

Friern Barnet *Newsletter*

Published by Friern Barnet & District Local History Society

Issue Number 17

July 2004

MEMORIES OF NEW SOUTHGATE STATION

Pamela Brown, our member in Broxbourne, has kindly sent us an article written by her cousin, Allen Bray of Hullbridge, Essex, in which he recalls his time working for J.G. & S. Bailey, Potato and Vegetable Merchants at the LNER Depot at New Southgate Station.

"In the early 1930s, when I was born, my father started work for J.G. & S. Bailey, their offices being in 'the yard'. The main shed and office was the building situated at the end of the two central sidings. In the late 1940s I spent many hours folding 1cwt sacks and stacking them into piles ready to be returned to the various farmers or distributors. The potatoes were loaded mainly direct from the wagons in 1cwt sacks onto the delivery lorry and were occasionally loaded into the shed for storage. The shed identified in the yard plan as a 'potato store' was mainly used as a sack store then.

At that time all produce would come by rail from the potato growing areas of East Anglia and Lincolnshire to Ferme Park yards, arriving at New Southgate on a daily basis with the yard pilot, a J6 from Hornsey shed. One day - can't remember the exact date, but it was probably in the school holidays - I



Bailey's was to the right of the gasholder; the down slow track is on the far right

was taken down the yard to the pilot, J6 No 4188. To my delight I was beckoned up onto the footplate. This was one of those childhood experiences never to be forgotten! Acting on the fireman's instructions and I recall, to his amusement, I attempted to stoke the fire and shovel coal - both nearly going into the box! How important one felt on that footplate. In the 1950s I can remember my father having long irate conversations with someone, probably at Ferme Park, about late arrivals of his wagons. He would then go up to the signal box, to find the imminent train times. Eventually, a 'Bailey's Special' - one engine, one wagon and a brake would appear on the down slow road going just under Friern Barnet Road bridge to stop a few yards past the reverse crossover. When a gap in the services appeared it would be shunted back over all the other running lines and into the yard.

Looking at the yard layout again, the long building by the main gate backing onto Station Road, I recall, was used as the stables for the many magnificent coal cart horses. The coal merchants (Charringtons is the only one I can remember) were at the Pinkham Way (North Circular) end of the yard. Horses would be harnessed up every morning except Sundays to pull the heavily loaded coal carts round the roads of New Southgate. I remember the building work on the goods shed being done; it was to add an office above the weigh-bridge. I can't recall any wartime bomb damage; the yard escaped unscathed.

Past the main gate along the wall and towards the station was Hunts the timber merchants with large stacks of freshly cut timber on the ground, against the wall and sometimes arriving in wagons. The whine of their large circular saw would be heard on and off most days. At that time in my life I was an avid train spotter, therefore most of my spare time was spent at the best vantage points around New Southgate. In fact when I was on the J6 footplate, a trip up the headshunt down by Wood Green tunnel would bring you within spitting distance of the main line trains as they rushed by. Also you were at the same level as the footplate crews on those expresses. If only I'd asked my father for another day on the footplate - but you just didn't. Trips to King's Cross were a regular thing, at 6 1/2d return (child's fare).

Again I can't remember the exact date, but it was some time in the 1950s, when a fast northbound freight parted company from its brake van and, I think, one or two wagons between the Wood Green tunnel exit and New Southgate station. I was in the yard at the time but did not see this rear portion of the train drifting back towards the tunnel. Unfortunately or fortunately, whichever way you look at it, a following train burst from the tunnel and the two collided. No one was hurt in the accident but the breakdown crane toppled over when picking up the 20 ton goods brake and the operator suffered a broken leg.

One of the conditions of Bailey's tenancy in the yard was that all produce received came by rail. But, in the early 1960s as the deliveries from the growing areas began to take longer and longer, it became necessary to use road transport. Lorry loads of potatoes, ten tons or so, would arrive together at the yard gates usually very early in the morning. Two very large lorries would clog the limited yard creating all sorts of problems for my father. One

particular delivery arrived at the yard gate about 4 o'clock one morning and the driver wanted to get back home. When my father arrived, at what he thought was early enough, at 5am, he found five tons, 100 sack loads of spuds, in a pile against the locked gates. He had to climb over to get in before even making a start on the mess. There were heated phone calls that day.

