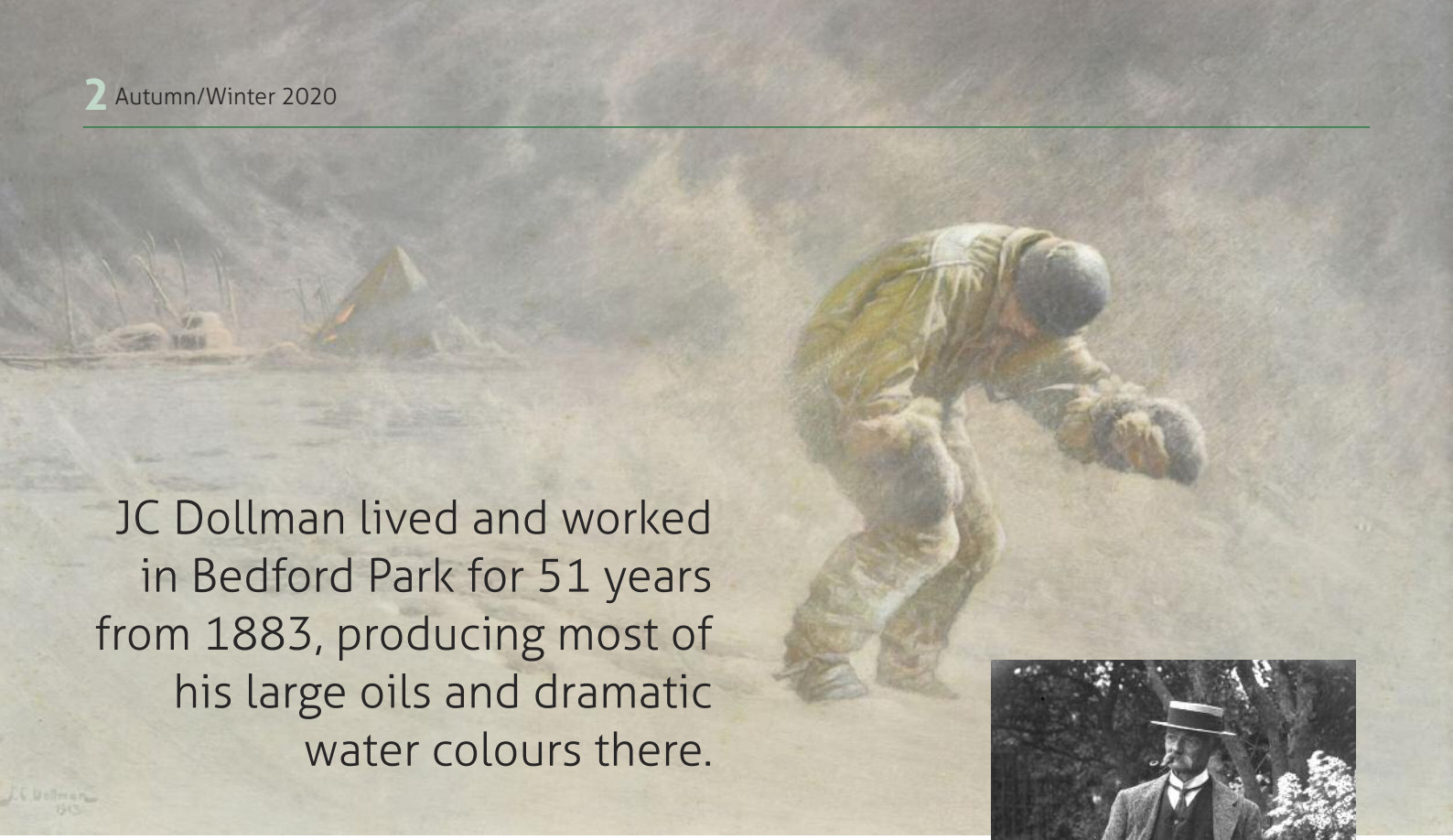


THE BEDFORD PARK SOCIETY

THE BEDFORD PARK JOURNAL

Celebrating the architecture, people and history of the suburb

For members of the Bedford Park Society **Autumn/Winter 2020**



JC Dollman lived and worked in Bedford Park for 51 years from 1883, producing most of his large oils and dramatic water colours there.

A Very Gallant Gentleman



Right: **Dollman in the garden of 14 Newton Grove**

A prolific painter

JC Dollman

Renowned English artist, John Charles Dollman, bought land in Bedford Park in 1880 and commissioned Maurice B Adams to build him two houses at 12 and 14 Newton Grove — with a studio at number 14.

Born in 1851, the son of an established bookseller and stationer, he called his home at 14 Newton Grove "Hove House" in memory of his place of birth. The house is now known as Kara Lodge and today its large and light first floor studio has been preserved and is still stunning. JC Dollman came to London to study at South Kensington and the Royal Academy Schools. In his day, he was a highly celebrated and fashionable artist, exhibiting almost continuously at the Royal Academy from the 1870s until 1912, and elected to the Royal Watercolour Society in 1913. He had 67 major paintings exhibited at the Royal Academy over a period of 62 years and the Royal Society for Painters in Water Colours exhibited 193 of his works. His paintings are owned by many galleries in England and internationally.

