

Friern Barnet *Newsletter*

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THE IRON LADY AND THE TREE

by David Berguer

In the last issue of the Newsletter I mentioned that we had been given the archives of the Friern Barnet & Whetsone Townswomen's Guild and that I would be featuring extracts from these in future issues. Amongst the records was a scrap book of photographs which included the following picture of Margaret Thatcher, who was Finchley's MP from 1959 until her retirement from politics in 1992.

On 7 December 1990, a month after she resigned as Prime Minister, Mrs Thatcher came to Friary Park to plant a lime tree. This was part of a special 'Rooting for the Future' campaign which was organised by the Friern Barnet & Whetstone Townswomen's Guild.



Mrs Thatcher said: "It is always a pleasure to plant a tree. We take them for granted, we assume they will always be there. You do have to believe in the future if you plant a tree, so it is specially good for me to plant a tree now."

The tree and the plaque that commemorated the occasion are still there, just to the right of the Friary Road entrance to the Park.

Guild President, Doris Hammersley, and fellow Townswomen make sure the tree is planted properly

HOLIDAY MEMORIES

Those of you who attended our meeting on 28 April, when the subject was Holidays, may recall that we were unable to include everyone's memories due to lack of time. Fortunately, two members have put pen to paper, so here are their recollections of holidays past.

Sylvia Stilts writes: "The last family holiday I enjoyed as a child was just before the outbreak of War. My parents rented a bungalow at Jaywick Sands, and eight of us travelled down, squashed in an open-top car; Mum and Dad in front and two aunts and four children in the back. The two uncles, who had to work on Saturdays anyway, came down later by train. Every evening after dinner, the men went off to the local pub and as it was dark when they returned, and there were no lights between the bungalows, there was much hilarity and striking of matches as they tried to find ours. The scuffling woke the children and we lay in bed giggling as we waited for the inevitable telling-off by Mum and the aunts - in loud whispers, so as not to disturb us!

The ten of us fitted somehow into three bedrooms and early every morning we children slipped out quietly to watch rabbits run about in the field at the back. Yellowhammers, which I thought were canaries, flew over hedges and there was a stream, crossed by little bridges, that ran between the bungalows. We caught minnows in nets and jamjars and said "boo" to the water voles that popped in and out of holes in the bank.

We spent every day at the beach and Mum frequently anointed us with sunoil from a large bottle. Sand soon stuck to the oil of course, and our limbs resembled breaded chicken. Dad and the uncles turned up their trousers, knotted hankies on their heads, and took us on at French cricket. We paddled and swam for hours in the sea that was so clear we could see our feet, even when standing in it up to our waists. When I visited Jaywick recently, the sea looked like stale ginger beer. Our knitted swimsuits, once wet, stretched out of shape and down past our knees.

There was a newly dredged boating pool on the front and my brother and I spent pocket money on a motor boat but, after a while, we went aground on the far side of the pool, which obviously hadn't been dredged enough, and a man in waders came to our rescue.

When we went to buy fish and chips in the High Street, there was the added attraction of talking to the white cockatoo, which hopped about on its perch outside the shop. There was also a large tank of water which, when it wasn't accommodating live eels, served as a swimming pool for a Siamese cat.

I nearly forgot to mention that outside one of the bungalows there was a monkey on a chain attached to a kennel on which were painted the letters IBI; so we called the monkey *lby*. One day we realised that two of the letters had worn off and originally they had spelled out 'I bite!'

John Holtham says his comments may be a bit negative, but they do take

some of the gloss off childhood holidays:

"Some of my holidays were not so enjoyable. As was mentioned at the meeting it was common to holiday in the same area every year. This happened to us; we holidayed in Brighton for a number of years during the early 1960s. We always stayed at the same guest house (it had been recommended by a friend) at the Kemp Town end of Brighton, which was not all that attractive. We used to travel by coach, Venture or Cronshaw, from North Finchley and the guest house was some distance from the coach drop off point, which meant lugging a number of heavy suitcases. It was also a long, uninteresting walk from the town centre.

