

# Friern Barnet *Newsletter*

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## DEEP AND CRISP AND NASTY

*By David Berguer*

Wednesday 28 January 2004 was to have been the day of our first meeting in our new venue. The Committee had been phoning each other all day, checking to make sure that everything was going to be in order. John Donovan had travelled down by car from Potters Bar in the morning, Janet & Colin had all the catering things ready, Dorrell had assembled her raffle prizes, Mel's books were all packed up and ready to go, and John Holtham and David Berguer were flexing their muscles prior to setting out the chairs. Helen Hooper and Mary Taylor were looking forward to greeting everyone.

Snow had been forecast and we all began to peer heavenwards as the skies turned more and more leaden. Around 5 o'clock it began. Not a few gentle flakes, but a veritable blizzard. In no time at all Friern Barnet looked like a Christmas card apart from the robins, of which there was no sign. Frantic telephone calls ensued and an Executive Decision was made: we would have to cancel. We telephoned as many people as we could, and some of you phoned us to find out what was happening. In the end only one hardy sole turned up at the hall, to be politely turned away by Colin and Janet who had risked life and limb (not to mention the threat from polar bears in Friern Barnet Lane) to cope with such an eventuality. The ironic thing is that the snow had all gone by the Friday, although I did just have time to take this photo in Coppetts Wood as a memento of The Great Blizzard of 2004.



### NEW MEETING DATE

Because of the cancellation of the January meeting, we missed the opportunity to hear Norman Burgess talking about The Two Stephens's, who were responsible for the Stephens Inks empire. Fortunately Norman has agreed to give the talk on Wednesday 28 July. As you know we don't normally hold meetings in July but we hope that this will not deter you from coming. We are assured of a very interesting evening so please make a note in your diaries.

### ASYLUM FIRE

In the early hours of 27 January, 1903 fire swept through five temporary wards at the Colney Hatch Pauper Lunatic Asylum. The wards had been erected in 1896, were made of wood and corrugated iron and were connected to the main block by a passage, also made of wood and corrugated iron. A strong wind fanned the flames which quickly spread from ward to ward. Rescue of patients was hampered by lack of water and the fact that the iron became red hot. Some of the patients became disoriented and ran into the fire instead of away from it and a number were found wandering distractedly in the grounds. Sadly 51 people died, all of them women, making it the worst disaster in peacetime in English hospital history. It was reported that 47 of them were members of the Church of England and 4 were Roman Catholics. They were all buried in a common grave.

The following touching poem was written by J.E.S., an inmate of the Asylum, in appreciation of the great heroism of the members of the staff:

Only Asylum Workers,  
But a truly noble band,  
That cannot be dispensed with  
Throughout this mighty land.

Those without rhyme or reason  
Are placed within their charge.  
It would be very dangerous  
For such to be at large.

A few words to you, friends,  
About the terrible fire.  
To say too much upon it  
I have really no desire.

'Twas in the early morning  
The Asylum staff were woke,  
And what they had to encounter  
Was volumes of flame and smoke.

They rushed to the wards of the helpless  
And tried to find them there,  
But the flames were soon upon them  
Before anyone was aware.

Now think of it for a moment -  
Midst fire, water and smoke:  
That those they were trying to rescue  
were treating it all as a joke.

But the dead are free from suffering,  
And will know no more sorrow or pain.  
But the sight and sounds were so awful  
May it never occur again.

Doctors, attendants and nurses,  
Were nearly done to death,  
But they worked away like Trojans,  
Each moment fighting for breath.

A word of appreciation  
Is surely due to such.  
Just to simply praise and thank them;  
That cannot be too much.

England has many heroes,  
But none more brave than they,  
For daily they're facing danger -  
Protect them, Oh God we pray.

## AN UNNOTICED BEAUTY SPOT

by John Heathfield

Carefully hidden in Bawtry Road is one of the most attractive housing developments in Whetstone. It is the Bookbinders' Alms Houses, designed as a "garden village" and opened at a cost of £10,750 in 1927. The Society of Bookbinders was formed in about 1830 with the Duke of Bedford as its first President. He wrote: "Desirous of doing all I can to promote the interests and welfare of so meritorious a Body as the Operative Bookbinders of the Metropolis, I will with pleasure accept the distinction proposed to me by the writers of the letter you have put in my hands of Nominal President of the Society". Note the flowery language, typical of the period. Other patrons included the Duke of Sussex, Sir Robert Peel and Earl Spencer, an ancestor of the late Princess Diana. In 1837 a fund was established "For the erection of an asylum for decayed bookbinders, their widows and females who have worked in the business."



