

Friern Barnet *Newsletter*

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THE MYSTERY OF THE DUPLICES CRUCIS - PART TWO

by Sir Arthur Conan Heathfield

The key to the mystery of the Duplices Crucis lies in the stained glass window of St James Parish Church. The Duplices Crucis, or double cross, is the sign manual of the Knights of St John of Jerusalem who were Lords of the Manor until the dissolution of the order in 1540. The manor passed to the Crown and was granted to the Chapter of St Paul's in 1544. An example forms part of the new stained glass window behind the altar. There was a boundary dispute between Finchley and Friern Barnet about 1505. The old highway to the North ran in front of the alms houses and shortly afterwards turned north, behind what is now the Esso garage, to Oakleigh Road North where it turned sharply west forming a corner which still prevents the east/west route through Totteridge from lining up. The boundary runs to the east of the highway as far as the County boundary.

The Lord of the Manor of Finchley claimed the block of land abutting the crossroads (The Griffin etc). In order to refute the claim Friern Barnet inhabitants were ordered to mark their property clearly. The crosses that stood at the County boundary were in existence in the 1350s. There is a boundary stone against the front wall of the Jewel of Bengal restaurant on the corner. The Griffin inn is in Friern Barnet, the front door step and pavement outside are in Finchley. The Griffin was rebuilt in mock-Tudor style in 1929.



St James Church, home of the stained glass window

JEROME K. JEROME - LOCAL RESIDENT

by Colin Barratt

Friern Barnet has a number of famous people who have lived in the district over the years, but New Southgate has very few. Probably the most famous was Jerome K. Jerome, best known as the author of *Three Men in a Boat*. As a child he lived here for a short time, and it's likely that this period "in the country" influenced his later writing.

JKJ's father was Jerome Clapp, who was born in 1807 in Bath, Somerset, becoming a farmer and preacher, and later involved in the coal and iron industries. The family started off in Appledore, Devon, then moved to Walsall, Staffs, in 1855, and it seemed to be about then that Jerome senior started using Jerome as a surname. JKJ was born in 1859, the youngest of four children, and was also named Jerome Clapp Jerome, but adopted the middle initial K as an adult.

The family fortunes declined disastrously in 1859. Jerome senior moved to East London to earn some money and bought an ironmongery business. In 1861 the family joined him in Poplar, where they lived in relative poverty. In 1866 JKJ's sister Paulina married and moved to the newly built Upper Park Road, New Southgate, which was still quite rural. JKJ's father suffered with poor health, and he often stayed at his daughter's, where the air was cleaner, visited regularly by the family. Eventually, JKJ's mother was persuaded to move the family near her daughter, and in August 1870 took a house in Springfield Road (which backed onto Upper Park Road).

The eleven year old Jerome junior seemed to thrive here. He was able to enjoy the rural surroundings, and played in Walker's Woods (the woods north of Bowes Road, then part of the huge Arnos Grove estate, owned by the Walker family). He learned how to fish in Pymmes Brook, and to snare rabbits. There was also an old brickworks just off Bounds Green Road, where a lake had formed, and he used to enjoy boating here, possibly the start of his interest in boats!

Sadly, his idyllic lifestyle was cut short, when his father died in June 1871, and two months later his mother and he moved again. Her diary records that they moved to St John's Villas, but this wouldn't be the one in Friern Barnet, as it wasn't built then. Two years after this they moved to Finchley.

Jerome left school at 14 and started work as a railway clerk for the London & North Western Railway at a salary of £26 per year. Soon afterwards his mother also died, so at 15 Jerome was an orphan. He went on to work as a journalist and actor. His first books were published in 1885 and 1886, then in 1889 *Three Men in a Boat* appeared, and he became rich and famous.

In the 1890s he edited various magazines, and gave extensive coverage to the exploits of his nephew, Frank Shorland, Paulina's fourth child (who was born in Upper Park Road). Frank was the British Amateur Long Distance Cycling champion, and Jerome even tried to arrange a race between

Shorland and the French champion, offering a huge prize of £100, but it wasn't allowed, as the French cyclist was a professional!

As a commemoration of Jerome, a sculpture depicting the prow and mast of a boat was built as the centrepiece of New Southgate's Millennium Green, which was opened in July 2000.

SPOT THE DIFFERENCES

One of our members, Mrs June Hulbert, kindly sent us a photograph of her parents' home at 121 Friern Barnet Lane, taken in 1945. It is interesting to compare it with the house as it is today:



1945



2003

The visible changes include: double glazed windows; a dormer window; a skylight; conversion of the garage into an extra room; a paved parking area for three cars; a brick wall instead of a wooden fence and, of course, television aerials. Anyone who saw the TV series *The 1940s House* will have an idea of how the interior of no.121 might have looked. Lino and carpets would probably have covered the floors; the paintwork would have been dark brown; food would have been kept cool in a larder; and entertainment would have been via the wireless, with such exciting stations as the Home Service, the Light Programme and, of course, the mysterious Hilversum that seemed to appear on all radio dials at that time.