Extensive skills

Dollman painted in all the traditional and new genres: history, dramatic narrative, war, social realism, mythology, sport, portrait, still life and landscape. Equally proficient in oils and water colours, his particular talent lay in applying his skills as a highly competent painter of animals across all media. His sporting and highwayman pictures were printed as popular photogravure reproductions, which found a ready market.

From the mid-1870s he produced material for a number of Illustrated newspapers and magazines, and was appointed Chief Draftsman for *The Graphic*, a weekly illustrated newspaper. His work depicted political, military and social events, including the Zulu Wars and the wars in Afghanistan, invariably with a dramatic narrative. His experience on *The Graphic* was particularly formative in developing his sensitivity to social issues and his interest in painting social realism.

Depictions of misfortune

Some of his later work reflected his desire to tell a story of human misfortune or represent the plight of working animals. Works such as *The Immigrants' Ship*, *Hard Times* and *The Pinch of Poverty* depicted hardship and vulnerability with the aim of provoking thought and eliciting sympathy for his less privileged working-class subjects. One of his best-known animal works is *Les Misérables — A London Cab Stand,* focussing on the working horses, standing together in stormy conditions.





Amongst his prolific output, his most famous painting, *A Very Gallant Gentleman,* depicts Antarctic explorer Lawrence Oates as he walked to his death. It was commissioned by officers of the Inniskilling Dragoons and exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1914. It now hangs in the Conservative Club in London.

During the First World War, Dollman, unlike the official war artists, did not experience the front line directly but his work was informed by official photographs published in newspapers and magazines. He concentrated on the human side of war, illustrating comradeship and selflessness but also the suffering of the injured.

Early Bedford Park's artistic appeal was such that Dollman's younger brother, artist Herbert Pervis Dollman, and six of his siblings were recorded as living nearby at 32 Woodstock Road. Married with four children who became gifted scientists and artists, JC Dollman lived at Hove House for 40 years until the death of his wife Mary when he moved to 25 Woodstock Road. He died in 1934, having painted throughout his adult life.

Thanks to Ruth Levy and Guy Dollman for their help in compiling this article and providing images.





Clockwise from top left:

Les Misérables – A London Cab Stand © Museum of London

The Immigrants' Ship

***The Avenue looking south*, one of nine lithographs by local artists commissioned by Jonathan Carr** © Museum of London

Fraternité

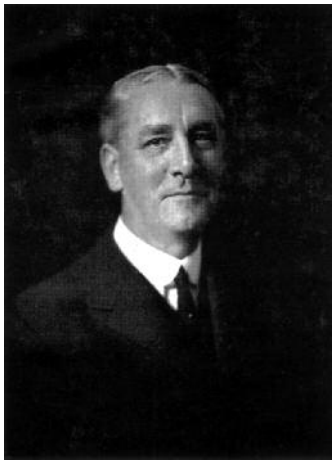
Bedford Park's prestigious coachbuilder

Retired interior designer George Butlin reveals his passion for historic cars in this history of H J Mulliner & Co.



Advertisement for an early Mulliner's car

In the first half of the last century, it was very common to see a bare motor car chassis being delivered from manufacturers to the celebrated coachworks of H J Mulliner & Co in Bedford Park. The late Leonard Darke, a long-time resident and former President of the Bedford Park Society, recalled to me many years ago the frequent deliveries of these chassis, which involved a temporary seat being fixed to the bare frame, leaving the driver exposed to the elements. The smaller, usually high-quality specialist car manufacturers often did not have their own coachwork facility and would therefore sell a chassis to an individual purchaser, who then made the equally important choice of coachbuilder. It was in this growing industry that H J Mulliner (1870–1967) achieved his success. HJM, as he is commonly described, was part of a coachbuilding dynasty with pre-motor car coachbuilding works in Northampton, Leamington, Birmingham and Liverpool, dating back to 1760.



H J Mulliner in 1926

HJM's father Colonel Robert Bouverie Mulliner had moved to Chiswick in the early 1870s, and, already prosperous, lived with his family at Grove House, an 18th century villa, and one of the largest houses in the expanding suburb of Grove Park until 1882. HJM was first apprenticed to the company's Liverpool works. This was followed by two years in Paris (1891–93) at an academy for mechanical draughtsmanship and designing, with the well-regarded Albert Dupont.

