

# Friern Barnet *Newsletter*

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## **ST PAUL'S SCHOOLDAYS**

Ron Kingdon, our member in North Mymms, has sent us the following article which was written by Judy Way, who lived in the same house as him in Highbury in the late 1920s - early 1930s. In 1936 they even moved together to East Barnet and lived next door to each other. Judy became a teacher and then a Head Teacher in the post war years.

"I spent two happy years as teacher of 7 year olds at St Paul's School, New Southgate from 1958 until 1960. Miss Pightling was the Head Teacher, who ran a happy, well disciplined school; I had great respect for her, as did everyone.

The school consisted of two buildings. The main building was for the Junior children and had three classrooms, a hall and a small kitchen, where excellent



*The school today - not much has changed on the outside since 1960*

meals were cooked for the children and staff. As there was no staffroom, we collected our cups of tea at breaktime from the kitchen, quite often to drink in the playground. As the boys had a separate playground from the girls and

the infants, we were often on playground duty.

The smaller building consisted of one large reception classroom and a very small classroom for the older infants. The heating was made up of a coal fire and one radiator, which often smelled of gas. The rooms were lit by gas lights which hung low down over the desks and gave off a hissing noise. They were only good for the children who sat immediately underneath and, as the windows were high up, the room was quite dismal on a dull day.

There was no running water in the washroom - the Welfare Assistant carried large jugs of hot water from the main building for the children to wash their hands. All toilet facilities were the other side of the playground.

The school was situated in The Avenue and was alongside the railway line. The trains had not long changed from steam to diesel and when a train came by there was the usual deafening noise of the train itself accompanied by the loud two-tone musical sound, which was to warn New Southgate station of its arrival. This amused the children who, in unison, shouted "diesel" every time. Naturally, all lessons ceased until the train went by. This happened quite a few times a day.

In spite of the few drawbacks, as mentioned above, I enjoyed my two years as a young teacher at St Paul's Primary School."

If anyone remembers Judy, or Miss Pightling, please let us know.

## **OLD JOHN'S MEMORIES**

*by John Donovan*

At the top end of Carlton Road, on the northern side, is an impressive detached house called Seaforth Lodge. It is now an Old People's Home, but when we moved into Holly Park Road in 1963, it was the home of our local GP Dr Rutherford, and he ran his practice from the house, too. The house was built around a grand hall at ground level and had a square atrium in the roof.

He was a wonderful family doctor, with infinite patience and kindness. He was particularly good with children, a point well illustrated by a little incident one Christmas morning late in the 1960s. Linda had woken up feeling very ill, and with a high temperature. Christmas morning - would our doctor come down to see her? Had he, perhaps, gone away for the holiday period? I hesitated to disturb him but, finally, around 10am, I ran up the road and rang his bell. He opened the door and I could see his hall was full of friends (or relations) all holding glasses of wine and laughing and chatting loudly. I felt most uncomfortable, bothering him at such a time, but he made no fuss, just grabbed his bag and hurried back down the street with me. In the event, it was nothing serious and, after examining Linda thoroughly he prescribed the appropriate medicine.

The next incident concerns archaeology. I had gone up to see him one evening (with me, it was always a cough or cold), and I went upstairs to the half-lit room

he used as his surgery. Looking around the room, I noticed small archaeological artefacts dotted around the shelves and tables. Then, as he was writing out my prescription, he handed me a beautiful little oil lamp. "Know what that is?" he asked. I made a (wrong) guess and he explained that it was an ancient Egyptian lamp. "Are you interested in history and archaeology?" he asked. I told him I was and he said I ought to go up to Hampstead Garden Suburb Institute with him once a week to his evening class, which was all about the Prehistoric era. The tutor was Dr Desmond Collins (of HADAS), and it was an extra-mural course run by the University of London.