As a teenager, holidaying with parents was not appreciated; at the time money was a bit tight and admission to the various 'pay for' attractions was not an option. My parents were quite happy to spend most of the day either walking along the sea front or sitting in deckchairs on the pier. Needless to say, I did not want to do either of these things! I would either wander off on my own or sit and sulk; sometimes I was grudgingly taken on the bus to Devil's Dyke or Rottingdean. This went on for several years until I eventually refused to go. This caused some bad feeling at home, as you can probably imagine but I was old enough to look after myself by this time. By chance, the same year the landlady of the guest house moved, so we had one year with no 'proper' holiday, only a series of day trips by coach. My parents never holidayed in Brighton again, and transferred their allegiance to Bournemouth. In any case, I had, by then, re-established contact with a former school friend and we started going away together, mainly to the Lake District, but that's another story!"

VANCOUVER VACATION

by David Berguer

Back in July I took a holiday in Vancouver, and part of the trip included a visit to Vancouver Island, which is a two hour ferry ride from the city itself. As well as glorying in the magnificent scenery, I took the opportunity to visit our furthest flung member, Eswyn Lyster, who lives in Qualicum Beach, a resort on the south east coast of the Island.

Over a cup of tea Eswyn told me a little of her life, which started off in Friern Barnet. Eswyn (whose maiden name was Ellinor) lived at no. 13 Parkhurst Road until 1933 when her parents moved to Worthing to open a tobacconist and confectioner opposite the station. In 1937 they moved back to Friern Barnet to live at 36 Lewes Road and then, as war loomed, they relocated to Aldwick Bay near Bognor Regis. It was there in 1943 that Eswyn met her husband-to-be, Bill, who was a Canadian stationed over here with the Calgary Highlanders. They married in April 1945, and after the war was over Bill was shipped back to Canada. Eswyn followed in February 1946 on a special ship containing over 2,000 British warbrides.

Eswyn and Bill settled in Alberta in the Prairies and then in 1955 they crossed the Rockies to settle in Vancouver. Bill had his own business as a manufacturer's agent for bakery products until he retired in 1974. Sadly, Bill died in 1996 and since then Eswyn has been working on a book detailing

the history of Canadian warbrides who, she told me, numbered over 48,000! Eswyn says that the book is nearly complete and will be produced by a publisher in Toronto.

Eswyn has been corresponding for a number of years with John Donovan, who she came across via a family history website. Although they have been writing regularly and John has been sending her photographs of Friern Barnet as it is today, it apparently never occurred to them to send each other photographs of themselves! In a capacity as a go-between, I took Eswyn's picture while I was there, which I gave to John, and have now taken John's photo which I have sent to Eswyn.

Once Eswyn's book is published we shall obtain a copy which will go into our archives as a permanent record of the link between Canada and Friern Barnet.

SHOPPING AS IT USED TO BE (or BRIDGET JONES' DAIRY)

by John Donovan

In these days of high-speed supermarket shopping I often think back to the late 1940s, when I was a ten year old living in 'Norf Kensin'ton', and my Mum used to send me on errands round to Mrs Jones' Dairy in Bonchurch Road. The biggest chore was on Friday evenings when I'd have to get the week's shopping. Mrs Jones was a short, stout Welsh woman, and the tiny shop reeked of ham. The shop only held about six people and I'd dread being four or five back from the counter. The routine would go like this (you have to imagine Mrs Jones with a Welsh accent):

Mrs Jones: "Who's next then?"

Mrs Brown: "It's me."

Mrs Jones: "Oh, hello Mrs Brown, how are you? I haven't seen your Joanie lately."

Mrs Brown: "No, she got married last month. They moved over to Harlesden."