New form of progression

After returning from Paris in 1893, on his own admission HJM rather "dallied in Chiswick tennis society" until he took up a position at 28 Brook Street in early 1896 as joint manager of the Mulliner London Ltd showroom run by his cousins, Augustus and Arthur. In November 1896 the Motor Car Act was passed "giving this new type of vehicle the freedom of the road." HJM rapidly took a great interest in this "new form of progression." His ability with the French language had enabled him to become well known with a number of French chauffeurs — preferred by their employers for their superior technical skills — which, in turn allowed him to develop an increasing connection with wealthy motorists of the time. Along with his cousin Arthur, he was a founder member of the Automobile Club of Great Britain (and Ireland), which later became the Royal Automobile Club**,** and drove his car during the first parade of club cars in 1897.

When the 1900 Motor Car Exhibition was held, *Coopers Art Journal* reported: "Messrs H J Mulliner & Co of Brook Street are going in very strongly for the manufacture of Motor Car bodies, besides having a stand of their own at the Exhibition, their handiwork was very much in evidence on many of the exhibits, and we have no hesitation in saying that most of the best carriage work in the Exhibition was of their manufacture."

HJM's first showroom and works were in Brook Street, Mayfair, where he attracted the attention of the Hon C S Rolls, building for his personal use a two-seater on an early Silver Ghost chassis. The completed car was used by Rolls to transport his balloons, a "sport" with which he was very involved at the time, and the rear platform was constructed to take the balloon's basket. Hence, it became known as Rolls's balloon car.

Flanders Road site

In 1901, when HJM married Gertrude Piesse, he was noted as a "Motor Carriage Builder of Isis House, Grove Park" on the wedding certificate. His father was now calling himself "Gentleman." A Royal Appointment was granted to the young company in 1903 as a Motor Body Builder to the Princess of



Above:
The Keene's Motor Works, looking north towards the gable of The General Stores.

Top right:
1953 Bentley R Type Continental; 192 examples were built in Bedford Park. The finest of these now sell for £1 million

Wales, later Queen Mary, and in 1905 the company is recorded as building limousine coachwork for the Princess. In addition, the company built bodies for Indian Rajahs, the British nobility and others who were able to pay the prices asked. In 1905, the company took over a site in Bedford Park from the previous occupants, Keene's Automobile Works, founded by Henry Lancelot Addison Perry-Keene, a devotee of steam cars. The illustration shows the yard, which was accessed from the corner of Flanders Road, looking north towards the gable of the former General Stores on Bath Road, now used as offices. The Mulliner works originally comprised the yard in Flanders Road plus the three floors of the General Stores, under a lease running from 29 March 1905 to 20 September 1924. Over the years, the works were expanded to cover a previously open space to the west of the site and behind the Tabard Inn. The top floor of the General Stores' building was allocated to the drawing office and the leather shop, where upholstery was made for fitting to vehicles, which were assembled on the ground floor, accessed by a wide opening in the gable wall.

Design of supreme elegance

HJM appears to have prospered before selling out to John Croall & Sons in January 1910. He remained as a consultant for three years before retiring on health grounds although this seems inconsistent with his living to the ripe old age of 97. Under the new owners the firm was perceived to be at the same level of achievement as its major competitors, including illustrious companies such as Hooper,



Barker and Vanden Plas. Not only did it exhibit the highest standards of craftsmanship, it also managed to produce innovative designs for its stand at motor shows, for example the "high-vision" Bentley models, which incorporated pioneering curved plexiglass roof panels. During the post-war years, H J Mulliner produced large numbers of factory-commissioned coachwork for the R Type Continental "fastback," considered by many to be a design of supreme elegance.

In 1961 the company merged with the London coach builder Park Ward, which since 1939 had been owned by Rolls-Royce. Work transferred to the Park Ward premises in Willesden, under the new name of H J Mulliner, Park Ward Ltd, where it produced specialised versions of Bentley coachwork. The firm moved to Harlesden in 1982, finally closing in 1991. A three-storey office block was constructed on the Bedford Park site, still clearly visible from the District Line platform. For part of its history the firm proudly displayed on its entrance gates "Mulliner of Bedford Park." Given the style and quality of this business, and the sheer panache exhibited in its output, surely it was a highly appropriate activity within an aesthetic garden suburb.



The ground floor of The General Stores, showing the assembly of the wooden ash framing before panelling with metal

I am indebted to Will Morrison, motoring historian, for information on the Mulliner family and their firms. Further information was obtained from the records and collections at the Archives & Local Studies, Chiswick Library who also kindly provided the historic images from the Mulliner Archive.

Hotbed of women's



At the time Bedford Park was established in the early 1880s, women had no right to vote, their legal existence was suspended during marriage and acceptance into professional institutions to train as a lawyer or doctor was still very difficult.

However, from the outset the atmosphere in the new suburb was unusually enlightened — leading suffragettes spoke at forward-thinking debates on women's rights and there were a number of high-profile female residents who fought against the prevailing Victorian prejudice.

The absence of sex discrimination in the Bedford Park Club, together with its treatment of women as equal members, created an ideal environment to encourage open discussion. The Bedford Park Reunion — one of the Club's key societies — founded in 1882, which met monthly to discuss social questions, included women's rights when it was still a highly controversial subject. Five of the Reunions' discussions during the first 12-month period were led by women, and four dealt with specific problems of women.

