

Friern Barnet *Newsletter*

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SHOPS UPDATE

by David Berguer

A recent report seems to indicate that the future of the small local high street retailer is gloomy indeed. On 24 December the *Daily Mail* reported that Tesco are planning to open 400 new smaller stores ("Tesco Expresses"), while the Co-op has taken over 600 of the Alldays stores. Tesco are hoping that each of their small outlets will generate a turnover of £55,000 a week; this compares with about £7,000 for small neighbourhood stores most of which are, of course, family run businesses.

We all know that things have changed since our parents' days but in the last 20 years the pace of change has increased dramatically. Small businesses



Whetstone, Dec 1961. Studio Cole (extreme left) and Pulhams the butcher (extreme right), both long gone Photo Ron Kingdon

such as grocers, greengrocers, butchers, bakers and fishmongers have all but vanished, while the number of restaurants and takeaways has mushroomed. Cycle shops, wireless dealers and TV rental shops have been replaced with shops selling mobile phones, computers and videos; and estate agents and coffee shops have blossomed.

So what has been happening in the Friern Barnet, Whetstone, New Southgate and North Finchley area?

One of our major projects is our Shops Survey, which not only charts the history of shops in our area, but also surveys what changes are taking place today. This year, with the invaluable help of Ollie Natelson and John Holtham, I re-surveyed over 530 shops that we had first recorded in 2001 and we found that nearly 17% of them had changed. Some of the major findings are shown below:

	2001	2002
Total businesses	533	529
Restaurants/takeaways	88	91
Food shops	30	30
CTNs *	25	23
Furnishing/Carpets	23	22
Pubs	21	21
Ladies Hairdressers	18	19
Estate Agents	18	19
Banks/Building Societies	20	19
Ladies Wear	19	17
DIY/Hardware	15	16
Dry Cleaners/Laundrettes	16	16
Garages/Car Accessories	15	12
Chemists	9	10
Men's Wear	8	9
Electrical	10	8
Jewellers	7	8
Charity Shops	7	7
Opticians	5	7
Gents Hairdressers	6	6
Florists	4	6
Video Hire	5	5
Footwear	5	5
Antique Dealers	6	4
Printers /Copy Shops	4	4
Shops Vacant	25	21

• = Confectioners, Tobacconists, Newsagents

To underline the change in the pattern of retailing, here is something worth considering – there is now only *one* butcher's shop in the whole area (Seabrooks of 406 Oakleigh Road North) and, even more surprisingly, there are now no greengrocers at all!

In comparison, just over fifty years ago (in 1950) even Wetherill Road, which only has five shops, boasted a butcher, a grocer, a greengrocer and a boot & shoe repairer. This was, of course, in the days before most households had refrigerators and housewives (most of whom did not work) would have to shop several times a week. More importantly, supermarkets had not yet arrived in the UK, and few households had the luxury of a car.

North Finchley is still the largest shopping area, as can be seen from the numbers of businesses we surveyed this year:

High Road North Finchley	153
High Road Whetstone	102
Woodhouse Road	64
Friern Barnet Road	59
Oakleigh Road North	47
Colney Hatch Lane	38
Ballards Lane (north of Kingsway)	31
Friern Bridge Retail Park	11
Oakleigh Road South	11
Wetherill Road	5
Cromwell Road	4
Sydney Road	2
Pembroke Road	1
Wilton Road	1

As well as conducting these annual surveys, we are also monitoring day-to-day changes through the work of our Recorder Groups, details of which are outlined later in this Newsletter.

TO THE STANDARD AND BACK

- EPISODE THREE

by John Donovan

When we lived in Holly Park Road, our next-door neighbour and very good friend was a retired carpenter. I believe he had lived most of his life in this area, so he was a good source of local history information and anecdotes, and one of the latter concerned Bethune Park.

The whole area has changed drastically during the last hundred years, with the conversion of a local rubbish tip (that ran alongside The Crescent) into the splendid allotments that gave me so much visual pleasure on my walks to work, and the creation, in 1931, of a 9 hole golf course at the north-western end of the park, and a running track in the middle. There is a sunken grassed area, lying to the east of the track and alongside Beaconsfield Road, which I always knew as a cricket pitch (it's now a football pitch) but, according to my neighbour, was once a small pond. It was fed by a stream that came down from Manor Drive, and my neighbour told me that in those far-off, pre-war days of long hot summers, he and his friends would go "skinny dipping"! Apparently, the stream, still heading east left the pond and ran under the railway embankment and Oakleigh Rec to the area around Falkland and Marne Avenues. On days when The Fields were too muddy to cross, I would walk down the dip and up to the railway bridge, and I would imagine those kids as I passed the site of their pond. Incidentally, you can see a photo of the above mentioned rubbish dump on page 119 of John Heathfield's 1994 book *Around Whetstone and North Finchley in Old Photographs*.