Bailey's was only a very small company, my father being voted Director in 1949 and Chairman in 1967. As the big supermarkets came into being, business became more and more difficult and in 1973 the company was liquidated and dad started his well-earned retirement".

DUST STRIKE

by John Heathfield

One of the first actions of the newly-formed Finchley Borough Council in 1899 was to set up a rubbish collection service with a depot in Squires Lane. Residents had to supply a dustbin which was emptied weekly and the rubbish was taken to a piece of waste ground in Summers Lane where the tipper carts were emptied. By 1910 the carts were worn out and, in order to save money, the Council decided to "privatise" the service by employing a contractor who provided his own carts.

In November 1910 the dustmen went on strike. Their complaint was that the new contractor had not provided tipping carts, which meant that they had to be unloaded by hand, using shovels and forks. The result was an unreasonable extension of hours of labour for the same wages (24 shillings a week). The working week was 14 hours on Mondays to Fridays and 12 hours on Saturdays. Matters came to a head when the special metal-lined cart for fish offal was withdrawn and men were required to load offal together with general rubbish, and by the end of the day the smell was far from fragrant.

One of the men who had been employed by the Council without complaint for 13 years was dismissed; another who refused to take out a horse, which he said was lame, was also dismissed. The contractor denied this. Two men who subsequently complained were also dismissed, whereupon the rest of the men went on strike, saying that they feared wholesale dismissal. Councillor Brogan brought up the matter in Council, saying that 15 local men, all educated in Finchley schools, and men of good character, had been dismissed. He said that winter was coming on and these men had wives and families.

On 11 November the strikers were given temporary work at the Council's sewage farm and paid out of the rates. On the following Wednesday the Council met again. It was pointed out that there were already 23 men in Finchley without employment, and that they should be given work ahead of the strikers. The decision to employ the strikers was then rescinded. The contractor took on staff who worked until the following February, when the contractor asked to be released from his contract, stating that he had underestimated the cost, and was losing money. The Council agreed and reinstated the direct labour scheme. Twelve of the former staff were re-employed, the others having obtained other jobs.

TOWNSWOMEN'S GUILD

by David Berguer

Early in January I received a telephone call from Deidre (Dee) Hughes who told me that, sadly, the Friern Barnet & Whetstone Townswomen's Guild was going to have to close. The Guild had been in existence since 13 March 1935 and Dee asked me if our Society would be interested in inheriting their records. I said that we would be delighted, as it would offer us a great opportunity to glimpse at first hand how society had changed in the last seventy years.

In March, Dee phoned me again to say that they had now held their last meeting and that I could come and collect everything they had. This turned out to be even more interesting than I had imagined, as it ranged from the beautifully hand-written minutes of all their committee meetings and the accounts to a collection of press cuttings and photographs. At its height the Guild had over 100 members and its monthly meetings were regularly featured in the *Finchley Press*. Meetings were held at All Saints' Church in Oakleigh Road North for many years, then at Manor Drive Methodist Church, and latterly at the Old Fire Station in Friern Barnet Lane. During the War the Guild were very active, and through their Wool Fund they were able to provide both servicemen and civilians with a range of items that had been knitted by the members. The following letter is a graphic illustration of their work:

A. Squadron.
3. Wing.
R.A.F. Station.
Compton Bassett,
Wiltshire.

The Secretary. December 9th 1940.

Dear Miss Gentle,

I was home for the week-end and Mother gave me the lovely warm scarf and nice wool socks, please will you thank the ladies of your Guild, who so very kindly gave their time and cash, and tell them how very much these comforts will be appreciated.

Wishing you and your Guild a happy and successful New Year.

Yours sincerely,

John S. Haughton

You cannot help wondering what happened to John Haughton: was he one of the Few, and did he survive the War?

Once I have had time to study all the Guild archives in more detail I will include items that I think are of interest in future Newsletters. If any of our members once belonged to the Guild and have any memorable stories to tell, please contact me and we will include these as well.