Mrs Jones: "Ooooooh! There's lovely isn't it? I hope they'll be very happy together. Well, what is it today?"

Mrs Brown (looking at her list): "Half a dozen eggs please, Mrs Jones."

Mrs Jones would walk around the back of a pile of boxes of biscuits, past the shelves of jam and tinned soups, past the little ledge with the ham and the slicer, to where the eggs were kept, above the sacks of split peas and lentils. She'd pick up the eggs and walk back to the counter.

Mrs Jones: "There you are, isn't it? Six eggs. What can I get you next?"

Mrs Brown (consulting her list again): "Well, I would like a pound of split peas please; we're having boiled bacon tonight and George loves his pease pudding."

Mrs Jones: "Oh, I know, so does my Idris. He loves a bit of boiled bacon and pease pudding."

Back she'd go, past the boxes of biscuits, the shelves of jam and tinned soups, past the little ledge with the ham and the slicer, to where the eggs were kept above the sacks of split peas and lentils. She'd take a large scoopful of split

peas, then shuffle back to the scales, where she'd start weighing them out.

Mrs Jones: "How much was it then? A pound is enough?"

And I would pray she had too much in the scoop. If she had too little, she'd have to walk back to the lentils for some more.

Mrs Jones: "Well, there dear, what's next?"

Mrs Brown (taking another long look at her list): "I don't suppose you have any nice ham, do you?"

Mrs Jones: "Of course I have, look you, why it was only fresh in ('get on with it, you dozy old biddy', my brain would be screaming) this morning. How much will it be?"

Mrs Brown (looking at the list): "Oh, I think a quarter will do. No, no I'm wrong; George's mum is coming round. You'd better make it a half."

Mrs Jones: "Right you are then lovely."

Back past the boxes of biscuits, the shelves of jam and tinned soups to the little ledge with the slicer. There were no scales near the slicer, so Mrs Jones would cut off as many slices of ham as she thought sufficient, then shuffle back to the main counter, smile at Mrs Brown and weigh the ham. If she needed another slice or two, back she'd go again.

Thus it continued. You've guessed correctly - Mrs Brown *did* want jam *and* tinned soups *and* biscuits, and Mrs Jones *did* make a separate journey for each item! Why Mrs Brown didn't just give Mrs Jones her shopping list, so that Mrs Jones could get all the items in one go, I don't know. My torment was not over, however. As Mrs Brown left the shop amid calls of, "Give my regards to George" from Mrs Jones, Mrs Green would step forward to the counter, and *she* had a long list, which she read out, one item at a time, and so did Mrs White, and she was in front of *me*. I suppose I was in that little shop an hour or more but, to me, it seemed like an eternity.

Footnote from David Berguer:

One thing John seems to have forgotten is the actual process of paying for all the items. I can recall shopping with my mother at Sainsbury's in Muswell Hill (in the days when Sainsbury's was dark brown, not orange and blue as it is today). We had to queue up at each separate counter, where the assistant would weigh out or count out every item and put it in a brown bag and mark the price on it. Once we had been to the bacon counter, cheese counter, butter counter, egg counter (queuing all the time, of course) we then had to present our purchases to a fearsome dragon seated behind a grille at the end of the shop under a sign saying "Cashier" in ornate gold leaf. Only once this dragon had been appeased with half crowns, florins and threepenny bits could we move on to the next shop. With a bit of luck it would be Edmond's, near the roundabout (where I could cross off the numbers of the STLs and TDs in my Ian Allan ABC). Once there I could admire the 'overhead railway' carrying cash at the pull of a handle from the counters to a central location, also manned by a dragon. This dragon I didn't mind so much - at least she had transport connections!

SUMMER SHOW

The gods were certainly smiling on us during the Friern Barnet Summer Show on 21 and 22 August. We had feared that the unseasonable rain which had persisted during the previous week would continue on the Saturday and Sunday but, in fact, both days were gloriously sunny and attendances were high. We had our usual stall where we displayed a large selection of second hand items, many of which were generously donated by our members. It was also nice to see so many members at the Show, it made our two-day stint in Colin and Janet's gazebo really worthwhile!