You will recall that I would walk through the subway to Oakleigh Road South, turn left, and up to The Standard. Running alongside the pavement, on the

left, are some iron railings which delineate the railway embankment, and growing up those railings was a line of English lime trees; their branches used to stretch out over the pavement and shade me from the summer sun. At ground level, great fronds of white and green cow parsley would push



Oakleigh Road South, with the railway line on the left. Limes and hogweed invade the pavement

through the fence, followed later by hogweed. I found those trees a constant source of pleasure on my daily walks as I watched the young leaves appear, then the tiny, sweet-smelling yellow flowers, and finally the full vivid canopy. Those limes were home to all sorts of small birds, caterpillars and butterflies. This treat would last for a few years, with the council merely trimming back branches which hung too low over the pavement, but then they would savagely cut back the poor trees to their bare knuckles, and I had to wait a couple of years until they grew back to their full glory.

One day, I was trudging up the hill in the summer heat when I noticed lots of tiny dark balls dotted around the pavement under the trees. My first thought

was that they were pieces of rust, fallen from the iron railings. Then I took a closer look and realised that they were *droppings!* I looked up into the trees to see a dozen or more yellow and black caterpillars chomping their way along the edge of some leaves, dropping their 'debris' as they moved along. I noted their markings and, when I returned home, identified them as the children of the Buff Tip (a moth that resembles a cross between a birch twig and a cigarette end!). Next day, I took a jam jar in my briefcase and, on the way home, I collected a few and successfully hatched them out to moths.

Having reached The Standard, I would sometimes turn right into Brunswick Avenue and, on the right, opposite the shops, was an old 'tin chapel.' When I first saw it, in the late 1960s, it was no longer used for religious purposes, but was some sort of school for the STC Apprentices. Some years later, when apprenticeships becoming things of the past, the tin hut was demolished, and houses now occupy the site. At the far end of Brunswick Avenue, at the corner of Brunswick Park Road, was an industrial building that, I was told, had once been a parachute factory.

Perhaps you are wondering what I actually did at STC? Well, I was a Progress Chaser, an indispensable part of the workforce. In the 1960s STC actually made the electronic equipment for telephone exchanges. An independent firm would build one of those lovely Queen Anne exchanges for the GPO, and STC would spend a couple of years filling it with all the equipment it needed to function. The aforesaid apparatus would be constructed from a vast array of items, from tiny fuses to iron bars, from screws to mahogany cabinets, and it was the job of a Progress Chaser to make sure that every item was where it should be to make each piece of equipment, in time for shipping. I'll tell you more about that in future instalments.

In the last episode I mentioned a wasp that wasn't very street wise. Well, I happened to be walking across the Railway Field one spring morning, having entered by the elderberry bush and flowering-cherry entrance. As I made my way to the railway fence, a wasp flew past me, carrying something in its "arms". Now, I am sure that there *is* a place for wasps in the scheme of things (without them, there would be a lot more insects around), but I felt sorry for the potential victim, so I hurried after them both. As it neared the fence, the wasp headed for a leaf on one of the hornbeams that stand along the fence, and I made ready to shoo the hunter away as soon as it put its prey down. The victim proved to be a humble woodlouse (one of nature's useful waste-disposal agents) but, unfortunately for the uneducated wasp, the prey was *not Oniscus asellu*, the Common Woodlouse, but *Armadillidium vulgare*, the Pill Bug, which rolls itself into a ball in times of danger! Wasp puts prey on leaf; prey rolls off leaf; Donovan flicks prey deeper into bushes; wasp, confused, flies off. I walked off towards the subway with a grin on my face.


To be continued.....

FISH AND CHIPS UPDATE

In the last issue of the Newsletter we reproduced an ad for Eric's Fish & Chip shop in Summers Lane. John Donovan reports that this brought back happy memories for him and his family, since they used to buy fish and chips right up until the shop closed. Apparently the proprietor was a small, dark man with a deeply wrinkled forehead, but he was always happy and greeted everyone with a smile. John says his young daughters were particularly pleased with his habit of giving customers a few chips to be going on with, while waiting to be served. John also says he also recalls a sweet shop on the corner of Short Way. Unfortunately, he can't remember details of any of the other four or five shops in the same parade as Eric's. Can anyone fill in the details?

Here is another advertisement from the past, 1953 to be precise. Oliver Bros occupied the site that is now the Al Fresco Restaurant. Does anyone remember them?

Established nearly a century



Oliver Bros.