A STEP FORWARD

The donation of the Townswomen's Guild archives has highlighted a situation that has been taxing us for some time now. Since we started the Society in 1999 we have been accumulating material at a rate of knots. Our living rooms, garages and attics are gradually reaching saturation point. As well as printed material and photographs, we have a collection of over 400 books on general and local history topics. We have also amassed a number of artefacts, including a ladies' sit-up-and-beg bicycle that used to stand outside Oscroft's in Woodhouse Road, and a Comptometer machine that once graced the accounts department of STC.

Ideally all this material would be housed in one central site where it could be easily accessed; the problem was, where? After fruitless searching in Friern Barnet (which would have been the ideal location) we settled on Avenue House in East End Road. This has a huge basement area with many spare rooms, and it is also the place where The Finchley Society have their archives. We were offered a very large room at a cost of £250 per annum which would meet our needs but we had to carefully consider the financial implications.

At our Annual General Meeting on 26 May, Norman Burgess had tabled a motion that, in order to finance an archive room, a levy of 50p should be charged for everyone attending our meetings. Whilst this would have generated the required revenue, we considered that it was unfair to penalise members who were already supporting us by buying raffle tickets at our meetings. The matter was discussed at some length at the AGM and a motion from the floor by Ivor Gartside and seconded by Janet Friend to raise the annual subscription from £5 to £6 for single members and from £8 to £10 for couples, was carried unanimously. The increase will take effect from 1 April 2005 when new subscriptions become due.

WHEN GYMNASTS WERE AMATEURS

by Hilda Clark

"The People's Palace, in the East End of London, was opened by Queen Victoria in the year of her Jubilee (1887). Whether it was the attraction of a new building or the supplying of a long-felt want, or even one of those periodical outbursts of enthusiasm, the fact remains that on the opening night the gym was packed. At the order: "Fall in for Drill" over one hundred and thirty members lined up, Mr Callingham being one of them."

This was the beginning of an article in *The Gymnast* (the only Amateur Gymnast paper, price twopence) which described my father's long association with the

world of amateur gymnasts. At the end of the 19th century there was a great demand for further education and the St Bride Foundation in Ludgate Circus was an educational and social club for City workers. The Orion Gymnastic Club, founded in 1868, was in East Bank, Stamford Hill; The Dockland Settlement Club was founded by the old German Gym Society in St Pancras Road about 1890; the Federation of London Working Boys (later called the London Federation of Boys Clubs) met in St James' Gym in Holloway; and the Northampton Polytechnic Institute in Clerkenwell had its gym affiliated to the Amateur Gymnastic Association in about 1900. These clubs collected together under the Metropolitan and Southern Counties Amateur Gymnastic Association. The Wood Green branch of the M and SCGA met in Alexandra Palace in 1924, although the club had started in 1883. At the time of the Alexandra Palace meeting, Mr White of Woodside Road, Wood Green was the Secretary. The Standard Telephones and Cables gym was started in 1930.

My father, Harry Callingham, was aged about fifteen when he attended the memorable opening of the People's Palace and was a member for several years, but when the gym club was closed owing to lack of funds, he attended a club at the Institute in Shoreditch run by Mr Burdett-Coutts. When this closed the members went to St Brides and then to the Northern Polytechnic Institute. One of the instructors of the time was Mr Rudolph Oberholtzer who trained some first-class gymnasts and became known as the Grand Old Man of Gymnastics.

My father was also a keen cyclist, swimmer and diver, and for several years was a member of the Aural Rowing Club stationed at Hammersmith. He was Vice-Captain and stroked many winning crews. My mother, Ada Symes, was a member of the NPI Ladies' Gym Club and became one of Mr Oberholtzer's outstanding gymnasts, being Champion of England for three years around 1908. She was also a keen cyclist, swimmer and diver. My parents married in 1913 and moved to Umfreville Road in Haringay, my father giving up active training in the club, although still being Vice-President. He continued his interest in gymnastics as a member of the Amateur Gymnastic Association. The Chairman of the Executive Committee at that time was a Major commanding the local volunteers of the Artists' Rifles of Hornsey, Finchley and Muswell Hill. My parents continued their association with the gymnastics world through the AGA judging competitions, arranging exercises for competitions and displays. When they attended these events, I went too and must have started going as a toddler. The displays were enthralling, but the competition not quite so. When Mum and Dad were busy there was always someone to keep an eye on me. I particularly remember 1928 when we went to the Orion Club for coaching of the Olympic teams on Saturday afternoons and Sunday mornings, since everyone was working during the week. There had been a team for the 1924 Olympic Games in Paris, but for men only. The comment on their performance was that it was an improvement on the team sent to Antwerp in 1920! In 1928 there was a Ladies' team, for the first time ever, and my Mum was Manager. The 1928 Games were held in Amsterdam. The teams and officials wore white slacks and shirts for the men, white dresses for the ladies, navy blazer with the Union Jack and "1928" on the pocket (I still