Exactly what is a "decayed bookbinder" and what is the business? The first three pensioners were John Lewis, aged 78, afflicted with debility and old age; John Trubshaw, aged 76, nearly blind, lame and afflicted with bodily ailments; and William Cooks, aged 56, suffering from double rupture, dimness of sight, and paralytic. One unfortunate man was admitted in 1847. He was racing his horse drawn carriage with a friend when the wheels interlocked and he was speared through the chest by one of the shafts, leaving him severely disabled.

An asylum was built in the Balls Pond Road and opened in 1843 at a cost of £550. It was closed in 1927. By the end of Victoria's reign increasing

mechanisation led to mass redundancies in a skills-based industry. This, coupled with a reduction in income during the First World War, led to the decision to sell the Islington site in favour of Whetstone. The money raised was used to provide better facilities further out of London. The estate still provides a little haven of beauty.

### **DEAD WRONG**

Ken Brooks, our member in Friern Park, very kindly donated a number of issues of Muswell Hill Garage News, a fortnightly magazine produced by the Sports Club staff at Muswell Hill bus garage in Sydney Road where he used to work as a conductor. Muswell Hill garage was opened by the LGOC in September 1925 and closed in July 1990 when it was subsequently demolished to make way for a small housing estate, Audley Close. MH, as it was known by London Transport, housed some 99 buses at its peak and it operated routes 13,43,73,102,134,210,212,244 and 251.

The issue of 9 Feb 1973 of Muswell Hill Garage News contains this apology:

"We are Very Sorry Bert.

As some of you probably know, in our last issue we reported the passing away of one of our retired drivers, Bert Howson. Unfortunately for us, this was not correct. We would like to make amends, and offer Bert our sincere apologies for the error. We would also like to apologise to all of Bert's friends who may have been upset because of this dreadful mistake.

Quite simply (for those of you who did not see a copy of our last issue) we mistakenly announced the passing away of retired driver Bert Howson. The mistake came about through the misinterpretation of a name. The name being Houseman, for this is the name of an ex Muswell Hill driver who retired some eighteen years ago, and has since passed away. As you can see, the names are so similar, we feel anyone could have made the same mistake, however we do agree that we should have got our facts verified by the Garage Manager, something we failed to do.

The trouble this error has caused is quite unbelievable, with the Hornsey Journal devoting a quarter of a page to the mistake and, to cap it all, the Daily Mirror phoned the garage last Friday to find out what it was all about.

However, we do wish to thank the Hornsey Journal for publicly putting the matter right and we hope that they do not have to go through the same trouble on our behalf again."

The Hornsey Journal had interviewed Bert, who drove 43 and 134 buses for 11 years until his retirement, and he said "My budgie died last week, but I'm alright."

### **PAST VIEWS, PAST VOICES**

This is the title of the current exhibition at Church Farmhouse Museum. It consists of a large number of views of the district mostly dating from 100 years

ago. These are supplemented by a series of tape recordings made by Percy Reboul. They include accounts by a local sweet-shop owner, postman, tram driver and teacher all from our own district. The exhibition runs until 16 May and should be visited by anyone interested in local history.

The Museum is situated in Greyhound Hill, Hendon and is open Mondays to Thursdays 10.00 -12.30 and 13.30 - 17.00, Saturdays 10.00 - 13.00 and 14.00 - 17.30 and Sundays 14.00 - 17.30. It is closed on Fridays.

As the recordings are only available at set times it is worth telephoning the Museum first on 020 8203 0130.

### **BOUNDARY MARKER SAVED!**

*by John Donovan*

Last year Janet Liversidge told me of a boundary marker at the entrance to Oakleigh Park Station. Only the top half could be seen, and it seemed to peep over the tarmac, with its back to the fence. In due course I took its picture. Recently I was driving past the station *en route* to Friern Barnet when I noticed that there was a 'road up' sign and some workmen were digging in the kerb near the marker. Later I checked to see that they had not damaged it, and there it was, gone. A small section of fence had been replaced either side of the entrance and the marker, which had been hard against the old fence, had disappeared. I stood, nonplussed, trying to think what to do next. Adjoining the new fence was a section of old fence leading to the disused kiosk, about twenty feet away. Behind the fence was an area of rubbish leading across to a thirty-foot drop to the railway line. There in the rubbish was the missing boundary marker or, to be precise, its top half. The marker was not too far from me but although I am quite good looking for my height, I knew I wouldn't be able to climb over that fence. There was a long, thin piece of timber leaning inside the rubbish area, within arms reach, so I used it to try and draw the marker nearer to me. All I managed to do was turn it over, showing the lettering. I'd already taken a photograph of one side, so I took another. I decided to cover the marker with a paper bag (using the timber) as camouflage, and seek advice.