A platform for suffragettes

The first discussion "The Relation of Women to the State" was on 3 June 1882. James Sime, local resident and authority on Goethe and Lessing, spoke in favour of extending the vote to women because he felt that any class which is unrepresented is neglected, although he deplored the "exaggerated" language of some of its supporters. He was followed by suffragette Lydia Ernestine Becker who spoke about the plight of married women and argued that women were better qualified to legislate some matters than men since "they knew more about them". It was something of a coup to have Becker speak at the Reunion meeting. She was a leader in the early British suffrage movement, as well as an amateur scientist with interests in biology and astronomy, founder and publisher of the *Women's Suffrage Journal* between 1870 and 1890, as well as chair of the Central Committee of the National Society for Women's Suffrage, formed in 1871 to lobby parliament.

A more heated and lengthier debate took place on 26 May 1883 when introductory speaker, Miss Mary Elize Richardson, a member of the London School Board and proprietor of the Bedford Park Stores argued that "the solution of the present difficulty regarding women's need of remunerative employment lies in the throwing open to all, without distinction of sex, the industries and professions hitherto monopolised by men." She pointed out that although there were more women than men in England the only jobs open to them were those of governess, school mistress, and telegraph or post office clerks. During the ensuing debate, her argument was supported by Miss Eliza Orme who lived at 14 The Orchard. She was the first woman in Britain to gain a law degree, although as a woman she was not admitted as a member of the English bar or of the Law Society. Founding member of the Women's Liberal Federation and editor of the *Women's Gazette and Weekly News* from 1889-1891, she became senior lady assistant commissioner to the Royal Commission on Labour, investigating women's work.

Women's own group

Despite considerable support from many male members in the debates, the women decided to form their own group: The Ladies' Discussion Society, which met monthly at 2.00pm on Saturdays at Eliza Orme's home. The 100 members of the Society were clearly a credible force in the women's movement as they were able to attract Elizabeth

suffrage

Cady Stanton — a leader of the women's rights movement in the United States during the mid-to late-1800s — as one of their speakers. Stanton became the president of the National Woman Suffrage Association and was also active in other social reforms, including the abolition of slavery.

In May 1884 another discussion "The general belief in the inferiority of women is not based on evidence" was led by Laura McLaren, Lady Aberconwy, wife of the Radical MP Charles MacLaren and a leading Liberal suffragist. She was a life-long campaigner, an activist in the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies and founder of the Liberal Women's Suffrage Union. In 1910, she led a deputation to Downing Street to confront Prime Minister Asquith about his opposition to women's rights. As an aside, it is interesting to observe that the monthly discussion meetings were not universally popular. After they had been running for eight months, a letter from a member's husband was published in *The Bedford Park Gazette* in which he begged the editor to use his influence to persuade the ladies to meet on a day other than a Saturday when he "could reasonably expect to enjoy the company of his wife."











Clockwise from top left:
Lydia Ernestine Becker © Manchester Art Gallery
Elizabeth Cady Stanton
Gertrude Baker
Portrait of Inez Bensusan by Cecil William Rea

Local residents continue the cause

Bedford Park was more than a platform for debate on suffrage; over the next 20 years some of its most high-profile female residents continued the struggle through their contribution as writers or performers, as well as suffragettes. Gertude Elizabeth Baker (1876–1962) lived at 106 Esmond Road and was a playwright whose work highlighted the battle against the social constraints that were limiting opportunities for England's young working women. Her first play *Chains* exposed the plight of lower-middle-class men and women trapped by the "chains" of work and marriage. She wrote a total of 15 plays in the new "realism" style.

Inez Bensusan (1871–1967) lived in a flat at 8 The Orchard from 1924. She had emigrated from Australia, and worked as an actress, writer and campaigner for women's suffrage, through the Jewish League for Women's Suffrage and the Women's Social and Political Union. She made a vital contribution to the work of the Actresses' Franchise League, developing and running their Play Department.

Another prominent figure was Florence Farr (1860–1917) — well-known actress, writer, composer and director, one-time mistress of George Bernard Shaw and leader of the occult order "The Golden Dawn." She didn't own a home in Bedford Park but in early 1890, moved in with her sister, Henrietta, and brother-in-law, painter and stage designer Henry Marriott Paget, to 1 The Orchard. She was an early Feminist who publicly campaigned for suffrage, workplace equality, and equal protection under the law for women. She wrote a book and many articles in scholarly journals on the rights of "the modern woman."

It would not be until 1918 that the Representation of the People Act was passed, giving women over 30 the vote if they met minimum property qualifications and 1928 when the vote was finally given to all women aged over 21. It could certainly be argued that Bedford Park played its part in furthering the cause during the vital time leading up to this breakthrough.

This article has drawn information from The Early Community at Bedford Park by Margaret Jones Bolsteri and from wider research.