have such a pocket) and straw hats with red, white and blue ribbon.

The pair of clogs brought home as a memento disappeared a long time ago, but the soft doll dressed as a Dutch boy is still one of my treasured possessions. A few years ago I took the clothes off the doll and washed them, and washed the doll. I replaced everything as authentically as possible, and even had an artist friend repaint the face.

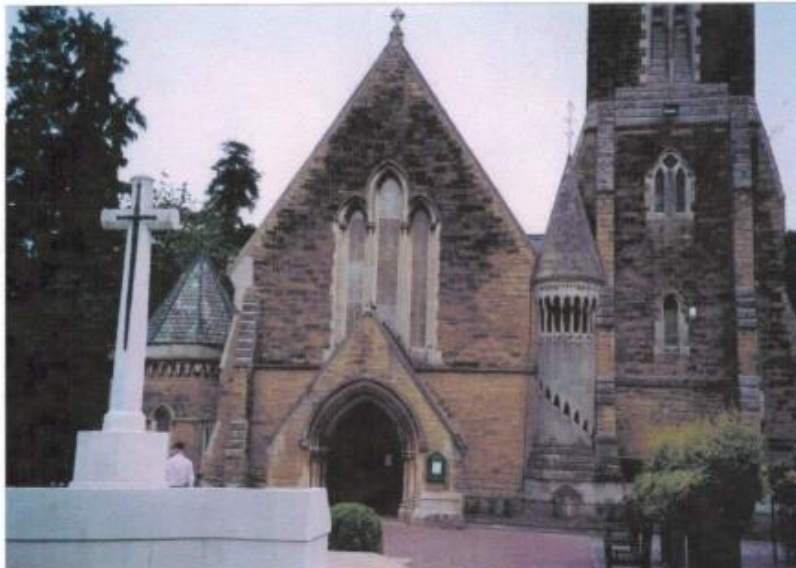
We moved to Wood Green in 1933, the year that it received its Charter as a Borough. There was to have been a floodlit display of Health and Beauty training and gymnastic display in the Town Hall grounds, but because of the rain it took place in White Hart School. The school was also the venue for the Osterley Gym Club which I joined in the thirties. I was proud of my belt in the club colours of mauve and white. I remember falling off the rings on one occasion and being made to get straight back on and I remember helping to move the parallel bars and managing to knock the fire extinguisher off the wall; the Caretaker was not very pleased at having to clear up all the water!

I was very keen on gym at school and when Mum came to the school Open Days, I think the only mistress she talked to was our gym mistress, Miss Sharp. I left school in 1939 and when war broke out that year it brought the end of our active involvement in the world of gymnastics.

THE CEMETERY HORSES

by Colin Barratt

In May, I led a group of 20 people on another conducted walk around New Southgate Cemetery. After the walk, Pat Richardson, one of our members, said that, as a child around 1950, she used to live near the cemetery and was fascinated by the place. She would wander through the south entrance gates, now gone, and up to the central chapel. At the back of the chapel was an



underground cellar or vault, with barred open windows at ground level. She thought it was a dungeon! Pat remembered that the vault was in complete darkness, but she could hear horses moving inside. For a young girl it was quite frightening, and at first she didn't realise the noises were horses; she never saw them outside, but assumed they were used for pulling funeral carriages.

A group of us intrepid explorers made our way with Pat round to the back of the building to see where this may have been. Sure enough, we found the rusted iron gate, across the entrance to what looked like a vault or crypt, under the main chapel. Part of this vault now has an extension built over the top, for the exit from the chapel, now a crematorium. This was where the horses used to be heard.

