

Clissold Court Callers

In the 69 years since the Court was built, many interesting characters have had some sort of association with it. Hopefully, this article will initiate a series in which residents will recall anecdotes and encounters with notable, or notorious, visitors.

Until 1984 Flat 2 was the surgery of a dentist, Dr. Hackenbroch. He and his surgery achieved a degree of immortality when cited in 'Sacred Games', the biography of Miklos Hammer, a Hungarian-Jewish holocaust survivor. This was the address, and person, to which Miklos Hammer was directed after a short stay in a British internment camp at the end of the war. The book, written by Gerald Jacobs, one time editor of the *Jewish Chronicle*, was published by Penguin in 1995, and has been widely and highly acclaimed as an important addition to the literature of the holocaust.

When I moved into Flat 3 some 37 years ago Flat 1 was occupied by Mrs. Barcan and her polio-disabled daughter Sylvie. One of the first things Mrs. Barcan told me was that my front room had been used by seamstresses working on the Queen's coronation robe. Perhaps one of their tasks was to replace the daffodil which Norman Hartnell, the Queen's dressmaker, had mistaken for the Welsh emblem, with a leek! The table is wartime utility furniture inherited from the previous tenant, and it seems quite possible that where I now spill my chicken curry had once supported that august garment. The Sharrs, living in

Flat 6 had also been aware of this activity, but their views were coloured by a distaste for all things 'establishment', and that included things 'coronation'. In fact the Court seems to have been a focus for radical left-wing politics. I was told that Emmanuel Shinwell and Fenner Brockway had been regular visitors to a flat at the eastern end of the Court.

During the '70s a frequent visitor to the court on Summer Sunday afternoons was one Godfrey Hounsfield. We played Croquet on the lawn behind the house in the park, and invariably partook of a tea comprising egg sandwiches and jelly afterwards. Godfrey was working at Thorn EMI on a novel X-ray imaging technique and his ideas directly inspired my puzzle-game 'Black Box' published in 1976 by Waddingtons and others. But imagine my surprise and delight when he was awarded the 1979 Nobel Prize for Medicine for his invention of the scanner.

On going out one day around 20 years ago I was surprised to encounter Sir Clive Sinclair, of electronic calculator, Spectrum computer, and C5 electric car fame, on the stairs. He was visiting Don Gray, an architect living in Flat 4. It seems they had been school or university friends.

If you have bumped into, or heard of, celebrities who have visited the Court, I am sure the editor would be interested in a contribution for the Newsletter.

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