I did as he suggested, and most enjoyable it was too. I did the course, but couldn't keep up with all the reading, so I did the same course the following year and passed the exam. Dr Rutherford moved on to the second year, but another little incident amused me. He always sat next to me so he could copy my notes; he wore a hearing aid, and couldn't always hear what the tutor was saying!. Then there were his piano lessons. You'd have thought that being a doctor and studying archaeology would be enough for a seventy-year-old, but he was also learning to play the piano, and read music (Classical).

The final story was sad. He retired from work, moved to the West Country, and not long afterwards he was killed in a car crash. He was a real gentleman.

### **MARVELLOUS MEETINGS**

Thanks to our Events Secretary, Janet Liversidge, we have had a great start to the year with some truly wonderful meetings. In January Cynthia Wade gave an excellent talk on *The Golden Age of Postcards* with some memorable slides. This talk obviously struck a chord as it produced a record attendance, with 63 people crammed into the hall.

Even for people who don't share his passion for trams, Alan Williams' talk *To Finchley by Tram* in February was enthralling as it dramatically showed the changes that have taken place in the area since the days when these denizens roared and clattered through the streets.

In March we asked you to bring along your memories and memorabilia for our *In the Kitchen* meeting and you responded in great style. We were inundated with tools and implements, including many strange ones kindly brought from the Potters Bar Museum by Terry Goulding, and we had enough cookery books to sink the Titanic. Mary Taylor came up trumps by recreating two wartime recipes - her Carrot Cookies and Eggless Sponge tasted a whole lot better than they sounded!

In April we were delighted to welcome local bookseller Martin Gladman who introduced us to *The World of Secondhand Books* and what a world it was! He not only explained the history of books but also related how he first became interested in books via the former History Bookshop in Friern Barnet Road. Such was the interest from our members that we had to almost throw people out of the hall so that we clear up, lock up and go home! We immediately asked Martin if he could come back again at some future

date to tell us more, and we are glad to say that he willingly agreed.

### **FIFTY YEARS AGO**

The following appeared in *The Finchley Press* of 27 June 1953:

#### **WHETSTONE MAN WINS MINISTRY MEDAL**

Mr Reginald Kenneth Smith, architect of Friern Barnet's flats in Oakleigh Park North, known as The Hollies, has been awarded the London Region housing diploma for 1953 by the Ministry of Housing and Local Government.

The 58 flats are on a site near the junction of Oakleigh Park North and Oakleigh Road Whetstone.

Mr R. K. Smith designed also the Friern Barnet Council's Colney Hatch Lane Estate. He received his diploma at the headquarters of the Royal Institute of British Architects. At the same time Cr. L.W. McClane, Chairman of Friern Barnet's housing committee, received a medal on behalf of the committee.

Recently the block of flats was recommended by the Ministry to visiting members of Weymouth Council, Dorset as an excellent example of post war planning.



*The Hollies*

### **TO THE STANDARD AND BACK - EPISODE FIVE**

*by John Donovan*

Although these anecdotes are supposed to reflect my journeys to and from work, I have been asked to include more about The Standard itself. I have already made mention of the sort of thing they made at STC, but I'll repeat it for those of you who weren't listening. When I arrived (in 1966) they made

equipment to go into telephone exchanges. The GPO would erect one of those lovely Queen Anne buildings, and STC would fill it with equipment, and spend a year or two making sure it all worked, before handing over.

Briefly, the STC site comprised three huge buildings (each three storeys high), plus numerous lesser buildings. They were all numbered and, on the western side of the premises, Buildings 3 and 4 filled the length of the site along the railway (I believe passengers on passing trains could see both buildings). The third large building (Building 8) sat a little downhill, in the centre of the grounds but, at that time, it still accommodated departments that had nothing to do with telephone exchanges. Those three buildings housed the main factories and offices, and they were built in the 1930s 'Egyptian' style, monolithic, with a minimum of exterior design.

The equipment that STC sold to The Post Office for their telephone exchange buildings was constructed using an extremely diverse range of equipment, including tiny electronic devices (such as diodes, resistors and capacitors), common-or-garden nuts, bolts and washers, plus a vast array of devices that meant little to me, because I was completely non-technical. As a Progress Chaser I needed to know *where* everything was, not how it *worked*!