We had to find out more, so I rang Jim Rous, former Superintendent at the cemetery, and he confirmed that horses *had* been kept there. He remembered one being there when he started work there in 1966, but it had only been used for pulling a cart around the cemetery for collecting rubbish! The cart had broken, and the horse had been made redundant, being replaced by motor transport. However, it stayed on at the cemetery, in retirement, being stabled in the vaulted crypt. The Foreman usually fed it, but sometimes Jim and his wife took this on, which Jim found rather daunting, as the horse was heavy and unpredictable. Sometimes it escaped, and roamed around the grounds, to the surprise of visitors!

Jim also told me that, on one occasion, several coffins (plus contents) had been stored in the crypt, as the families wanted to take them abroad for burial. For some reason, they were never collected, and stayed on shelves there. They may even be there still!

TO THE STANDARD AND BACK - EPISODE NINE

by John Donovan

Last year I told you about the three large buildings that formed the core of the STC site and I have already noted how I spent my days wandering around, visiting each one, and seeking answers to questions.

Those buildings were three storeys high but, occasionally, I would creep up the final flight of stairs and on to the roof. I love being up high and looking at wide vistas and that was a way of indulging myself in complete safety (there's a feeling of solidity in a three-storey building). Building 8 was the one that gave the best views, and I would gaze out at a panorama that started in the east, encompassing the lovely new lake in the former sports fields, the spire of the church at Waterfall Road, and the line of Chase Side on the horizon.

Moving my gaze to the north on that same horizon I could see a large, gleaming white, Georgian Mansion on Chase Side; that was the Theological Training College I believe. In the early part of last century, when the house was in private hands, there was a huge greenhouse in the grounds and the head gardener

grew bunches of grapes so large that much of the crop was sent to be sold in Covent Garden. I took several pictures of that panoramic view. Yes, I know that cameras were not allowed on site, but if *you* don't tell anyone, *I* shan't!



A roof with a view

As you can imagine, I was very much aware of the changing seasons while walking to and from work, year in and year out, and I have to say that I welcomed each change. High summer was glorious, of course, with all the trees and flowers I have described in earlier episodes; autumn brought changing colours and delicate mists and, in the early seventies, winter snow. Snow was a big problem to those of my colleagues who had to drive in from as far away as Cheshunt, and the steep slopes of the 'dip' outside Chaville House, would be littered with abandoned cars. I just pulled on my wellies, put my head down and trudged across the white fields; I was always the first at my desk. I'll be referring to those changing seasons in future issues.

Because the 'dip' in Beaconsfield Road was surrounded by the park and not overlooked by houses, it attracted litter dumpers, and I'll also speak of those in a future issue. It also attracted lone cars that would park on winter evenings away from the streetlights. Inside, middle-aged couples would be talking earnestly. It may be my particular mind-set, but I assumed they were adulterous couples. I would keep walking, staring straight ahead and I never actually saw any hanky-panky, but one dark winter's evening I picked a letter from out of the gutter. It was from a chap to his girlfriend, written in a primitive hand, in

pencil, and was full of highly explicit material (as the tabloids used to say). I took it home, tore it to shreds and put it in our rubbish sack; had it fallen into less scrupulous hands it might have caused all sorts of personal problems. I couldn't help thinking about the chap who'd lost the letter, though. I'll bet it was several weeks before he could accept the fact that there were to be no repercussions from his lost letter (and he could breathe again!)

I gather that some of the audience at our recent Lecture by Stan Springate started to lose track when he talked about the technical side of life at STC. One incident he related concerned the 'metal-finishing shop' and a trumpet that was given a new (and illegal) finish one Saturday morning, when the bosses were supposed to be absent. The proper work done there was the sandblasting and degreasing of metal bars prior to painting them, plus the plating of small parts with zinc or chromium. Having been plated, the items (brackets and suchlike) would be tied to a moving belt, and they would swing and sway their way around the whole factory, while they dried out. One became used to this bizarre 'hanging garden' high above one's head as one passed through.

We are told that while the cat's away, the mice will play and, apparently, a certain foreman decided to pop in one Saturday morning (unannounced) to see how a special contract was progressing. He walked around the factory looking at the plating baths and paint shops for some time before he became aware that the shiny, chromium plated dangly bits above his head were not telephone exchange parts but a complete fifty piece cutlery service. My informant did not relate the end of the story, but it was probably all hushed up.