It would be interesting to compare changes to other properties in the area, so if you have any old photographs of your house, and would be prepared to lend them to us, please let us know.

OUR NEW HOME

As the old Fire Station has been sold to Barratts and will be demolished to make way for a block of flats, our landlords, the Day Centre, will have to find a new home. At the moment it looks as though they will be relocated within Friary House, in the middle of Friary Park. Unfortunately, this venue will be unsuitable for us because there is no room large enough to accommodate our meetings. We were also concerned about security, as the park can be a forbidding place on a dark night; a further factor is the lack of adequate parking facilities nearby. We investigated a number of alternatives but most of these proved to be either too expensive or to be fully booked up.

We finally found a suitable venue at St John's Church Hall at the northern end of Friern Barnet Lane. This is on the main road, has a bus stop outside (routes 234 and 383) and is situated right next door to Whetstone Police Station. It also has ample parking at the side and the rear for over 30 cars. The hall is not quite as smart as the Day Centre and, alas, the chairs are not as comfortable as the ones you have become accustomed to, but we are sure that our meetings will be just as successful as before, and we look forward to seeing you there.

Because the hall is not available on Tuesdays, we have had to switch our meetings to the fourth Wednesday in the month. The first meeting at our new home will be on Wednesday 28 January at the normal time of 8.00pm. Needless to say, we look forward to welcoming you with a cup of tea and a biscuit or two!

TO THE STANDARD AND BACK - EPISODE SIX

by John Donovan

In the last episode I promised to tell you about a clump of trees just inside the STC site (Oakleigh Road entrance). They were on a grassy knoll, which was nearly fifteen feet high, and shaped not unlike a whale. There were some thirty trees on the knoll, forming a sort of copse (and no, I can't recall what species of tree they were). The whole, tree-covered 'lump' created a somewhat sombre alcove, some thirty feet across, the garden fences of the houses in Brunswick Crescent forming its eastern boundary. In this alcove stood some old-fashioned cycle racks (with curved, corrugated roof) and a small parking area for acetylene gas bottles and suchlike. One had the impression that the cylinders and bikes had been 'tucked away' behind the knoll. That sets a scene that remained unchanged, year after year.

Then the powers that be (PTB) decided to chop down all the trees (which struck me as a gross act of vandalism). The immediate effect was to open up the alcove to the light, which dispelled its former gloomy aspect. Perhaps this was to make it more difficult for bicycle thieves to go unnoticed (I don't really remember if that had been a problem before). Nothing else changed for a

while, and I continued to walk through the alcove on my way into the office.

With the arrival of the autumn rains, I noticed that the tarmac in the alcove was always wet, and I found myself stepping around wide streams (bear in mind that the ground dropped downhill from the main gate to the canteen). The problem became so bad that, eventually, the PTBs were forced to dig great trenches across the alcove and install a complete system of drain holes and underground pipes to get rid of the water. No doubt, that cost STC a pretty penny, and I often wondered if the PTBs ever understood the reason for the flooding. Trees drink lots of rainwater; lots of trees drink even more water. Cut down the trees and that water sinks into the earth, and emerges at the bottom of the bank (and onto the path) - gallons of it. As my old gran used to say, "You can't mess with nature."

When I started work at the Standard one crossed the railway from Oakleigh Road North to Oakleigh Road South on a narrow footbridge. It had very high sides and, in winter, we'd all troop across, heads bowed against the rain, our feet echoing on the bridge floor. It was like a scene from a Northern drama film ("Trooble oop at t'Standard, lad").

The footbridge had been erected next to an older road bridge, which was a notorious traffic hazard. Since the bridge stood at right angles to the railway line, the traffic from both directions had to perform a right-angled turn to get onto the bridge and another turn to get off, and that slowed everything down. Late in 1975 the old bridge was demolished, to be replaced with a



The old road bridge, from the south

splendid new one. This bridge was wide, and it described a far less severe angle as it crossed the line (it's still there, if you want to check).

Before they could demolish the old bridge, however, they had to build a temporary 'Bailey Bridge' across the lines. This ran at right angles to the road.

some fifty yards south of the old one. The bridge was anchored to a concrete platform built at the top of the grassy embankment and, because of the manner of its construction, it rattled loudly with every passing vehicle. I don't suppose the neighbours were best pleased.

The whole job took several months (I took one or two photos of the work in progress), but the result was well worth it. If you were to walk along Brunswick Avenue heading west, stop at the kerb, look both ways and cross directly to the railway fence, you would see the concrete platform which once led to the Bailey Bridge.