What we actually sold the customer was a series of 'racks', on which were mounted all the electronic equipment necessary for the telephone exchange to accept calls and pass them on to the recipients. Everything we needed in order to make these racks was either designed and made by our own staff or bought in from other firms.

Every week some twenty to thirty different kits were fed onto the floors, each one sufficient to make a specific type of rack. A group of assemblers, wiremen, wirewomen and inspectors would work on the kits, and each completed rack would go to be inspected before despatch to the relevant, embryo telephone exchange.

As a Progress Chaser, I had to ensure that each kit was one hundred percent complete, so that the racks could move through the factories and down to the shipping department without a hitch (that was the theory, anyway). I would start work on each kit in the store and then spend the whole of each day chasing the missing items. If it were a 'bought-in' item, I'd call on 'goods in' (ground floor) to see if it was held up to an inspection. If it hadn't even been delivered, I'd go back upstairs to the purchasing department to see if the stuff had actually been ordered.

If the missing items were made 'in house', I'd have to go downstairs to the iron shop, the metal-finishing shops, the cable-running shop or the wood shop to see what was holding my stuff up (a 'shop' was a specific area in the factory floor). If any of those departments were held up for a technical drawing, I'd have to go up to the top floor to find which of the vast array of engineers was responsible.

My work folder never contained less than forty 'kits', and in any one day I'd have to visit departments on all three floors (end to end) of two large buildings, then walk down the hill and across Brunswick Park Road to the shipping department, then all the way back up to the large buildings. I did all this several times a day, in all weathers.

Of course, nobody likes to be criticised or told they aren't doing their job properly; if one wanted co-operation from the culprits one had to be aggressive or diplomatic (I chose the latter approach). Anyway, that's enough of work (I'm becoming bored just writing about it). Let's have some more nature notes.

In the early years I'd come in through the top gate (Oakleigh Road South) every morning at 8.15, and promptly be faced with a choice of three routes. Straight ahead along the main road (past Building 3) wasn't very interesting. But if I went slightly to the right I could walk through the gardens, with the canteen on my right. In winter I loved to see the bushes full of the bright orange or red berries of the Firethorn (*Pyracanthus*). Morning fogs would leave the trees dripping with moisture, and bushes tapestried with damp spider-webs. In spring the gardens would be full of daffodils and pink-blossomed hawthorns, while under the trees would be purple carpets of shy Henbit and Deadnettle.

Dropping down even further to the right took me into a secluded area, hidden by a dozen or so tall trees on a grassy 'hill', past the rack where they kept gas bottles (for welders and such folk), and then around the back of the canteen. One day 'they' cut down those tall trees, and next time I'll relate the consequences!



*The path to the canteen*

As one drew level with the canteen one stood in an avenue of English lime trees, which had once been the 'processional walk', coming down from the railway sidings (Cemetery Station) and up to the chapel in the Great Northern Cemetery, which had owned the site before STC. That avenue led past an old, brown wooden hut (in which acoustic testing took place), and on to the Social Club. Framed by canteen, Social Club, and Brunswick Park Road was the wide-open space of the sports field.

Between the gas-bottle rack, the canteen and the footpath was a small triangle of lawn on which I would sit in high summer, eating my lunch and reading my book, while fat bees stitched imaginary quilts in the grass; I could easily imagine that I was deep in the countryside, where even the old, brown acoustic hut wasn't out of place!

One of my summer pleasures was to come out of work at 6pm, walk across the road, and look down onto the railway embankment to see what wild flowers had turned up (that's the charm of wild flowers, they appear anywhere, without warning). One year it would be purple flowered Knapweed, another year pale yellow and orange Toadflax (a miniature version of the garden antirrhinum), or Yellow Ragwort. This latter was a particular favourite, since it was the food plant of a little caterpillar with a black and amber football jersey (to warn the birds that it was poisonous), which would then metamorphose into the Cinnabar Moth, one of the most beautiful of our daytime moths, dark with deep orange patches. If there happened to be some Birds Foot Trefoil around, then I might be lucky enough to see a Six Spot Burnet, another daytime moth. It was dark green, almost black, and it was covered in large, deep carmine spots.