E. G. OLIVER

OILMEN and IRONMONGERS

*A Good Shop
for
Good Goods
for Garden and Home*

1327-9 HIGH ROAD
Whetstone, N.20

VOLUNTEERS WANTED

One of our main projects is the day to day recording of changes in the area. As well as obvious things like shops changing hands and buildings being demolished it also includes more mundane things concerning the overall appearance of the area. Here are just a few of the things that our Recorder Groups noticed last year:

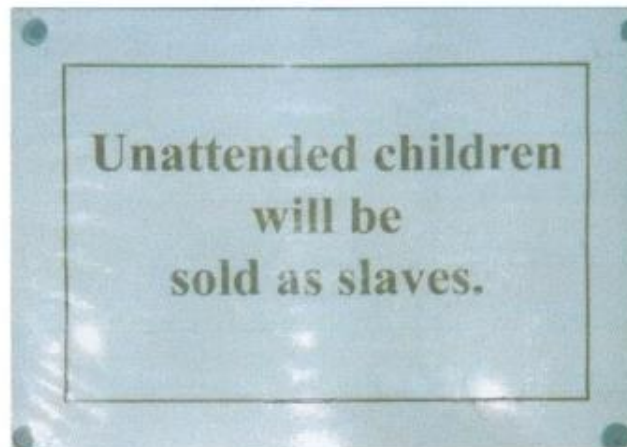
No 16 Oakleigh Park South. July 2002. New drive being laid and the two foot high stump at the front of the garden is evidence of a mature tree having been felled – probably beech.

No 47 Manor Drive. November 2002. A most unusual transformation; originally a semi-detached house (with No. 45), it has had an extension added to one side (south), making it into a double fronted, twin-pitched roofed house, in the middle of which is a huge portico with tiled roof, supported on Doric pillars over the front door. It has a splendid new garden wall too.

Friern Barnet Road, outside No 38 (Banker's Draft pub). October 2002. Sets of pedestrian crossings and traffic lights have just been installed on all roads at the junction. On 26 September the lights had not been switched on, but they were in operation by 1 October.

Summers Lane, Western end. August 2002. Road resurfacing works being carried out. By early August the stretch from the Recycling Centre roundabout to High Road North Finchley had been resurfaced.

Among the many photographs that we took in 2002 was this little gem, which was a notice in the window of Imagine at 722 High Road, North Finchley:



All the information from our Recorder Groups, together with any photographs, is collated and then filed in the appropriate Streets file (we have a file for each of the 265 streets in the area) and, together with historical information, will eventually give a comprehensive picture of the development of the area. This is obviously a long term project but one that is worth doing, as it will be of help to future historians. Because of the size of the task, we would welcome more help: would you like to be a Recorder for your area? It's really not too difficult; all you have to do is keep your eyes open as you travel about and then note down anything of interest. One of the bonuses is that you begin to start

noticing things you hadn't seen before – a bit of fancy stonework on a building, a nicely kept garden, some decorative tiling. We really would appreciate your help, so if you are interested please contact John Donovan on 01707 642 886 and he will explain how easy and rewarding it is.

LETTERBOX POSTSCRIPT

John Holtham's article on letterboxes in the November 2002 issue of the Newsletter prompted a letter from one of our members, Ron Kingdon, who very kindly sent us a photograph of his son Neill standing alongside an Edward VIII letterbox. Although the letterbox is not actually in the Friern Barnet area, it is fairly close, being situated in Winchmore Hill Road, near Southgate Circus. Ron took the picture on 22 July 1967 and it is gratifying



Kingdon Jr and Edward VIII

to note that the letterbox is still there today. The significant thing about the Edward VIII letterboxes is that only 161 of them were ever made due, of course, to the fact that Edward VIII (aka the Duke of Windsor) abdicated the throne in 1936.

FAREWELL TO THE WOODMAN



Now you see it..... (Aug 2002)



.....now you don't (Jan 2003)

IRIS GOES WEST

We heard with some sadness that one of our most loyal members, Iris Sande, was leaving Friern Barnet and making a new home in Exmouth. There must be something about the West Country air that lures old Friern Barnetians, because Iris joins Hilda Clark (Shipham, Somerset) and Margaret Roberts (Ottery St Mary, Devon). So far we have no members in Cornwall or Dorset, but if you are thinking of moving there please let us know - we love cream teas! Good luck, Iris, we hope you have a long and enjoyable sojourn in the sun.

Just before she left, Iris very kindly donated to the Society her late husband's WWII Clothing coupons card, along with a few spare coupons. These have been put into our archives and will therefore be saved for posterity.

TAKE A SEAT

At our meeting on 26 October 2002, Norman Burgess announced that Avenue House had finally been acquired from Barnet Council and would now be run by the Avenue House Estate Trust, an independent group. Norman told us that they were short of chairs and our committee decided that the proceeds from our raffle at the 26 November 2002 meeting would be donated to the Trust. Thanks to your generosity this raised £50 and we added a further £20 from our reserves. We sent the £70 to Norman and we understand that this is enough to buy two chairs, so we hope that next time you go to a function at Avenue House you will be sitting on a FB&DLHS seat!

