

Angus Walker is the new Chairman of the Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust.

A quick look in Who's Who revealed Angus to have had a very varied career, "Perhaps too varied", he muttered when I asked him about it. A grammar school boy from South East London, after two years National Service in the Army, Angus went to Oxford and read history. He did research in Poland and then joined the Foreign Service from where, in Washington D.C. he was seconded to the Treasury. Resigning from the public service, he spent the 70s teaching politics and economics back at University. He then worked as a strategist successively for British Petroleum and British Telecom before becoming a management consultant. Since retiring in the late 1990s he has continued to work on consultancy projects for the EU and HMG. He has also spent a couple of years teaching two twelve year olds the whole of the secondary school syllabus as well as working in the charitable sector. He is very proud of his recent A* GCSE Maths qualification: "I had to find out from experience what on earth 'course work' was." He is the review editor of an academic journal specialising in the history of Central Europe and somewhere along the way he became a Fellow of the Institute of Electrical Engineers, translated a book from Polish and wrote a book on Karl Marx.

Angus has lived on the Suburb in North Square for twenty five years with his – as he is at pains to point out – much better-known wife, Ann the Suburb artist who is also distinguished by her generous, if extremely informal hospitality and, according to some, excessively enthusiastic support of Suburb wildlife.

Although all his four daughters attended schools on the Suburb, Angus ruefully observed than many mothers at the school gates believed Ann to be a single parent; commuting and travel meant, he claims, that for a long time and for a good part of the year he never saw the Suburb except in darkness and his contribution to Suburb life had been infinitely small.

Retired, he found himself drawn into the debate about the possibility of the Trust's development of a site in North Square and was subsequently challenged by Jane Blackburn, the then newly-appointed Trust Manager, to help the Trust and not simply to criticize it. In 2005 he found himself working for Jane on strategic issues.

He was then involved for a large part of 2007 in the application to the Leasehold Valuation Tribunal to relate the Management Charge to the value of Suburb properties which again brought him into contact with a large number of Suburb residents and its organisations and which, as he says, taught him how much there was to learn about the regulations affecting the Trust and the way in which the Trust affects the lives of Residents.

In September 2007 Angus was one of four residents elected unopposed to the Trust Council and shortly thereafter was elected Chairman. When asked about the issues facing the Trust he said that, fifty years after the passing of the 1967 Leasehold Reform Act – which effectively sequestered a large part of the Trust's property – had transformed the majority of Suburb residents from leaseholders to freeholders, it was clearly time for a thorough review of the Trust, its functions and effectiveness. Fortunately, this was a process which his predecessor as Chairman, Mervyn Mandell, had set in hand, successfully grasping the nettle of the need to revise the way in which the Management Charge is calculated and so substantially to increase it. Mervyn Mandell had also arranged for a thorough revision of the Trust's accounting systems. These two things were the indispensable preconditions for the work needed to carry on the process that Mervyn Mandell has started.

Angus said that he was very mindful of the immense amount of experience of Suburb affairs possessed by past and present Trustees and by the many residents who had worked hard for the Residents Association, Fellowship House and other organizations that constitute the social life of the Suburb. He also emphasized what he felt to be the indispensably valuable and selfless role in the work of the Trust played by the nominated members of the Council. It was they who, in fact, effectively determined the quality of much of the Trust's most important functions. Last and certainly not least he was very conscious of the part played by the Trust's staff whose expertise was indispensable and whose effectiveness, patience and commitment was exemplary.

He took a modest view of his own role as Chairman. He was elected by the Council to serve their purposes. He had a lot still to learn. His primary role was to help the Council to establish and articulate policy. This should be exercised in a way that provided Residents with the opportunity fully to understand the purposes of the Trust and the rules that governed its operations. He also felt that the Trust should try to create regular opportunities for informed debate on the fundamental issues that the Trust was attempting to address.

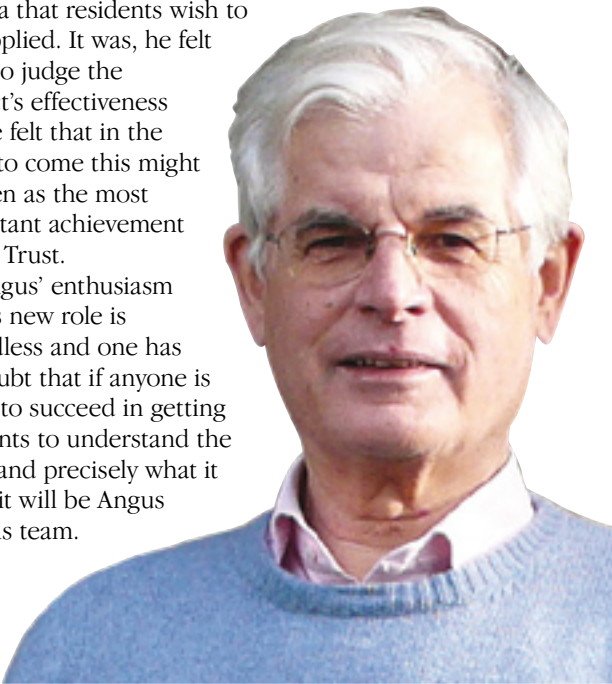
He would not be drawn on what precisely he hoped the Trust would achieve. He felt that words were cheap and the

delivery of promises much more difficult and that we all had yet much to learn about the nature of the problems with which we are faced. There were, however, two areas in particular in which he thought that the Trust needed to show evidence of progress.

The first of these was the long-run funding of the Trust. The Trust's stated objective include the raising of money for the fulfillment of its purposes, which related to more purely charitable activities as well as conservation. This was a function that had, so far, been relatively neglected. He hoped that the Trust would start to make proposals for fulfilling this objective.

The second area, of equal importance, was the way in which the Trust carried out its primary purpose, the preservation of the character and amenities of the Suburb. Here he was concerned to stress the importance of the area characterisation project, again started under the leadership of Mervyn Mandel. This was not simply a one-off, eye-catching initiative but represented a fundamental improvement in the way in which applications by residents for improvements to their property were to be made. This was an opportunity for any resident to participate in defining the conservation priorities of the Suburb Trust and in improving the efficiency and flexibility with which applications could be processed. The project was meant to provide a live, real-time database that would be constantly reviewed with the help of residents once established, and would provide a visual and written depository of the criteria that residents wish to see applied. It was, he felt early to judge the project's effectiveness but he felt that in the years to come this might be seen as the most important achievement of the Trust.

Angus' enthusiasm for his new role is boundless and one has no doubt that if anyone is going to succeed in getting residents to understand the Trust and precisely what it does, it will be Angus and his team.



BANANA CAKE

Ingredients:
2 cups of self-raising flour • 125 g of butter
2 whole eggs • 1½ cups of caster sugar
½ cup of sour cream (or buttermilk, or crème fraîche)
1 tsp of baking soda • 1 tsp of vanilla extract
1-2 very ripe bananas (depending on size)

Method:
Cream the sugar and butter, add eggs, one at a time. Dissolve the baking soda in the sour cream. Alternate adding flour and sour cream to the creamed mixture. An the end, fold in vanilla extract and mashed bananas. Pour into a lined baking tray or cake tin, even muffin cases – choose your shape. Bake in a moderate oven.

Note: Together with the bananas, non-purists may want to throw in leftovers of other soft, non-acidic fruit (e.g. strawberries), or chopped walnuts.

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