

Friern Barnet *Newsletter*

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FAREWELL TO THE TORRINGTON

by David Berguer

To the dismay of many people, *The Torrington* closed its doors in October. The pub was noted for its live music, as this advertisement from 1977 shows:

<p>'TORRINGTON' MUSIC LODGE LANE/HIGH ROAD, NORTH FINCHLEY SUNDAY, JUNE 19, JOHN OTWAY and WILD WILLY BARRAT SUNDAY, JUNE 26, ALKTRAZ Admission 80p. Open 8.15 p.m.</p>

The current building, which also includes Iceland, dates back to 1962, but there has been a pub on the site since the days of stage coaches. North Finchley was one of the first stopping places for coaches leaving London and heading north and, as well as *The Torrington Arms*, there were stables and a blacksmiths. The name Tally Ho! in fact derives from a coach company of the the same name which operated the London to Birmingham route. It is somewhat ironic that as one entertainment venue in North Finchley closed another one opened, as The Arts Depot was officially opened by Prince Edward, the Earl of Wessex, on Tuesday 26 October.



The Torrington, complete with "Sold" sign

SCOUT TRANSPORT - THE ROAD TO ISTANBUL

by Colin Barratt

In our July 2004 Newsletter a double decker was shown, apparently owned by New Southgate Venture Scouts, and displaying the optimistic destination of Istanbul. The question was asked: does anyone remember the bus, or the Scouts, and why were they going to Istanbul?

I was sure there must be a story behind this bus, so I rang a friend who I thought might know something about it. Sure enough, she remembered the bus, and the Scouts and, more importantly, still kept in touch with the sister of one of them. A few minutes later I was given the phone number of the former Venture Scout who I hoped might be able to tell me what it was all about. Now living in Melton Mowbray, he answered my call, and he spent three quarters of an hour telling me the story, plus some other memories of his time living in Friern Barnet.

Venture Scouts are at the upper end of the Scouting age range, and the New Southgate Venture Scouts were created in 1966, based at the Baptist Church in Grove Road. They were expected to work out targets to achieve, and were considering a project to undertake. Someone, inspired by Cliff Richard's film *Summer Holiday*, had the idea of travelling in a bus across Europe, but to outdo Cliff, who went to Greece, they would go to Istanbul, in Turkey.

The first step was to get a bus, and they managed to buy a second hand one, a Leyland, from a dealer. It was a lowbridge type, with a row of four seats and one sunken gangway upstairs, to reduce the overall height. Although buses with this layout were quite common in the provinces, they were only used on a few routes in the country areas around London. With advice and help from London Transport, the bus was overhauled. The interior was stripped out, and they converted the upstairs into 3 cabins, each with panelling, a skylight and four bunk beds. Downstairs became the living and cooking area and there was also a chemical toilet. The conversion work took some time as many of the team were students, and it had to be done in their spare time. The bus was kept behind the church hall, in the yard of the former waterworks. It was painted blue and white, and looked immaculate.

In August they headed off, bound for Istanbul with 11 people on board, including two drivers with PSV licences, but an hour out of Calais the bus broke down. After this setback they continued on, but in Austria, halfway up a mountain and on hairpin roads, it broke down again! The bus had to be reversed down the mountain, and my informant was given the job of watching the rear wheels from the platform, sometimes hanging over the cliff edge!

The bus attracted crowds everywhere they went, and the team were grateful for electric doors, which often stopped unwanted visitors. This was particularly useful when they stopped overnight in Paris, not realising they had parked in a red light district!

When planning the trip, the team got the AA to check the height of bridges on

the route, and everything seemed OK. However, the team had used the roof of the bus to store the spare wheel and sacks of potatoes. While on the German autobahn one night, this additional height was too much and a bridge scraped off the wheel and spuds, sending them rolling down the motorway, causing cars to scatter behind! A skylight also shattered, sending lumps of sharp Perspex raining down on the bunks. Luckily nobody was injured, but it could have been disastrous.

Another breakdown in Austria left them stuck for 9 days, while waiting for a spare part to be flown out, and it became obvious that they had run out of time to reach Istanbul, so they decided to end their trip in Yugoslavia, on the coast of the Adriatic. While in Yugoslavia they again faced a bridge too low, a railway bridge being worked on. The workmen advised an alternative route, and had a laugh at these crazy Englishmen!

The return journey was uneventful, but they arrived back with plenty of stories to tell. There are some press cuttings of the send off in New Southgate, and photos taken during the trip. I may include some in a future Newsletter. After this adventure the bus was kept by the Scouts and used locally for a time before being sold.

