



# Opening up the forest floor

Work is currently being carried out in Bigwood. This is being done according to the Bigwood Management Plan which has been drawn up by Barnet after consultation with the Trees and Open Spaces Committee of the RA. Part of the Plan involves coppicing which is done from time to time on Saturdays mornings. This work is directed by a Barnet Arboricultural Officer but volunteers are needed from the community to help with the work. The picture shows volunteers working in the wood in September. Further days are planned for October 22 and November 26. Volunteers meet at the Memorial Gate at 10am.

The work is vital to preserve the character of the woodland which was first shown on maps circa 1746. Coppicing has been practiced in the UK for at least 400 years. Most mature trees will sprout repeatedly from the stump when cut down so can live for centuries. A recent example can be seen on the right of the Memorial Gate entrance where hazel, coppiced in February this year, has re-sprouted very quickly. This form of management has declined since the nineteenth century but is now being reinstated in areas of ancient and semi natural woodland.

When the forest floor is opened up, by cutting hazel and clearing ivy etc, to sunlight, nutrients are available for wild flowers and young trees to grow. A properly run coppice cycle gives a diverse age and habitat for wildlife. The smaller cut hazel timber can be used to form fencing or dead hedging whilst larger timber will remain in situ to increase deadwood resource and provide valuable habitat for invertebrates, bats and birds.

Trees are essential to us in so many ways. They store carbon, improve air quality, offer shade and shelter, stabilise the soil



RA volunteers coppicing party

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# Tony Mandelson memorial renewed

It was an idea that would have appealed to RA chairman Tony Mandelson, who died in 1988, a memorial bench round a tree on Willifield Green used by children and their parents on their way to and from school. Since then two such benches have been worn out and a third has now been organised by the Residents Association.

The new bench, work has not yet been completed, is beneath a different tree, this time at the other end of the green. Once finished there will be another ceremony for what will be an even more fitting memorial to a well loved Suburb character.



# An Indian Portia

Dr Kusoom Vadgama looks after the eyes of a host of Suburb residents and has done so for years in her Temple Fortune practice. But that's not all. Every now and again she produces a well researched scholarly tome

mostly on the influence of Indians on the UK. Many of her Suburb friends joined her in South Audley Street to see the launch of her latest book at the Nehru Centre. We were not alone as it seemed most of London's Indian intelligentsia were there too.

The latest book, at 704 pages, celebrates the life and writing of Cornelia Sorabji one of the most remarkable women of her time. The launch, chaired by the BBC's Joshua Rozenberg, heard of Kusoom's discovery of Sorabji and her determination to reveal her story from law student in Bombay to Oxford where, at Somerville College in the 1860s, she became the first woman and first Indian to obtain an Oxford law degree. She devoted her life to womens' emancipation and to writing. We heard from

the current Somerville principal, Dr Alice Prochaska, who was proud that Sorabji had been a student as had been Indira Ghandi, the first woman prime minister and Margaret Thatcher. One of the Suburb contingent was Dr Elizabeth Monkhouse who was also at Somerville in the thirties.



Dr Kusoom Vadgama, left, Elizabeth Monkhouse and Richard Wakefield in the Nehru Centre

# Trip to RAF Fylingdales

The Suburb Astronomy Group, HGS Astronomical Society, visited RAF Fylingdales on 30 August. Situated in the middle of the North York Moors, the RAF base achieved fame in the 60s because of its appearance, three large golf ball shaped spheres housing sophisticated radar designed to give the UK and US warning of any impending nuclear attack. Fylingdales was one of three BMEWS (Ballistic Missile Early Warning System) sites, the others being at Thule in Greenland and Clear in Alaska.

The Golf Balls were replaced in 1992 by 120 foot high pyramid called the SSPAR or Solid State Phased Array Radar, now devoted to monitoring not only missile launches but also Space surveillance.

The Space aspect was the big attraction for the dozen members

of the society who visited the top security RAF base. Flt Lt Kevin Simmonds took us through huge steel doors into the main building, as it is designed to withstanding a nuclear EMP (electro magnetic pulse) attack. After a film about the history and function of the base and a tour of the SSPAR we were taken into the Space Operations Room. This is manned continuously and monitors some 16,000 man-made objects orbiting the earth currently and has a catalogue of over 32,000 objects.

We asked them whether they had ever detected UFO's but they told us they were confident that they had identified most of the objects, varying in size from the ISS (International Space Station) down to a glove, a camera and even a screwdriver.

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# 'The Merry Wives'

July was not exactly sunny but it was cheered up by an excellent production of 'The Merry Wives of Windsor' by the Garden Suburb Theatre group at the Little Oak Wood Open Air Theatre. Colin Gregory's sensitive production had a real small country town feel about it. Children played and folk bustled about.

John Colmans has the figure and voice for Sir John Falstaff, but he was rather too gentlemanly. A little more of the rogue and amorous opportunist would not have gone amiss. The object of his passion, Mistress Ford, was well portrayed by Catherine Lemmon. She and Louise Seheult, as Margaret Page, made a good pair of Falstaff

baiteurs. Jon Musker, as the jealous husband, Frank Ford, was outstanding. His frustrations and rages were amusingly depicted.

The young couple Fenton and Anne Page (Geoff Prutton and Vanessa Williams) were happily united finally. Tony Newton, impressive as Robert Shallow, got a lot of humour out of the Justice of the Peace as did Owain Rose as the parson Hugh Evans. Lydia Tutton was a pert Robin, servant to Falstaff.

The set and costumes were created by Frances Musker and Mirander Solomon's childrens' movement and dances added to the enjoyment of a particularly delightful production.

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