 October the Hunters' home took a direct hit and all three generations of the family perished.

A few days later the King and Queen visited the Green itself to see the havoc wrought there, an exciting event that Eileen Barrett of Addison Way remembers very clearly. Our much-loved Queen Mother, as she is now, no doubt recalled her visits to the Suburb before the war. On 13 September Buckingham Palace had itself been bombed so she was able to identify with other peoples experiences in the Blitz.

The news of the landmines was withheld from the public for 14 weeks and then suitably spun to tone down the devastation and slaughter in Coleridge Walk to comply with 'considerations of National Security and censorship'. Thus Willifield Green tended to get more attention in the history books. The number of casualties round the Green was remarkably light. But in Coleridge Walk there were 12 fatalities, and many casualties. Later on in the Blitz and in the Little Blitz in 1944

(when there were far more red alerts than in 1940) there were to be more deaths and casualties in the Suburb, but that is another story.

On a lighter note, many Suburb residents have always had a taste for the theatre, and no less so in wartime. The local attraction was the Golders Green Hippodrome, the first theatre in London to re-open after the war began, with *The Importance of Being Earnest*, with John Gielgud and Edith Evans.

However, residents were not afraid to visit the West End. Soon after the Blitz began, Ethel Whitehead of Willifield Way went to the Lyric to see *Thunder Rock* with Michael Redgrave and Bernard Miles. An air raid began. The manager told the audience they could either leave immediately or stay until the 'all clear'. Few left.

After the play the performers with others from another show, provided impromptu entertainment for a while. The raid ended at 4am. In the meantime people had settled down for the night. Ethel found a settee in a vestibule, and slept until the first tube to Golders Green, walking home for a wash and brush up and breakfast before going off to work.

MICHAEL HOLTON

60 years on, to the hour, Michael Holton and friends laid this wreath on the Tony Mandelson memorial bench in memory of Suburb residents killed by the landmine.



Suburb Reeds

The second Residents Association's Millennium Music Event

The HGS Millennium Music series continued on 30 September with a woodwind and piano recital by a distinguished trio of musicians, performing under the title 'Suburb Reeds' - oboists Neil Black and Janice Knight (Suburb residents since 1985) and pianist-clarinetist Thea King (from nearby Brondesbury). In an interestingly varied programme, only two out of the eight works performed used the same combination of instruments. Neil Black stuck to the oboe, but his wife (and former pupil at the Royal Academy) alternated between the oboe and its cousins the oboe d'amore and the cor anglais. Thea King on this occasion relegated the instrument for which she is best known, the clarinet (she and Neil Black are fellow professors at the Guildhall School), to second place in favour of the piano - on which she originally won a scholarship to the Royal College. We heard her on the clarinet and basset horn only twice in the evening; it was a pleasure to discover this other side to her talent.

The centrepiece was the 'Dialogue' for oboe and piano by Geoffrey Bush (1920-98), for many years a resident of Corringham Road, where his wife Julie still lives. Thoughtfully she had provided photocopies of his obituary from The Times, which offered much insight into the life of a scholar, critic and composer who deserves greater recognition. True to its name, 'Dialogue' is a partnership of equals, which exploits brilliantly the characteristics of both instruments. It is written in an attractive, approachable style, in the English tradition. Bush (a great admirer of John Ireland) wrote of himself: "My music is lyrical, rhythmic, economical, clear-cut in texture and, as far as I can make it, direct of utterance." Neil Black, who collaborated with Bush on the work and later recorded it, described it as "one of the best examples of wind writing that I have come across in my life."

The rest of the programme consisted of works by Telemann, Handel, Mozart, Beethoven, Reinecke (whose pupils in Leipzig



Thea King, Neil Black, Julie Bush and Janice Knight at the HGS Millennium Music evening.

included Grieg and Sullivan) and Ravel, all of which involved interesting substitutions for the composers' original scoring. In a Telemann concerto the rich tone of the oboe d'amore was particularly striking, enhanced by the resonant acoustics of the Free Church and the pleasing antiphonal effect of the wind players standing facing each other, in the baroque manner. Other pieces brought out intriguing contrasts of timbre from the different instruments.

As a pianist, I was not wholly convinced by the arrangement for cor anglais and piano of Ravel's *Pavane pour une Infante Défunte*. The cor anglais makes a magical sound, but its relatively short range meant that every repeat of the main theme had to be at the same pitch; in Ravel's original for piano solo it comes in at a different octave each time. But that is only a minor aside on a delightful evening of impeccable playing.

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