Colin Liversidge, Mel Hooper and John Donovan wait for the customers to come

After Mel Hooper had counted all the pennies we were delighted to learn that we had taken £378 over the two days which, after the deduction of expenses, left us with a net profit of £297, about £30 more than last year. We look forward to repeating the exercise next year, so start saving your surplus items now!

MANOR DRIVE

by John Heathfield

Number 99 Manor Drive (home of Colin and Janet Liversidge) is not merely a centre of culinary, cultural and conversational excellence. It is of historical interest as well. It stands in what was Damson Grove or Damson Field, part of Manor Farm. When John Bacon bought the Manor of Whetstone, in the parish of Friern Barnet, in 1783 one of his first actions was to employ a Mr J Ellis to map his new estates. In 1787 Ellis drew up his survey. It included Manor Farm, owned by John Bacon but rented by J Taring.

Attfield's Survey of 1815 (GLRO/DRO/12/I/H7) shows the same land now owned and occupied by J Bacon. It includes:

Manor house, yard etc barn and rick yard. 1ac. Or 22p.
 114 Home field 5 acres
 126 Hither Tylers field 4 acres
 127 Further Tylers 5 acres
 128 Church field 5 acres
 129 Church conduit field 10 acres
 130 Little Church field 2.3 acres
 131 Damson Grove 5 acres
 132 Damson Grove 4 acres
 141 Friern Barnet Church and church yard

Particulars

AND
 CONDITIONS OF SALE
 OF VERY ELIGIBLE
FREEHOLD ESTATES,
 (FREE FROM LAND-TAX)
 SITUATE IN THE PARISHES OF
FRIERN-BARNET AND FINCHLEY,
 IN THE COUNTY OF MIDDLESEX,
 COMPRISING
TWO CAPITAL RESIDENCES,
 (One of which is calculated for a Family of Distinction)
 AND SEVERAL CLOSES AND PIECES OF
ARABLE, MEADOW, AND PASTURE LAND.

Which will be Sold by Auction,
BY MR. BURTON,
 AT THE AUCTION-MART, BARTHOLOMEW-LANE, LONDON,
 On *FRIDAY, the 23th Day of MAY, 1824,*
 AT TWELVE O'CLOCK,
IN SIX LOTS.
 (Unless previously disposed of by Private Contract.)

The Premises may be viewed immediately, and Particulars had, by applying to Mr. CHAPMAN, at Finchley Lodge:—Particulars may also be had at the Green Man, Whetstone; the Red Lion, Barnet; the King's Head, Watford; the Angel, Edmonton; the Queen's Head, near Finchley Church; the Red Lion and Sun, at Highgate; and at the Auction-Mart, London; also, of Mr. BURTON, No. 25, Bucklersbury; and of J. B. BOSTOCK, Solicitor, No. 16, George Street, Mansion-house.

The fact that Damson Grove is shown twice suggests that it was a large field fenced in two. Damson would have made a thorny and strong hedge as well as providing fruit.

In 1815 John Bacon owned about 651 acres, of which he used 139 himself. His son, William, who lived at Manor Farm (now the clubhouse of North Middlesex Golf Club) had 182 acres; 138 acres were leased to William Gaywood and the rest to eleven minor tenants. In his will Bacon left one-third of his property to each of his sons - John William and Francis D'Arcy, and one-third in trust to the sons of his daughter Lady Johnson, wife of Sir William Johnson, who died in 1844. At that time women's property went to her new husband on her marriage.