German suburb inspired by Bedford Park



The international development of the garden suburb and the garden city accelerated after 1900 often following English models. Germany's first garden city at Hellerau, Dresden, has links and affinities to Bedford Park.

In 1906 Hans Schmidt, the owner of "The German Workshops for Handcraft Art" acquired land four miles from Dresden. His plan was to relocate his facilities into a single factory, to build a factory "village" for his workforce and districts of larger houses. He aspired to create a community drawn together "by the silent effect of good architecture within a beautiful landscape, by a calm secluded location with a convenient connection to the city, which is indispensable for us modern people." Schmidt's business brought him into contact with progressive designers and architects, the German Garden City Society, and especially with the architect Hermann Muthesius, an enthusiastic admirer of Bedford Park.

Muthesius had been posted to the Prussian embassy in London during the years 1896-1903, charged with reporting on British developments in the applied arts. His three-volume work of 1904-5, *Das Englische Haus*, is a history of modern English domestic building. Muthesius argued that English private houses were superior to the rented apartments characteristic of German urbanisation, and offered the satisfaction of ownership, permanence, healthier conditions and the opportunity for the individual to express taste and culture through his home. Muthesius came to know Norman Shaw and especially admired Bedford Park, which he saw as resolving the problem of housing for the urban middle classes. He wrote of the suburb as "a revelation ... these streets with their cheerful little houses nestling amid the greenery seemed to bespeak quiet comfort and a refreshing *Joie de vivre*."



Hermann Muthesius and his wife Anna at home in London c.1900

Schmidt gave Muthesius a leading role in Hellerau, as adviser and as architect designing one area of the residential development. Much of the scheme seems traceable to the English influence and to Bedford Park. The planning is irregular with variable street lengths and houses set in varying relations to the street. The Bedford Park house types are used with short terraces, semi-detached houses and detached houses offering a choice of house sizes. Muthesius had praised the use of the vernacular Queen Anne style in England and a range of German vernaculars dominate Hellerau. The house plans are free and reflect functional requirements as in the English house designs.

The theatre by the architect Heinrich Tessenow confirmed Hellerau as a centre of the arts. Designed for modernist productions and dance, it became the headquarters of Jacques Dalcroze's fashionable Institute for Rhythmic Movement attracting leading avant-garde dancers – and audiences – from all over Europe.



X-Weinzar, Creative Commons CC-BY-SA-2.5

By 1913 there were around 2,000 people living in Hellerau, prompting a wave of garden suburb developments throughout Germany. However, Hellerau declined under the Nazis and the subsequent Russian occupation. Following a 1996 report highlighting neglect, it has undergone a renaissance. Now protected by legislation, most of the houses have been restored, as have the theatre and other major buildings. The renewed Hellerau seems to share with Bedford

Park a sense of a community, enjoying its beguiling but artistic "'rus in urbe" — truly a sense of countryside in the city.

A house should be "clothed by its garden"



Leading designer of the Arts and Crafts movement, William Morris, considered that the garden was inseparable from the house. In his view, they were intended to be seen as a whole and should be designed to complement each other. The design of the garden should offer vistas from the house, while the views from the garden should flow into the house.







William Morris believed that, large or small, the garden should be "orderly and rich" and should be well fenced from the outside world.

"It should by no means imitate either the wilfulness or the wildness of nature but should look like a thing never to be seen except near the house. It should, in fact, look like part of the house."

Many gardens in Bedford Park — of all sizes — are wonderful illustrations of sympathetic extensions to their houses, enhancing the architectural features. A selection of the many examples from across Bedford Park are illustrated here.













Thanks to Ellen Rooney www.ellenrooney.com and Justin Morris Wyatt for the photographs and everyone who kindly gave access to their gardens, many of which have been part of the Bedford Park Festival Open Gardens.











An abundance of local

Laurence Rees

Laurence Rees is a former Head of BBC TV History Programmes and has written seven books focussed primarily on the Second World War. Many of them, including *The Nazis: A Warning from History*, *Auschwitz: The Nazis and the "Final Solution"*, *'World War II Behind Closed Doors* and *The Dark Charisma of Adolph Hitler* were also documentary TV series, which he wrote and produced.



His book *The Holocaust: A New History* published in 2017 was a Sunday Times bestseller, described by the Daily Telegraph as "the finest single volume account of the Holocaust ever written" and by the Mail on Sunday as "ground-breaking."

For several years he was a visiting senior fellow in the International History Department at the London School of Economics and Political Science. He holds honorary doctorates from the University of Sheffield and the Open University. His many awards include a British Book Award, a BAFTA, a George Foster Peabody Award, a Broadcasting Press Guild Award, a Grierson Award, a Broadcast Award, two International Documentary Awards and two Emmys.

In 2010 he founded the website WW2History.com to provide an accessible and authoritative multimedia history of World War II for the web.