*To be continued.....*

## **THE MYSTERY OF THE DUPLICES CRUCIS**

**A story in two parts by Sir Arthur Conan Heathfield**

The evidence:

1347 The Lord of the Manor of Barnet was granted pavage for 5 years from the Kings Highway to St Albans to Barnet and thence as far as Finchle Wood (*Finchley Wood ran from the Bishop's gate at the foot of Highgate Hill to the 9th mile stone*).

1354 John Lovell and William Smythe of Highgate are granted 5 year pavage from Highgate to Finchle 2 crosses.

1374 Nicholas le Pritell left ten shillings to repair the road from the town of Barnet to the Two Crosses.

Friern Barnet Court Rolls:

26 June Henry VII

the Homage present that the Duplices Crucis stand at Aggattes at Mylle Hille have fallen down and within the memory of man they were always used to stand in this manor. And the lord of the Manor shall make the crosses to stand

between the two counties of Middlesex and Hertfordshire and between the parish of Friern Barnet and the parish of Finchley. The bailiff was ordered to do the same before the feast of All Saints on pain of two shillings.

4 Sep 24 Henry VII

The Homage present that Thomas Sanny, William Heybourne, William Fox, Thomas Copwood and Agnes Dogett were fined two pence for not having Duplices Crucis upon their houses.

Whatever does all this mean? St James' Church might shed some light.

*To be continued.....*

#### **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

Our third AGM took place at the Old Fire Station on 27 May 2003. We received no nominations for vacant posts, so the existing committee stood again and were all unanimously re-elected. For those of you who were unable to attend the meeting we are enclosing a copy of the Report & Accounts for the year 2002-2003, which were also approved at the AGM. We are also enclosing the minutes of the 2002 AGM which were also approved.

Sadly, this was our last AGM at our much-loved venue, as the Day Centre has now been sold by Barnet Council, along with Friern Barnet Town Hall. We are actively searching for a new venue and we will try and consult as many of you as possible before we make a decision.

#### **FRIERN WATCH - AN UPDATE**

Following the article on page 9 of our Newsletter Number 12, we received a call from our noted local historian, Percy Reboul, who was able to provide us with some more information. Percy referred us to Chapter 3 (The Mayor's Tale) of his book *Barnet Voices* and kindly gave us permission to reproduce it. The speaker is Alfred Pike:

"I was working for an estate developer, Newcombe Estates Limited, whose office was Friern Watch House. Friern Watch was as a lovely country estate then, with cattle still breeding there; the house was eventually sold to the local authorities. A general manager and myself were the only two people employed and our job was to lay out and mark the new sites of the estate. The manager was often away and I would be left alone to get through the work. In 1912, I made some tracings of the Friern Watch/Ravensdale/Mayfield Avenues, taking great care with them and left them on a windowsill to dry overnight. When I arrived the next morning, the police were there - the house had been burnt during the night. They said it was the work of suffragettes who had come from London. The police said that, in Friern Avenue, where there were some tiny cottages, an old lady had had toothache and couldn't sleep. She was walking up and down all night and saw the unusual sight of three or four cars going into Friern watch House and coming out again. When they left the place was on fire.



The site was also a popular place for film production. It was used by Kalem Films who brought actors and scenery along. I became an interested bystander and once earned a packet of cigarettes by helping in one of the scenes."

Incidentally, a newly built four-bedroom semi-detached house in Friern Watch Avenue could be bought for £750 freehold (£550 leasehold). A £100 deposit and £45 per annum for 14 years bought a house with two reception rooms and a panelled hall with oak floor and "large cellarage with domestic offices".