John Bacon died with the finances of the estate in a mess, which delighted the lawyers for years. In 1824 his property was put up for sale and his children had to bid for their own inheritance. Lady Johnson received the southern part including Friern Lodge Farm and 234 acres. J W Bacon (William) got The Friary (now Friary Park), Manor Farm and 213 acres; and F D Bacon (Francis D'Arcy) got 80 acres, including Coldharbour, which is now numbered 1064 High Road.

Manor Farm, (which was 29 acres) later went to John Easthorpe. In 1832 it went to C W Allen, then to Edmund Walker, who lived in the farm house. Walker added to the farm, which had 57 acres by 1846. In 1851, shortly before his death, Walker sold the farm to John Miles. Church Farm (73 acres) was bought by William Radford in 1824. By 1846 it had 69 acres. Much of Lady Johnson's estates were bought by Bensley who wished to use it as an asylum. When Colney Hatch Asylum was opened in 1851, Bensley abandoned his plans. Part of his estate was bought by Mrs Bethune - this is now part of the Ridgeway estate. Manor Farm was sold for housing in 1934 and the estate was gradually built over the next two years.

JEROME K. JEROME AND HIS MOTHER'S DIARY

by Colin Barratt

In the October 2003 edition of the Newsletter, I wrote an article on the brief period in 1870/71 when author and playwright Jerome K Jerome lived in New Southgate. Some of the information I used came from his mother's diary, which is now in the possession of Frank Rodgers, a founder member of the Jerome K Jerome Society, and now living in Guatemala.

I was recently reading some of JKJ's autobiography, which was published in 1926, a year before his death. Jerome quotes many times from his mother's diary, and says that it only came into his hands some 20 years after her death. I was interested to know why this was, and how Frank Rodgers now has it.

I e-mailed Frank to see whether he could provide the answers. He replied that he didn't know why it took 20 years before Jerome had the diary. He knew that Jerome was alone with his mother in their house when she died, and he was only 16, so it could be that his older sisters disposed of the contents of

the house, and also took care of the diary, perhaps giving it to him years later.

As for how the diary came into Frank's possession, he told me this remarkable story. In the early 1960s he was seriously considering writing a biography of JKJ. He did a lot of research, including inspecting the collection of JKJ material at Walsall Library (JKJs home town). The librarian there told Frank that JKJs daughter, Rowena, was still alive, living in Chichester. Frank visited her a number of times, but she had not really kept in touch with her relatives, and did not have much information on her father. JKJ had destroyed all his correspondence after answering it, which is a pity, as he corresponded over many years with his friends Conan Doyle, H G Wells and J M Barrie!

In desperation, Frank asked about the diary. Surely JKJ kept that. "Oh yes," Rowena said, "I have that, but it wouldn't be of interest to you. After all, he was only a boy when she died, and didn't become famous until much later!" Frank was able to assure her that it would be of the greatest interest, giving the circumstances in which JKJ grew up. She not only produced it, but loaned it to Frank to examine at his leisure. He transcribed it over the next two weeks, though some names were difficult to read.

When Rowena died, her estate went to her long-time companion Maisie, whom Frank also continued to visit. On one occasion he asked whether he could borrow the diary again, to try to decipher the difficult names. Maisie decided that, since he was so interested in it, and would take good care of it, he should have it! In fact, it has only been in the last couple of years that Frank has managed to definitely confirm many of the difficult names, through correspondence with a Jerome relative in Australia.

Incidentally, a distant relative inherited the estate after Maisie's death, and she discovered a whole trunk load of typescripts and manuscripts of mostly unpublished plays. Frank made a listing of the material for her, and recommended where it should go on her death. These scripts are now in the Bodleian Library in Oxford.