His latest book, *Hitler and Stalin,* published in October this year, examines the two tyrants during the Second World War, showing that despite being bitter opponents they were, to a large extent, two sides of the same coin. The book is the culmination of 30 years' work and uses previously unpublished eye-witness testimony from soldiers, civilians and those who knew both men personally.

> "I've lived with my wife and children in Bedford Park for 28 years — the time has passed so quickly, and we all love it. I do think Bedford Park in general — and Woodstock Road, where we live, in particular — is one of the most attractive places in the world. Not just architecturally, but because of the wonderful trees as well. We're so lucky to be here. It's like a village in the city."

Elias Assad

Elias Assad was born in Syria at a time when the country was still relatively peaceful. He attended the American college of Aleppo where he studied English Literature and was particularly fascinated by the "foggy London" of Charles Dickens. He says he was not disappointed when he arrived in late December 1970 to a London with fog everywhere! He became interested in the Antique trade and started his business specialising in Islamic manuscripts, inspired by his affection for the Syriac manuscripts at his family home.

Published in 2015, *Pearls from Heaven* is a book about Elias's collection of manuscripts, started by his father and supplemented over time by him. The manuscripts are written in Syriac, an offshoot of Aramaic, the language spoken during the lifetime of Jesus. Since then, generations of Syriacs have preserved their Christian faith and continued using the Aramaic language. Elias hopes that the book will serve as a reminder that Syriac scholars were the first to translate the Greek sciences into Syriac and in the 8th century from Syriac to Arabic, thus making this wealth of ancient knowledge available for European scholars to render it into Latin in the 11th century.



In 2017 Elias was invited to display a small selection of his manuscripts at a Christian Aid event at St. Michael and All Angels, called "Who is your Neighbour?" This also provided the opportunity for members of the recently established Syriac church in Acton to be welcomed and meet their Bedford Park neighbours. Elias is currently working on a thorough revision of *Pearls from Heaven* to include the manuscripts left out of the original publication.

> "After a brief spell in Ealing I moved to Bedford Park and have lived here ever since, at first in various rented rooms until my wife and I got married. We finally settled in a house in the pleasant and friendly Blandford Road. I am much indebted to the Bedford Park folk who did not allow me to feel an outsider when I first arrived, even though there was no formal welcoming ceremony!"

authors

Bedford Park's reputation for creative and artistic talent continues today. Four more authors currently living in the area are featured below.

Oliver Soden

Writer and broadcaster Oliver Soden is the author of critically-acclaimed *Michael Tippett: The Biography*. His latest book *Jeoffry: The Poet's Cat*, a biography of 18th-century poet Christopher Smart's feline companion, was published in October this year. He is currently working on a biography of Noël Coward.



His biography of Tippett was chosen as "Book of the Year" by the *Spectator* and *Times Literary Supplement*, as one of "2019's Best Classical Music" selections for the *Observer*, won a Somerset Maugham Award, the Royal Philharmonic Society Prize for Storytelling, and is on the longlist for the Historical Writers' Association Non-Fiction Crown. It was a BBC Radio 4 *Book of the Week*, read by Oliver with Sir Derek Jacobi playing Tippett.

Oliver's essays and reviews have appeared in a wide variety of publications, including the *Guardian*, *Spectator*, *Times Literary Supplement*, *Literary Review*, *Gramophone*, *The Art Newspaper* and *BBC Music Magazine*. He has appeared as a guest on a wide range of BBC radio programmes and he serves as a trustee of the Michael Tippett Musical Foundation.

Oliver has worked as assistant producer for a number of award-winning television documentaries, including *George III: The Genius of the Mad King* and *Janet Baker: In Her Own Words* and is part of the team behind BBC Radio 3's long-running programme *Private Passions*.

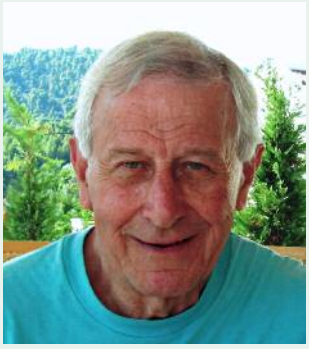
> **"We moved to our flat on the edge of Bedford Park late in 2018, just as I was editing my biography of Michael Tippett. I remember the drive from our previous home in Greenwich, with two cats and the 758-page manuscript on my lap. According to the 1911 census our flat was first purchased by a single woman in her thirties who earned her living as a photographer, and the flat beneath us was owned by a couple who both illustrated children's books. So, I like to think that there's an artistic spirit in the red brickwork."**

Gilbert Thompson

Gilbert Thompson, MD, DSc, FRCP qualified at St. Thomas's Hospital Medical School, London, and after military service joined the Royal Postgraduate Medical School, Hammersmith Hospital, where he spent most of his career except for periods doing research abroad. He led the Medical Research Council Lipoprotein Team at Hammersmith, where he was Honorary Consultant Physician in charge of the Lipid Clinic until his retirement in 1998.