I have described how I wandered all over the STC site, Progress Chasing, and in summer months I liked to walk down the slope with the rifle range on one side and the sports field on the other, across Brunswick Park Road to the lower car park, and on to Building 53 (Shipping). A grass verge and hedge ran down between the path and the rifle range, and one day I saw an exquisite little butterfly flitting around the hedge. I'd not seen that sort before, and it was a while before I could get a good look at it, but in the summer heat its wings glowed a bright coppery-orange. Of course, even in those days the security department forbade the use of cameras on site, so I armed myself with an orange felt-tip pen. The next time I came to the hedge I walked slowly along until I saw the butterfly resting in full view. Looking furtively up and down the path (I was, after all, time wasting) I quickly sketched the creature on the back of one of my work sheets; it had brown lower wings (each with a tiny point at the bottom) and orange upper wings, dotted with brown spots. As soon as I got home that evening I searched through my butterfly book and there it was - a Small Copper. The Large Copper became extinct in Britain in 1851 and I wouldn't be surprised to find that, here in the 21st Century, the Small Copper is extinct too.

One more story from STC, concerning geese. Apparently, the firm wanted to bid for Government defence contracts, to which end they 'tarted up' the site and threw a lockable perimeter fence around the working area. The Social Club was demolished (and a splendid new one erected by the top sports field) along with the wooden Audio Testing Hut. The large sports field (scene of many a bright Sports Day) was dug up and landscaped to produce a beautiful undulating area of smooth grass and nicely placed clumps of bushes; in the middle of it all was an attractive lake.

Now, such a large area of green, next to water soon attracted a huge flock of Canada Geese, which quickly became resident. I learned over the next few months that geese do not eat fish; they eat grass and I soon had to pick my way through trails of green poo. Then the firm built a new headquarters building to go with the landscaping and lake. It was a large, golden cube, very expensively decorated inside; in the foyer was a beautiful carpet and, hanging over that, a huge chandelier designed, apparently, by a famous chandelier-designer.

Now, what rankled among the workforce was the order that no one was

allowed in the new building unless they had immediate business there, not even if they washed their hands and faces first. You can imagine, therefore, the collective glee when the story leaked out that the geese, which did *not* have business inside, nevertheless approached the building *en masse* and walked in through the door (which had obligingly opened as they approached). Before anyone noticed them, they had stomped around the posh new carpet, depositing large amounts of green poo and treading it into the pile. Of course, on a site housing several thousand folk, the grapevine did give rise to some urban myths, so the goose from which I had that story may well have been exaggerating!

To be continued.....

A BRIDGE TOO FAR?

Following neatly on from John Donovan's article (above), this news item appeared in *The Finchley Press* of fifty years ago (3 Oct 1953):

New Road Bridge at Oakleigh Road is Wanted

East Barnet Council is making an attempt to have a new road bridge provided in Oakleigh Road "in view of the danger to both road users and pedestrians arising from the ever increasing volume of traffic using it."

The Council is to ask Hertfordshire County Council to take up the matter as one of urgency with the Ministry of Transport and Friern Barnet Council to take similar action through the Middlesex County Council.

Despite the "urgency", the road bridge was not finally replaced until September 1975. Work had started in August 1974 but deliveries of the steel were delayed by the three day week (remember that?). In April 1975 two Bailey bridges were built to the south of the road bridge, which dated back to the 1850s. The bridge beams, which measured 120 feet by 6 feet, had to be brought to the site by rail and then manoeuvred into position by steam crane. The old bridge had to be demolished using 200lbs of explosives, while the 140 foot steel footbridge mentioned in John's memoirs was cut into three pieces by welders. The whole project was completed before Christmas 1975.



Work starts on the footbridge

TOWN HALL DEVELOPMENT

by Ollie Natelson

Serious discussions took place behind closed doors on Friday 3 October 2003 between Barnet Council officers and the future developer of this site, Barratt Homes.

The developer's plans are mainly:

- 1) To convert the main building into 33 flats (13 having one bedroom, 19 with 2 bedrooms and one with 3 bedrooms)
- 2) To add a 4 storey extension at the back which will house 11 flats (8 with 2 bedrooms, 3 with one bedroom)
- 3) To demolish the Old Fire Station and erect a partly 2 storey, partly 3 storey storey block of 5 flats
- 4) To demolish all the smaller buildings and garages at the rear and prepare all the rear area for formal recreation which will include a tiny garden
- 5) To convert most of the basement into a gymnasium
- 6) The gardens at the side will be removed to provide car parking spaces. There will be a total of 54 spaces at the front and sides
- 7) Fortunately the two Yew trees and two ornamental Hawthorns will remain, as will the four Magnolia trees which show off their glorious flowers in March

It seems that the developer wants to keep the exterior walls, windows and roof unchanged at the front and both sides and the cupola is to remain. The Council Chamber was originally built as a square block at the rear - to prevent traffic noise from interfering with council discussions - and the proposed extension will be only slightly wider than this and below roof level, so it will not be visible from the front.