Later that day I mentioned the incident to Janet and, to cut a long story short, she and Colin drove down there to case the joint. Eventually, Janet went down on one knee by the fence, Colin stood on her other knee, leaned over and managed to rescue the marker (how I'd love to have been there with my little camera). We are now going to consult Barnet Council to ascertain what the marker's fate should be.

### **SHOPS SURVEY**

*by David Berguer*

Last year, with the invaluable help of John Holtham and Ollie Natelson, I once again toured the district and recorded the shops. This is the third year we have done this and we are now building up a useful database which accurately records the changes taking place. These annual surveys are supplemented by the work of our Recorder groups who log day-to-day changes.

In the 1960s this was Leavers the Drapers and during the 1970s and 1980s it was Shamrock Linens. By 1991 it had changed to Augustus Barnett wine merchants, but when was it Vintner's and who were they? If you know the answer please let us know.

The distribution of shops by area is as follows:

	2001	2002	2003
High Road North Finchley	149	153	158
High Road Whetstone	110	102	102
Woodhouse Road	64	64	67
Friern Barnmet Road	59	59	59
Oakleigh Road North	46	47	47
Colney Hatch Lane	39	38	37
Ballards Lane (n. of Kingsway)	31	31	31
Friern Bridge Retail Park	11	11	11
Oakleigh Road South	11	11	11
Wetherill Road	5	5	1
Cromwell Road	4	4	3
Sydney Road	2	2	2
Pembroke Road	1	1	1
Wilton Road	1	1	1
	533	529	531

As we have seen, when shopfitting takes place it often reveals hidden goodies. Here are a couple more:



*No 7 Oakleigh Road North, taken in 1996*



*No 470 Bowes Road, taken in 2003*

The two previous years are shown for comparison:

	2001	2002	2003
Restaurants/Take aways	88	91	90
Food shops	88	91	89
CTNs *	35	23	23
Furnishing/Carpets	23	22	22
Pubs	21	21	20
Ladies Hairdressers	18	19	20
Estate Agents	18	19	18
Banks/Building Societies	20	19	18
Ladies Wear	19	17	15
DIY/Hardware	15	16	15
Dry Cleaners/Laundrettes	16	16	17
Garages/Car Accessories	16	12	11
Chemists	9	10	9
Men's Wear	8	9	9
Electrical	10	8	9
Jewellers	7	8	7
Charity Shops	7	7	5
Opticians	5	7	7
Gents Hairdressers	6	6	6
Florists	4	6	6
Video Hire	5	5	4
Footwear	5	5	5
Antique Dealers	6	4	3
Printers/Copy Shops	4	4	4
Shops Vacant	25	21	30
Others	55	63	69
	533	529	531

\* = Confectioners, Tobacconists, Newsagents

There were changes to 52 shops (either changes of name or of trade), 9.79% of the total. Of the large shopping centres, Friern Barnet Road (with 13 changing trade and 5 changing their name only) and Woodhouse Road (5 changes of trade and 3 changes of name) showed the largest change.

One of the changes was to number 29 Queens Parade in Friern Barnet Road. Last year this shop (Montana's Supermarket) closed and remained empty until March 2004 when, as part of the refurbishment, the fascia was removed to reveal the following:



### BARGAIN PRICE

When Beryl Humber married Robert Spurr back in 1953, they held their reception in the wooden hut next to the Fire Station in Friern Barnet Lane. You can see from the attached receipt that the cost was not exorbitant. To put things into perspective, the average weekly wage in those days was around £12; a bottle of gin cost £1 13s 9d; a 16" black and white television was 87gns and, believe it or not, a Biro pen cost £1 5s 8d!

OFFICIAL RECEIPT

RECEIPT No. 46378

FRIERN BARNET URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL

TREASURER'S DEPARTMENT:  
TOWN HALL, FRIERN BARNET, N.11

PARTICULARS	AMOUNT NO.	RATES			DOETS	GENERAL			PRIVATE			OTHER			TOTAL	
		CHARGE				RENTS	STREET	WORKS	INCOME							
ofc. 2489.						4	1	4						4	1	4

RECEIVED FROM Mrs. E. K. Humber  
BY CASHING THE SUM STATED ABOVE  
DATE 28.5.53

28.5.53

28.5.53

### THE AGM

Our Annual General Meeting takes place Wednesday 26 May and with this Newsletter is your official invitation to attend, along with a Nomination Form. If you would like to be on the Committee please complete this and send it to John Donovan by Tuesday 11 May.