In the eighties all our road sweepers were made redundant (my neighbour being one such) and that brought numerous changes along my journey. As the gathering dust and dirt formed a pseudo soil in the cracks in the pavement, small outcrops of grasses and wild flowers began to appear; nettles, purple mallow, pink lesser willow herb, rusty sorrel, yellow cat's ear, all sorts of things. For a few months there was even a tiny Locust tree by the allotments, a seed no doubt from the beautiful tree that was blown down in the 1987 storm. I used to call it '*Son of Locust*'. It grew to about nine inches, and then died.

Come the autumn and all the fallen leaves would gather in the kerbs and block the street drains. Then came the rains, and the water used to cascade along and over the blocked drains. Since long stretches of kerb in Holly Park Road had been flattened by parked cars, the torrent would sweep along the pavements too, and I'd arrive at work with damp shoes.

I'll finish with a moral tale concerning tea and computers. When I started at STC they had just one ten-minute break that was around 10.30 in the morning. A procession of tea ladies would travel along the corridors from department to department dispensing lovely fresh tea and tempting cakes. If I were out on my tours of duty, one of my colleagues would get me a tea and a cake, and put the saucer on the cup to keep warm. This practice might have continued forever but one day they installed a huge mainframe computer on the top floor of Building 3. It was such a voracious consumer of work that the firm started

a night shift so as to keep the monster running 24 hours a day. The next problem was how to refresh the night workers without employing nocturnal tea ladies. Their solution was to install a couple of primitive tea machines near the computer. The tea tasted like a distillation from a kid's chemistry set but, over the years, the quality did improve.

Why did I say 'over the years'? Well, the tea machines were eventually installed all over the site, in the three main buildings and some of the smaller places. All the tea ladies were dismissed (a few bob saved there), and there the story might have stopped. The problem was, we all liked *fresh* tea and *cakes*. Within months electric kettles had appeared in offices, moonshine tea was being distilled in filing cabinets, and cakes were being stashed in desks; the revolution had begun! I could go on, but suffice it to say that the money the firm spent on the electricity would have paid the wages of a whole army of tea-ladies, nocturnal and diurnal.

To be continued.....

SCOUT TRANSPORT

Ron Kingdon very kindly sent us this photograph that he took in August 1968. This Leyland bus belonged to the New Southgate Venture Scouts and was kept in a yard in High Road, New Southgate. Does anyone remember the bus, or the Scouts, and what were they going to Istanbul for?



COME TO THE SHOW

This year the Friern Barnet Summer Show will be held on Saturday 21 and Sunday 22 August, in Friary Park. Among the usual attractions, for both young and old alike, will be the stall of the Friern Barnet & District Local History Society. It will be manned by the members of the Committee and, as before, we will be selling a huge variety of books, videos, ornaments, crockery

and general bric-a-brac. We shall also be exhibiting maps and photographs of historical significance and, if last year is anything to go by, we will be fielding all kinds of questions from interested passers by.

Needless to say we would love to see you and have a chat, so do pop along. In the meantime, if you have any items you want to dispose of, we would be happy to take them off your hands and turn them into cash for the Society. You can call Janet Liversidge on 020 8368 3927 and she will be round before you you have had a chance to put the phone down. And if you do come and see us, we solemnly promise that we won't sell you any of the items you have donated!

THE VANISHING FOX

by David Berguer

Early one morning in April I went out to post a letter in the pillar box at the end of Cromwell Road. Imagine my surprise when I saw a dead fox lying forlornly behind it - I knew the urban fox was quite common, but I had never seen one up close. I dashed back to get my camera and took this photograph and, shortly after nine thirty I telephoned Barnet Customer Care to report it. About half an hour later I went out again and - the fox had gone! Was the fox really dead, or was it lying doggo (or foxo)? If it *was* dead, who removed it (Customer Care are good, but not *that* good)? Not to labour the point, but I must admit I am completely foxed.



**Friern Barnet & District
Local History Society**

President: John Donovan
01707 642 886
Chairman: David Berguer
020 8444 3089
Archivist: Ollie Natelson
020 8361 2496