Gilbert is a Past Chairman of the British Atherosclerosis Society and the British Hyperlipidaemia Association (now HEART UK) and is the author of several books, chapters and numerous peer-reviewed papers on the role of cholesterol in heart disease. He is Emeritus Professor in Clinical Lipidology at Imperial College London.

His published books include *Hammersmith Marathon*, *The Cholesterol Controversy*, *Nobel Prizes that changed Medicine*, *Pioneers of Medicine without a Nobel Prize*, *A life spent serving the Raj in Bengal, 1860-1892*, *Time spent Fishing* and most recently *Medicine my vocation, Fishing my recreation: memoirs of a physician and fly fisherman.* This book recounts the author's experiences as a post-war medical student, army doctor in Ghana, and medical research worker in London and North America. It also describes his leisure time activities including running in the London and New York marathons, and his fly fishing expeditions all over the world. The narrative covers the period from the Second World War to the present day, during which there have been dramatic changes in medical practice and social attitudes.



> **"I've lived in Bedford Park since 1977 together with my late wife (Sheila) and our four children; two are doctors, one of whom lives locally. Sheila was a volunteer at Kew and was awarded an MBE for her work there. We both became so fond of Bedford Park that when the time came to down-size we simply moved from one side of the road to the other."**

More information can be found on the "Chiswick Writers' Trail" and the "Timeline of Writers and Books," which lists around 425 writers who have written a book and lived in Chiswick W4, or written books about the area: chiswickbookfestival.net.

Office refurbishment respects architectural values

In 1975 the Victorian Society purchased 1 Priory Gardens in the heart of Bedford Park and installed its national offices in the building. This turn of events has always seemed emblematic of the entwined histories of the "Vic Soc" and Bedford Park, dating back to when John Betjeman and Tom Greeves had been present at the foundation meeting of the Victorian Society in 1957.







Both men would later play central roles in the foundation of the Bedford Park Society and the Victorian Society would give strenuous support in the campaign to save Bedford Park from the threat of development in the 1960s. The Vic Soc reaffirmed its commitment to Bedford Park in 2017 — rejecting a move to new offices. This set in motion a major refurbishment of 1 Priory Gardens, originally built as a family residence by the architect E.J.May, and one of Bedford Park's 356 grade II listed buildings. The wait to see what approach the leading British advocate of the conservation of Victorian and Edwardian architecture would take to their own building opened a new chapter in the relationship between Bedford Park and the Vic Soc. As they wrote to their members: "While the thrust of the present project is overwhelmingly practical, the Society is also ... committed to making the restoration of this historic building an exemplary one."

When the building emerged from eight months of work, the first impression from the street was of restraint. There were freshly painted white windows, balustrade and green doors, but the brickwork had been only lightly cleaned. The new terracotta ball finials marked a return to original materials — dispensing with a fibreglass replacement of a lost original. Access has been rearranged with a new step-free entry from Priory Gardens up to a new front door on the western side, while the entry from Bath Road has also been retained, though it is not in use.

On the garden side, there were major changes, though these carefully acknowledge the architectural language of the original building. Where historic plans indicate that there had once been a conservatory, a new structure now provides a meeting room and kitchen. The design of the meeting room windows is based on the design of the original garden doors. The other main room on the garden side has also been slightly enlarged to improve an awkward interior







space — with the window design closely echoing adjacent existing windows. These changes have created two fine new interior spaces on this side, joined by a lobby with exposed brickwork leading into the garden.

An attractive modern office

It is the interior which is most strikingly changed. The main objective has been to transform what had become a dingy and impractical building into a functional and attractive modern office. At the same time, it was considered vital to reflect the values and mood of a Bedford Park house built at the height of the aesthetic tendencies of the Victorian era, while avoiding slavish imitation of the past.

Changes have been made to the lighting, services and décor so that the interior now has the feel of a modern, attractive office — without resorting to irreversible changes to the fabric of the building. Natural light enters through the two new ground floor rooms and a roof-light at the top of the stairs and suffuses through the building. Modern lighting has been installed throughout as part of a complete updating of all the services. The two offices on the ground floor that overlook Priory Gardens have been opened up — though they can be separated by a new set of panelled doors. The décor is light, and the wood flooring has been cleaned.

Yet, what is also immediately striking in the interior is the retention and enhancement of Bedford Park detail and the use of a decorative scheme that makes reference to the period of construction of the garden suburb. There are three new fireplaces based on original Bedford Park examples with reproductions of de Morgan tiles of the period. Two of the William Morris wallpapers loved by the early residents of Bedford Park are used throughout; both designs are by Kate Faulkner. 'Mallow' used through most of the building against soft green paintwork gives a serene effect. The red version of 'Bramble' used in the library is vivacious, especially against the de Morgan tiles of the fireplace. The adjustable bookshelves were specially designed and are topped off with a "Voyseyesque" detail. Some of the doorknobs are specially commissioned reproductions of original items from other Bedford Park houses.