TO THE STANDARD AND BACK - EPISODE TEN

by John Donovan

We'll start this episode with STC car-parking arrangements. During my first couple of years there I would drive in through the main gate, past the security guards' cabin, straight along the 'main drag' to the 'bridge' between Buildings 3 and 4, turn right, downhill to the end of Building 8, then left and uphill to the large upper car park. Just beyond that was the 'top field' and beyond that, Weird Ale Avenue (have you all got your bearings now?). Having parked the car, I would head for the western side of the car park, and walk down the steep path hard by the link fence, alongside the railway line, to the rear entrance of Building Four (Bldg. 4, as it was known) and thence to my desk (which, over the years, was in Buildings 4 and 3). The 'top field' was used, I believe, for sporting activities and, although they did not interest me in the slightest, I *shall* talk about the social Club in a later issue. It was from that path I first noticed

talk about the social Club in a later issue. It was from that path I first noticed that the railway signal box bore the legend, 'Cemetery', and it was one of the old stagers in the office (Len Hillier) who told me the story of the Great Northern London Cemetery's Victorian 'Corpses by Rail' service, which was to form the subject of our June 2004 lecture, by Rev. Martin Dawes.

I have digressed; we were talking about car parks. When the entire floor of Bldg. 3's top storey dropped a couple of feet (another story), all the staff and equipment therein were moved onto the top field, and into a vast collection of Portacabins (which soon became known as Portacity). We were all told that we'd have to use the 'bottom car park', which was across Brunswick Park Road, adjacent to Bldg. 53, our Shipping area (it's now all under bricks and mortar). Since the workers clocked on half an hour before the office staff, by the time I arrived all the best spaces had been taken, and I had to park down by Pymme's Brook! I then had to traipse uphill to Bldg. 3 and, during the winter months, it was 'head down' against wind, rain and snow. Given this new arrangement, it then took me five minutes longer to go from home to desk by car than I did on foot; I did the obvious thing - I left the car at home and walked to work (which is where this series started).

While we are down at the bottom car park, I'll mention butterflies. No one born during the last couple of decades can imagine just how many butterflies there were around in the summers before their habitats were grubbed out by farmers, and they were globally warmed by industry (among other reasons for demise), not just species but numbers. There used to be hundreds of them, little fluttering jewels, so delicate and beautiful. One particular favourite of theirs was the Buddleia bush; they just loved the tiny purple florets that made up each big bloom, and you could stand in front of those bushes in high summer and count butterflies by the dozen. Between Bldg. 53 and the car park was a clump of these bushes, and I recall looking at them, around about noon, on one of my official visits to Shipping. It was very hot (about 75 C) and there seemed to be hundreds of orangey-red Small Tortoiseshells about, on the bushes, and in the air. Parked close by were two cars, their metal bodies shimmering in the heat, and they were literally covered in basking Small Tortoiseshells - it was an amazing, wonderful sight (now lost for ever).

Reading these memories of mine you might be forgiven for thinking that, during my daily walk to work, I encountered only *flora*, *fauna* and *birda*. I have to confess, however, that there were times when *litter* was more in evidence than Nature. Sadly, fly-tipping, junk-food wrappers, broken bottles and discarded washing machines are nothing new, and I used to fume at the slovenliness of folk who would drive all the way to 'my' fields to dump their rubbish, rather than drive in the opposite direction, to Summers Lane dump. Of course, there would be the odd wry smile, like the Monday morning I turned from The Crescent into The Dip and there, a few yards down on the left, was a car's gearbox (black and oily). Next morning it had been moved about twenty yards further downhill (bear in mind how heavy it would have been). Every day it moved further north, as though a group of hefty fairies pushed it along overnight. By the end of the week it had reached the start of the uphill slope, and there it

stopped. A couple days later, it had gone.

What was probably the most blatant example of the fly-tipper's art was a large pile of carpet off-cuts, strips of underlay (and a steel kitchen sink), which appeared one morning hard by the railway fence on the Big Field. Someone had had to make several trips to and fro, carrying it all in their car. After a couple of days I phoned the council, they took it all away, and I went back to looking at wild flowers.