ARCHIVE STORAGE

At last we now have our archives safely stored in a room in the basement of Avenue House, in East End Road. Mel Hooper and David Berguer decorated the room, and Janett Durrant, who runs Avenue House, has kindly lent us a filing cabinet and some racking and we have purchased two filing cabinets of our own. We have also acquired a second hand computer and a printer which have been installed, so we now have a fully equipped place where research can be carried out. The great advantage of having everything centrally located is that, not only is it easily accessible, but for the first time everyone can see exactly what material we have available.

ATHENAEUM ROAD

by John Heathfield

Athens Road was originally called East Lane because it ran eastwards from Whetstone Town to East Barnet parish church. The Ordnance Survey Map of 1864 shows a barn, a gravel pit and four cottages. These cottages belonged to W Matthews, a dairyman and publican who owned the Green Man and several nearby fields. Matthews was born in 1830 and by 1871 some of his relatives lived in the cottages. Sam Matthews, an agricultural labourer, lived in one and George Matthews, a dairyman, lived in another. The other two were occupied by farm labourers and a police constable.

In 1797 the nearby land was owned by W Tash who subsequently sold his estate to Sir Simon Haughton-Clarke, who lived in Oakhill House and whose funeral monument is prominent in East Barnet churchyard. In 1869 the land was sold to the Whetstone Freehold Estate Company who built 25 houses on what was to become the Oakleigh Park Estate. The houses were detached, with 5 to 9 principal bedrooms, 3 or 4 reception rooms and carriage sweeps.

Each house was to cost not less than £1000 and not all were sold and, as late as 1936 some were let for rent.

The agents appear always to have lived on the Estate. In 1871, Richard Looker, Secretary to the Land Company, lived in The Hollies. In 1886 the Secretary was A Waldron who lived originally at the foot of Athenaeum Road and later at Springfield, at the south west corner of Oakleigh Park North and Athenaeum Road. W Passmore lived for a time at Carlstone in Oakleigh Park North. He succeeded Joseph Baxendale as occupant of Woodside House. After the death of his wife, he moved to a smaller house in Oakleigh Park. There is a monument to his wife in St John's Church. Passmore was paid for the restoration of the church in the 1880s and was churchwarden for many years. Baxendale had been the last surviving trustee of the old Whetstone and Highgate Turnpike Trust and after his death, Passmore took over his papers, which have unfortunately since been lost. In 1886 the houses in Athenaeum Road were:

Left side

Millerwood, Joseph	
Christie, Henry	North Villa (now no. 63)
Dando, Mrs	South Villa
Smith, Albert	Redcliffe Villa
Blowfield, Thomas	Park Villa
Yates, Frederick	Fairlight
Waldron, W A	Estate Office
Golding, Edward	Gordon Villa
Starke, William	Braemar Villa

Right side

Sharpe, George	Police constable
Barratt, Mrs	Laundress
Plymouth Brethren Meeting Room	
The Athenaeum Club (secretary George S Waterlow)	

The cast iron marker on the south side of Athenaeum Road marked CHG marks the boundary between Colney Hatch Gas Company's mains which supplied the estate and the Barnet Gas Company whose main ran along Whetstone High Road as far as North Finchley and Totteridge.

The *Barnet Press* of 12 Nov 1884 advertises the sale of "seven copyhold cottages having a considerable frontage to the High Road and return frontage to Athenaeum Road, brick and timber built and let to respectable tenants at a total annual rent of £72." These were demolished about 1895 and later replaced by a bank (Barclays at no. 1288 High Road) and a row of shops. The buildings of the former Athenaeum Club were taken over by Birt Acres who set up a photographic works there in 1897. Acres was an American inventor who played a prominent part in the development of moving pictures. Movie films depend on a strip of celluloid which is coated with light sensitive chemicals and apparently the celluloid base and the coating

expanded at different rates when exposed to the heat of the projector, which led to the flaking of the film. Acres invented a way of dealing with this and he later set up in partnership with British Xylonite but the business was short-lived and closed after a few years. The site later became no 1296 High Road, which is now occupied by Thoughts Newsagent.

Footnote: Further details of Birt Acres, and his work with the film pioneer Robert Paul, are contained on page 2 of the January 2004 Newsletter.

FRIERN WATCH

by John Donovan

In the April 2004 issue of the Newsletter John Heathfield outlined some of the early history of the Friern Watch Estate. What had intrigued me for some time though was, what did the house look like? In an attempt to find out, I contacted Hugh Petrie, the Barnet borough Archivist and asked him for help. I took a trip to the Archives in their new location in Daws Lane, Mill Hill and struck gold. Hugh had located a sales brochure from the 1920s which contained several photos of the house. The house was described as "a substantially built freehold residence, standing in upwards of 3 acres of beautiful and secluded ornamental grounds, with shrubberies, lawns, flower borders, gardens etc."