This is a Grade II Listed Building; every part is listed, every brick and plank, nail, screw and door handle is listed and Barnet Council can decide how far Barratts can go in removing, defacing or hiding any part of the building.

Roughly 60% of the basement is to be converted into a gym. The remaining western part is labelled on the plans as "to be retained in existing state." This is the part where, during the War, the telephonist sat receiving incoming calls for help due to bomb or rocket damage and adjoining rooms housed a doctor and an engineer who would organise ambulances, masonry-lifting gear and a mobile canteen, and transmit messages to the crews "out there". There were rest rooms for the staff where, during long periods of waiting, some drew or painted wartime scenes and mounted them on the wall, where they remain to this day. There were air-purification machines and an electricity back-up supply. If the roof were to crash down, then an escape tunnel could lead you to underground safety "somewhere" in Friern Barnet. All these features are still present and are probably unique in the country.

Under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, the developer is being asked to contribute the following sums to Barnet : £800,000 towards affordable housing; £57,000 towards education provision; £24,500 towards highway provision and £10,000 towards leisure provision. These sums will

almost certainly be spent within Barnet as a whole - not solely in Friern Barnet.

FRIERN BARNET SUMMER SHOW

The weekend of 16th and 17th August was one of the hottest of the summer, and it brought the crowds flocking to the Show. We had our usual stall full of books, videos, ornaments, china and glassware and general bric-a-brac and managed to sell a good proportion of it which pleased Janet Liversidge, as she did not have to continue storing it in her garage! We also launched our new *Historical Map of Friern Barnet* (price £1) and sales of this were very encouraging - we even managed to sell copies to the Mayor of Barnet and to Councillor Brian Coleman, who were visiting the Show.

The Show itself was probably the best yet and featured several attractions we had not seen before, including stilt walkers, a climbing wall and one of the world's strongest men, whose *piece de resistance* was to walk around the arena with a Mini balanced on his head. In terms of finance, we took just over £350 which, after expenses, produced a net profit of £264.86 - a welcome addition to our funds. Thank you to everyone who donated things, and to those of you who came to see us on the stall.



Don't try this at home!

THE MYSTERY OF MILL HILL

by John Heathfield

In 1257, John de Agate owned a windmill on the border of Barnet and Friern Barnet, about where Northumberland Avenue now stands. The hill was therefore called Mylle Hille in various spellings. The Duplices Cruces (see Page 1) were or was a two armed cross on a single pole which marked the boundary between Friern and Chipping Barnet and therefore between Middlesex and Hertfordshire and possibly between Mercia and Essex. The traditional home of the bailiff of Friern Barnet was Wallfield which stood at the northernmost extremity of the manor, perhaps to ensure that there no encroachments. John de Agagate (various spellings, including Agangate)

occupied Agate's Grove of some 35 acres. The rent included providing the Abbot of St Albans with two cart loads of firewood each winter.

DESIGN EXHIBITION

The Museum of Domestic Design & Architecture (MoDA) is holding an exhibition called *How to Live in a Flat: Modern Living in the 1930s*. MoDA is situated next to Middlesex University at Cat Hill (just off the roundabout at Chase Side/Cockfosters Road). The exhibition runs until 28 March and it is open Tuesday to Saturday 10am - 5pm (Sunday 2pm - 5pm). Entrance is free.

CHRISTMAS PARTY

Our Christmas Party is on Friday 12 December and, as last year, admission will be ticket (price £3 per person). You are welcome to bring friends or relations but please buy them a ticket first - it helps us to cater properly if we know how many people are coming. Tickets will be on sale at our meeting on 25 November, or you can phone 020 8444 3089 and we will send them to you.

NEXT YEAR'S PROGRAMME

Janet Liversidge is busy finalising our programme of meetings for 2004. The first three months' meetings are as follows:

* **Wed 28 January The Two Remarkable Stephens'**

The story of 'Inky' Stephens, founder of the famous ink business
by Norman Burgess

* **Wed 25 February Theatrical London**

by Diane Burstein

* **Wed 24 March A Million Years at STC**

The history of Standard Telephones & Cables
by Stan Springate

We will let you know the programme for the rest of 2004 as soon as we have finalised it. In the meantime we look forward to seeing you at our new venue, St John's Church Hall, next to Whetstone Police Station (and opposite the *Three Horseshoes* pub, for those of you with a thirst) on Wednesday 28 January 2004.

Don't forget the Christmas Party!

**Friern Barnet & District
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