CRIMES OF THE PAST

If you thought we were in the middle of a crime wave, here are two extracts from the Middlesex Sessions Rolls, which goes to show that there is nothing new under the sun:

"17 January 1615

A true bill was found against Elizabeth Rutter, Widow, for having practised at Fynchley certain wicked, detestable and devilish arts called witchcraftes, inchantementes, charmes and sorceries, upon and against a certain Priscella Fielde languished from the 17th to the 18th February, on which last named day she died of the said arts, being in this way murdered."

She was also arraigned for practising witchcraft upon Priscella Fielde's sister, Frances, who also died within two days, and John Fielde, the brother, who survived two weeks before dying.

Elizabeth Rutter was found guilty and sentenced to be hanged.

"11 January 1616

Ordered that the Constables, headboroughs, and other officers of Fryarne Barnett, shall cause Agnes Miller, the wife of Robert Miller, of Fynchley, yeoman, to be duckt in some pond of water, she having been indicted at the present sessions by the inhabitants of the said parishes for a notorious and common scoulde and disturber of the neighbours and honest inhabitants of Fynchley and Fryern Barnett."

SWEET MEMORIES

by John Donovan

The last house in Glenthorne Road before Holly Park Road is numbered 32 and in years past it was a shop. A woman used to sell sweets and ice cream from the front room of the house, which had a fridge for ice cream and ice-llolies. In the 1970s my daughter, Nicola, and her friends would go in after school and buy a selection of those awful sweets that kids loved in those days; 'Pink Shrimps' was one I recall, and liquorice bootlaces (how many of those children could ever have seen boots that lace?). None of the sweets was more than one new penny each.

I believe that the shop closed in the 1980s – does anyone remember it and do you know the name of the elderly couple that ran it?

SUIT YOU, SIR

by David Berguer

I happened to be in High Road Whetstone the other day and, being in one of those impetuous moods, I wandered in to Hodgkinson's at no 1304 to see if they had any trousers that might fit me (I always have difficulty finding a comfortable pair; either my legs are too short or my waist is too big, or both). I had often passed Hodgkinson's but never ventured inside and had no idea what to expect. I was delighted to find a shop with old fashioned standards – beautifully laid out rows of shirts and jumpers and a nice collection of suits, jackets, and, more importantly, *trousers that fitted*. All this without the accompaniment of blaring music. I got so carried away I bought two pairs of trousers and two pairs of fine cotton socks as well.

With local history in mind, I decided to keep the receipt, and the plastic bag they gave me, and filed them away for posterity. In 50 years time someone, perhaps from 'Time Team', may stumble across them and marvel at the low prices we paid in the early part of the 21st century.

Talking of receipts, John Donovan tends to keep his for a couple of years, just in case there's a query, and that habit once saved him a £30 fine when Barnet Parking Office wrote and accused him of parking in Lodge Lane car park without a ticket. He wrote back and offered to show them the actual ticket, and heard no more from them!

Ollie Natelson has started to keep a few selected till receipts from local supermarkets, again for reasons of posterity. I keep whatever flyers come through my door and file these safely away. I noticed the other day that one of our local Pizza delivery places had surreptitiously raised their prices without telling anyone (this year's leaflet was slightly different from last year's). It's not worth writing to the Chancellor of the Exchequer about, but it does show that hoarding mundane things can be of value, particularly when it comes to comparing prices.

If any of you care to donate unwanted mailing shots from local shops to me, I will happily put them in our archives along with the one from Hodgkinson's.

FROM OUR MOTORING CORRESPONDENT

John Holtham was scrabbling around in his loft recently when he came across a 1928 copy of the AA Handbook. A number of things caught his eye: Car Tax for a 30hp vehicle was £30; there is a note under the entry for Finchley (pop 52,000) that there was a Ten Mile Speed Limit, and four garages are listed - H Pope & Sons (3 The Mall, Ballard's Lane), Alfred Walker's Garage (Coldfall Lodge, Fortis Green), Lindsay Brothers (Highwood Garage, North Finchley) and North Finchley Garage (Avenue Road). There is no entry under Friern Barnet, but there is one garage listed under New Southgate (pop 42,800): Express Motors (D.G.Holmes) at 45 Friern Barnet Road.

The following note is of interest: "When a Patrol does not Salute, Members should, in their own interests, stop to ask the reason. This does not apply when Members are overtaking Patrols."

FOOTNOTE

After we had taken the photo of the demolished Woodman pub in Oakleigh Road North (see page 9) we heard that the two signs from the pub were to be found at Lee Chinnick, the Antique dealer at 187 Woodhouse Road. We rushed round there and found that one sign was for sale at £20, the other, larger one, for £120. If you used to drink at The Woodman they would make a good memento, assuming you've got room for them!



Friern Barnet & District
Local History Society

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