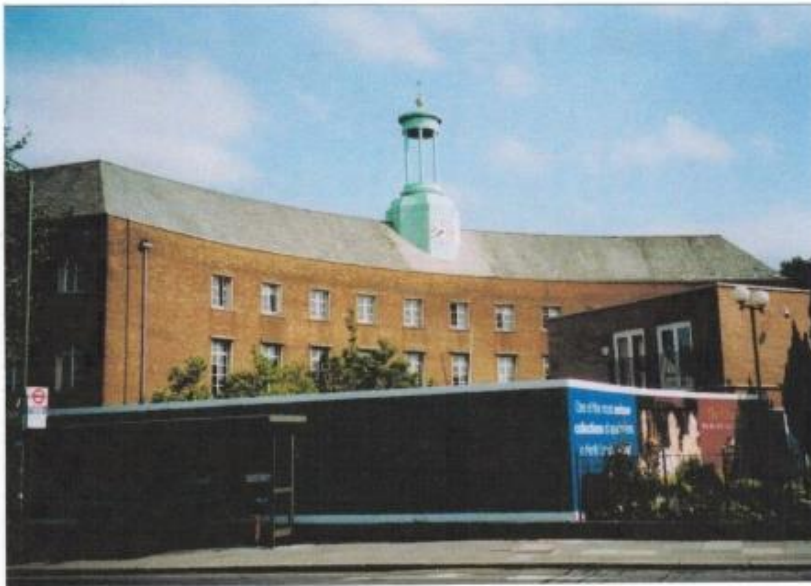
In winter, when the Big Field was muddy, I would walk home across the bridge and downhill past Chaville Court. That small stretch of road before The Fields always seemed to be nameless, although modern maps show it as Beaconsfield Road, of which it is the northern extension. Occasionally, I would see a lone, black Crow high above the allotments, flapping across that wide sky with such a sense of purpose, to disappear behind the rooftops of Holly Park Road. I used to wonder what on earth a creature with the size of a Crow's head could be heading with such determination, as though it had an appointment to keep. I love Crows; they strut around like old men. I've never been able to physically distinguish them from Rooks, but the latter are gregarious and Crows aren't. I coined a famous phrase many years ago, "A Crow in a crowd is a Rook; a Rook on its own is a Crow."

Then I was walking home across the Big Field one summer's evening when I saw a Thrush. In those days they were not as rare as they are today, but it was always a pleasure to see one. The Song Thrush is Blackbird-shaped, pale fawn, with brown markings, and a speckled breast. It also has, arguably, the most beautiful song of any English bird (followed closely by its cousin the Blackbird), and it will sit high up on a branch or TV aerial and trill away for what seems hours - sheer delight. However, this one was actually running about

since they are not gregarious birds. Imagine my surprise when three others appeared and joined it. Imagine my further surprise when one of them opened its beaked and croaked (well, nearly). It was definitely a rasping sound. Then they all started calling to each other in the same unlovely voice. As soon as I got home I consulted my "bird book" and found that what I had been looking at were *Mistle Thrushes*! They are nearly two inches longer than Song Thrushes and, although they occasionally 'chirrup', their main call is a sort of harsh *churring* noise. What's more, Mistle Thrushes *are* gregarious (A Song in a crowd is a Mistle.....") *To be continued.....*

TOWN HALL LATEST

Since 26 July Friern Barnet Town Hall has been surrounded by a hoarding erected by Barratt's who are busy converting the building into flats. On Saturday 4 September they announced the launch of the development, called *The Chambers*, and the new two-storey sales office in the former car park was full of people enquiring about new homes and viewing the show flat on the first floor. 24 of the 49 flats were on sale, with prices ranging from £180,000 for a 433 sq. ft. one bedroom flat on the ground floor to £275,000 for a 808 sq. ft. two bedroom flat on the third floor. Service charges range from £650 - £2000. The development also includes the building of new flats on the site the former Fire Station and two blocks to the rear of the Town Hall.



Friern Barnet & District
Local History Society

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