### WHEN GYMNASTS WERE AMATEURS

This is the year of the Olympics and it is therefore particularly interesting to learn that our member in Somerset, Mrs Hilda Clark, has a connection with the former British Olympic gymnastic team.

Hilda tells us that her parents, Harry and Ada Callingham, worked with other officials of the Amateur Gymnastic Association to send men's and ladies teams to the 1928 Olympic Games in Amsterdam. In the end the men's team did not compete, so all efforts were made to do the best for the ladies. Hilda's mother was in charge of them and, because they were all working girls, they could only practice in the evenings and on Saturday afternoons and Sundays in their own gym clubs. There was no full time training at home or abroad and, of course, there was no sponsorship of any kind. Just before they went they all met at Parkwood House, East Road, N11 for a final briefing. Hilda says she remembers the garden at Parkwood House and also going to the Sunday morning practices.

The dedication of the British ladies must have paid off because they won a bronze medal at Amsterdam, and it was about 50 years before British Gymnasts won another Olympic medal.



In the next issue of the Newsletter we will include an article from Hilda that gives her reminiscences as a child growing up in Harringay and Wood Green.

## **TO THE STANDARD AND BACK**

### **- EPISODE EIGHT**

*by John Donovan*

As I have mentioned before, my daily route to work took me down Bellevue Road and alongside the allotments; that was my 'scenic' route. Occasionally I would ignore Bellevue Road and continue along Holly Park Road to Beaconsfield Road, just for a change of scenery. It was then but a short walk to The Fields, but for half of that walk I was accompanied by a beautiful, red-brick Edwardian wall, on my left. This was the eastern wall of the garden of No 1 The Crescent (can you visualise that?)

After a few years, a house was built at the rear end of that garden and, sadly, that involved breaching the beautiful wall. Even more sad was the fact that, once the house was finished, the mature Plane tree that had stood on the pavement at the point had disappeared. The 'new' house is now No 73 Beaconsfield Road, and you can still see what's left of the old wall.



*The old wall, with part being demolished, and the tree*

If you stand across the road and look at the wall you will notice how well the builder (architect?) kept it looking horizontal as it moved, from left to right, downhill. It was designed in six foot sections (about shoulder height), each one a foot lower than the previous section. The bottom half of each section is cement rendered, while the top half is divided, horizontally, by four short brick stacks. Slightly taller brick pillars separate the sections, while every third pillar is above head height, much wider and topped with a brick triangle. The whole wall has a slightly ecclesiastical look, and really is worth visiting. I say 'is' because, although the wall was demolished for the length of the new house, and the lower six sections have been replaced by a simple cement-rendered wall, there is sufficient original wall to hint at its former glory.



*The new wall, with some of the original on the left*

I mentioned earlier that having traversed The Railway Field and emerged from the subway, I was faced with an exciting choice. I could turn left to STC (the usual option) or I could cross the road to Oakleigh Recreation Ground (the Rec), and walk to Brunswick Park Road. I have to say that I have always found the Rec somewhat bland. Sandwiched between Oakleigh Road South and Brunswick Park Road, it is mainly grass, with no flowers and little colour. As I walked across its northern end, however, I would pass a couple of Oak trees and beneath one of them was a park bench. Since I was always early for work, I would allow myself five minutes sitting under that lovely old tree. If I looked upward I could see the delicate young oak leaves x-rayed against the bright morning sun, and the occasional silhouette of a passing insect. Gazing across the park I would see the two lines of trees that provided shade for folk who had bought tea or ice cream at the 'Swiss Chalet' refreshment building, which also doubled as dressing rooms for the cricket field. Sadly, the Chalet has gone, but I believe cricket is still played (although the church clock stand no longer at ten to three). Beyond the park I could see the menacing bastions of Lander's Corner.

After a while the daydreaming stopped, I left my bench, walked on to Brunswick Park Road and turned left. At that corner is what was known, locally, as The Parachute Factory. The whole corner is, in fact, a collection of small businesses, which I am at present researching, but I have been told again, only last month, that the long building nearest the park was used in WWII for folding parachutes. From there I would walk past Brunswick Crescent and Brunswick Grove to STC (do *you* get confused with all those Brunswicks, or is it just me?)