## **JOURNEY TO IRAQ**

*by John Heathfield*

The Finchley Press for 28 Feb 1936 includes an account by Captain A.H. Farley, Chairman of Friern Barnet Council, of a journey he took from Haifa to Baghdad in 1923.

Capt. Farley said that he wanted a profitable adventure and saw the possibility of obtaining an oil concession over part of the Mesopotamian oil country. He was not permitted a visa beyond Syria as there was an international agreement following the 1914-18 war about oil exploration. He went on "I have never yet allowed obstacles to be placed in my path. I told the officials that I would reach Baghdad even if I rode on a donkey disguised as a woman".

The more interesting stages of the journey began with a ride from Haifa to Beyrout (*sic*). "Our convoy of cars mounted up into the Lebanese mountains until we were lost in the midst of the clouds. Then came the thrilling descent with the double hairpins outrivalling even the rides at Alexandra Palace. Then across the Plain of Rayak, up again, over the Anti-Lebanon and into Damascus. Thus the first 183 miles of the journey were completed".

The Consul at Damascus signed his passport and "The visions of an Arab woman escapade vanished for ever". From there the travellers set out for Baghdad and the Captain described the descent. "How fascinating is the desert with its atmosphere of solitude. For most of the journey no sign of animal life exists, but we occasionally passed a picturesque caravan of fifty or sixty camels. Wherever there is a sign of an oasis, a pack of gazelles dash away from the motor that disturbs their peaceful life". After Ramadie came the most trying part of the desert journey. The driver of the car accelerated to 75 miles an hour in order to get across the wastes as soon as possible. Exactly ten days after leaving London the Captain was in Baghdad. He had covered 733 miles after leaving Haifa. The lecturer went on to describe his encounter with the British Consul in Baghdad and the amazement when he saw that the passport was valid. After a stay of ten days in Baghdad, Captain Farley decided to forgo oil exploration and seek his fortune in Friern Barnet! He returned to England via Palmyra.

In thanking Captain Farley, Mr Pugh said that this was one of the most interesting lectures he had ever heard. Captain Farley was addressing the Friern Barnet Literary Society. At that time he was living in Torrington Park.

Captain Farley's account makes a thought provoking contrast with present day attitudes.

#### **MORE ON THE CHIP SHOP**

One of our members, Marilyn Testar, has provided some more information on Eric's Fish & Chip shop that we featured in Issue no 11. Marilyn recalls that the shop was owned by the Greek Cypriot Iannou family who lived in Bethune Avenue and whose children went to St John's School in the 1970s.

Yvonne Ruge also remembers Mr Iannou and says "his oh-so melancholy smile was as memorable as his welcoming fistful of chips on the counter".

Hilda Boyden moved into Friern Barnet in the mid-1920s and she remembers the parade of shops being built. Apparently they were just houses at first, but at £1,000 they didn't sell, so the shop fronts were added. Candy's the sweet shop was run by two sisters. She also recalls being sent (from her home in Lewes Road) by her mother to buy two lamb chops at 5d each from the butcher's next to Candy's.

#### **HELP WANTED**

Does anyone have any photographs of the old St John's School (the one in Goldsmith Road) which closed in the late 1960s and then moved down to The Crescent? If so, please contact John Donovan whose daughter was a pupil - he wants to include it in his family history.

#### **SUMMER BREAK**

Our meeting on Tuesday 24 June is our last until 23 September, when John Donovan will be talking about Vernacular Architecture, with some examples of local buildings of note. But during July and August we will not be idle; on Sunday 13 July Ollie Natelson will be hosting a conducted walk around North Finchley (meet at the corner of Dale Grove and Ballards Lane at 2pm) and on the weekend of 16-17 August we will have a stall at the Friern Barnet Summer Show in Friary Park. Please come along and have a chat, and don't forget to bring some money with you, as we will be selling valuable and rare items culled from our attics, spare rooms and garages! All proceeds will go to the Society.

Whether we see you or not, we wish you all a lovely summer and we look forward to seeing you again on 23 September.

**Friern Barnet & District  
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