All parts of the offices have benefitted from the refurbishment. For example, the entry lobby — which runs along Bath Road — previously felt awkward and pinched. Now, some steps have been moved, a fireplace re-instated and a half-glazed door opened through to one of the garden-facing offices. The room is decorated in Morris' Mallow paper and the floor has been re-laid with replica floorboards in Douglas fir. A visitor entering from Priory Gardens through the new front door is greeted by a view into a welcoming room bathed in natural light. The renovation of 1 Priory Gardens has respected the character of both its exterior and interior, while creating an attractive and practical building, fully meeting twenty-first century needs.

This article draws on Kit Wedd's article in The Victorian of March 2020. The interior photographs are by Nick Holt and exterior photographs by West Scott Architects, architects of the refurbishment. Thanks also to Joe O'Donnell and the Victorian Society.

Spotlight on some notable former residents

During this year's Covid lockdown period, the Society produced a series of weekly electronic newsletters for members, which featured over 40 of the hundreds of notable residents who have previously lived in Bedford Park houses.



The project re-emphasised the wealth of artistic and scientific talent from the earliest days of our suburb, while its popularity demonstrated the desire for more information.

Work is currently underway on a revision of the publication *Mainly About Bedford Park People* — originally researched and published by Lawrence Duttson in 1994 with a second edition produced in 2015. The Society has now taken on the task of updating it. The ultimate aim is to continue to provide an alphabetically listed entry on each notable former resident, supplemented with cross-referencing to a list of addresses, thus enabling readers to check any house listed and find out who previously lived there. This is a major undertaking and the first stage of the work is not expected to be completed before mid-2021. In the meantime, we're pleased to publish a reminder of some of the Bedford Park roads particularly noted for their famous former residents.

Esmond Road

No 29 **Fenella Fielding**, Actress

No 35 **Diana Pullein-Thompson**, Author (also 12 Blandford Road) *above, left*

No 48 **Henry Oscar**, Actor

No 62 **James Grout**, Actor

No 63 **Michael Flanders**, Actor, Broadcaster, Writer, Performer

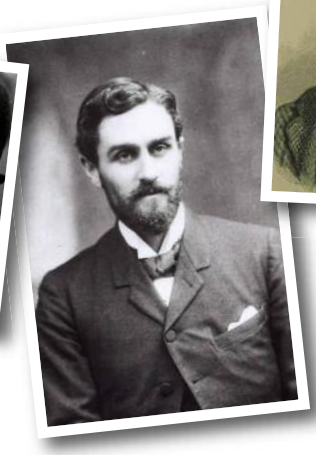
No 69 **Harry Waldo Warner**, Musician and Composer (also 17 Gainsborough Road and 35 Blenheim Road)

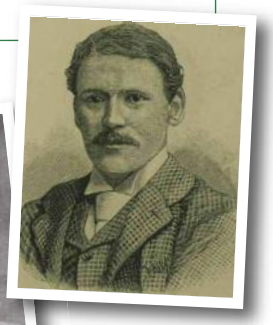
No 111 **Pauline Yates**, Actress











Blandford Road

No 2 **Geoffrey Toone**, Actor

No 2 (Flat 1) **Frank Middlemass**, Actor *2nd from left*

No 4 **Sir Patrick Stewart**, Actor, Director and Producer

No 5 **Angela Rippon**, TV Journalist, Writer and Presenter

No 7 **C F A Voysey**, Architect and Designer *right*

No 7 **Sir Roger Casement**, Diplomat, Humanitarian, Irish Nationalist *2nd from right*

No 12 **Diana Pullein-Thompson**, author (also 35 Esmond Road) *top, left*

No 20 **William Barnes Wollen**, Artist and Illustrator (also 9 Woodstock Road, 10 and 11 Queen Anne's Gardens *far right*

No 31 **Sergius Stepniak**, Russian Anarchist (also 48 Woodstock Road) *top, right*



Woodstock Road

No 1A/No 2 Woodstock Studios **Percy Angelo Staynes**, Artist and Designer (also 29 Flanders Road and 3 Bath Road)

No 9 **William Barnes Wollen**, Artist and Illustrator: (also 20 Blandford Road, 10 and 11 Queen Anne's Gardens) *far right*

No 13 **Lynn Seymour**, Ballerina and Choreographer *above, 3rd from left*

No 48 **Sergius Stepniak**, Russian Anarchist: (Also 31 Blandford Road) *top, right*

No 51 **Prince Dmitri Galitzine**, Diplomat and Businessman

No 88 **Robert Lindsay**, Actor *left*

Edited by Kate Bowes. Contributors: George Butlin, Ba Hons, FCSD (retired) and Nick Bueno de Mesquita

Published by The Bedford Park Society, 10 Blenheim Road, London W4 1UA

Registered charity no 288204

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Cover photograph by David Selby

Designed and produced by olleydesign.com

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