Brunswick Park Road is quite dangerous by the Parachute Factory, with traffic cresting the hill on a bend, usually too fast for safety. A line of iron railings runs along the eastern side of the road, and they belong to the Great Northern

Cemetery. I expect there are some Victorian railings left but, over the decades, most of them have been replaced, one section at a time, as each is demolished by a low-flying car. Our local version of 'painting the Forth Bridge' is 'replacing the Cemetery Railings'.

Have I introduced you to P.J.Enderby yet? Well, one of my duties at STC was to call in at each of the many stores to pink up 'pink tickets'. Every item (nut, bolt, washer or diode) was put into one of my 'job' boxes in the store, the pink ticket would be torn off the set, and kept for me. Using the ticket (it was about 4 inches square), I would delete the nut or bolt from my storage list for that particular job (this is getting as technical as a Stan Springgate lecture). When the job was complete I could 'release' it onto the shop floor for manufacture.

One day I was sitting at my desk when the postperson brought me an A4 envelope containing a wodge of *fifty* pink tickets. I looked at them rather nonplussed; they had nothing to do with me, although they would have been important to *someone*. No doubt they had come from a chaser who couldn't find a home from them. I looked on the envelope for a clue as to the sender (they were multi-use envelopes, so his/her name would have been before mine on the front) but it was new, and not previously used. Anyway, like a good citizen I decided to pass the wodge onto some other victim. I put them back into the envelope, crossed out my name, wrote P.J. Enderby, crossed *that* name out, and then wrote Robin Gordon. The tickets would not be traced back to me, because Robin would assume the fictitious P.J. had sent them. Clever, eh?

A few weeks later I received another wodge of pink tickets, and I did the same thing. Every week or so another wodge would arrive, and eventually I grew suspicious. I put a cross in the top corner of the top ticket and sent the wodge on its way. Two weeks later it arrived back on my desk - that same wodge had been touring STC for several months in all. I dropped the lot into the bin. (British Industry leads the world!) *To be continued.....*

## **FRIERN WATCH**

*by John Heathfield*

John Donovan's recent remarks about a boundary marker at Friern Watch (Newsletter No 12) set me thinking. This is not really my patch, but I have a few notes.

William Perte lived at Friern Watch and married Isabella Conyers (Conyers' house was on Church Hill in East Barnet). The first record is in 1580. William Perte was the stepson of William Clark, the Bailiff, who at that time had a lease for 100 years from the Dean & Chapter of St Paul's. The house stood in Adam's Field. Perte had a dovecote built, which caused one field to be called Doves. On the south side of this was Hogman's Hurn with two wooden houses on it. These gave their name to Woodhouse. The Hurn may have been a pond which caused the bend in the road in Woodhouse Road outside what is now Woodhouse College.

Where Finchley Park now stands was Goslings, a field name which may well recall the name of the previous owner, but in 1486 it was held by Thomas Sanny, a member of an extensive tribe.

The will of William Perte (another one) of Friern Barnet dated 13 Feb 1608 leaves to Margery his wife (should it be widow?) Friern Lodge, then in the occupation of William Shepherde on a 921 year lease. I calculate that the original lease would therefore have been signed about 1530 and it is possible that the first house dates from that time.

The estate seems to have run from Woodside Road to Finchley Park and on the east side of the High Road. It was bounded on the south by what became the Woodhouse Estate (owned by Alan Brent in 1655); on the east by Friern Barnet Manor Farm; and on the north by the Coldharbour Estate. There is further information in a rather good book called Finchley & Whetstone Past!

#### **FROM THE ARCHIVES**

The Finchley Press of 6 May 1937 carried this item:

"As reported in last week's Barnet Press the Friern Barnet Urban District Council in their monthly meeting on Thursday night last week decided to delete the suggested public assembly hall from their scheme for providing new municipal offices in place of The Priory.

The General Purposes Committee reported that the Friern Barnet Ratepayers Assn executive committee had written asking if the Simmons bequest of the Friary Park would prohibit the building of council offices in the park, and if so, if it would be possible to have the restrictive covenants removed.

The conveyance of the park to the council, the General Purposes Committee reported, contained conditions that prohibited the erection of buildings such as public offices in the park but the question as to whether the restrictive covenants could be removed on application by the Council does not arise, as the Council are unanimous in their opinion that the site of the existing offices is the most suitable for the new offices.

The executive committee of the Ratepayers Association were reported to be definitely opposed to the inclusion of a public hall in the scheme for new municipal offices."

From this it would appear that not only did the Ratepayers Association want to allow building in Friary Park, but they were actually against the provision of any kind of public meeting hall within the proposed new town hall. Had the meeting been held today, it is almost certain that the situation would be reversed!

**Friern Barnet & District  
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