Friern Watch House, in substantial grounds

The house was described as follows:

ON THE TOP FLOOR: - Landing (approached by main staircase), with Hand-Lift from kitchen. Eight bedrooms, Linen Press, Housemaids' Closet with Sink and h. and c. water, Hanging Cupboard, w.c. etc.

ON THE FIRST FLOOR:- Landing (approached by main staircase), with ranges of Linen Cupboards, Nine Bed and Dressing Rooms, Bathroom, Store-room, Housemaids' Pantry with sink (h. and c.), w.c.

ON THE FIRST & TOP FLOORS: - Six bedrooms and Store Room, approached by a secondary staircase.

ON THE GROUND FLOOR:- Porch, large Hall (with doorway to the Grounds), Cloak-room, 2 Lavatories and 2 w.c.'s, Spacious Drawing, Dining and Morning Rooms, excellent Billiard Room with oak inlaid floor and carved mantelpiece.

The Domestic Offices comprise:- Kitchen, Scullery, Butler's Pantry, Larder, Store, Wood, Coal, Wine and Beer Cellars, Game Larder etc.

The Newcombe Estates Co. Ltd were also selling building plots on the Friern Watch Estate which was "about 45 acres of excellent building land, situate in a healthy and bracing position about 300 feet above sea level." Transport links were good as "a frequent service of Electric Trams provides rapid travelling facilities between the Estate and Highgate and Golder's Green Tube Stations, Finsbury Park Station (G.N.R., G.N. & City Tube, Piccadilly Tube and North London Railway), while Motor Buses provide frequent and direct service to and from the City and West End, Golder's Green Tube Station, Hendon, High Barnet, St Alban's, Hatfield etc."

Four bedroom houses in Friern Watch Avenue ("By Sylvan Glades") were on sale from £550 freehold, while houses in Ravensdale Avenue were being offered from £450.

THE GREAT FLOOD

As part of our Oral History project Ollie Natelson recently interviewed one of our Committee members, John Holtham. They have both lived on the Halliwick Manor estate for many years so they were able to share memories.

John recalls one summer evening when there was a tremendous thunderstorm just as he was coming home from work and he had to take shelter in Friern Barnet Library. He recalls that when he left the Library after the rain had eventually stopped it was really quiet, as all the traffic had been stopped by the flooded roads. During the middle of his tea, around 6 o'clock, there was pandemonium outside and he went out to investigate. People were milling around with wellingtons on and with buckets trying to sort out a stream of muddy water that was flowing down Thurlestone Avenue. People were desperately knocking holes in boundary walls to let the water into the gardens next door!

It transpired that the water had run along Woodhouse Road, then Summers Lane, down Summers Row and then piled up behind the houses at the bottom of Woodleigh Avenue. Eventually the back door of one of these houses collapsed, unleashing a torrent of water which then flowed across Woodleigh Avenue, between the houses in Ferncroft and Thurlestone Avenues and through the gardens, emerging with considerable force between numbers 35 and 37 Thurlestone Avenue. It flooded the space under the floor of number 37 but by the time the fire brigade arrived to pump it out, it had disappeared. As a result of the flood the Council later put in a relief drain down the centre of Thurlestone Avenue, which involved the installation of large diameter concrete pipes. John does not recall the exact date of the Great Flood, but thinks it was probably in the 1970s or 1980s.

**TO THE STANDARD AND BACK
- EPISODE ELEVEN**

by John Donovan

I have mentioned that my daily walk to work normally took me through the subway that joined The Fields to Oakleigh Road South. Not being a railway buff, however, I was never really interested in what lay above me. Occasionally I would hear the rumble of trains overhead, but I didn't know how many lines there were, or what gaps there were between the lines. One gap would have been for a hole in the roof, halfway along the subway, which let in the daylight. Now, persons unknown would sometimes get up onto the tracks, make their way to the central 'light hole', and throw down into the subway any old junk they could find while, presumably keeping a weather eye open for speeding trains.

One morning in April 1992 I walked into the subway and had to pick my way gingerly between the debris rained down earlier by the unknown person. It consisted of a long length of iron track, one sleeper (complete with the cradles that hold the lines secure), a length of plastic drainpipe, a small roll of carpet, a short baulk of timber, numerous old paper sacks and handfuls of the gravel/ stones that ballast the track. The whole thing was set off to perfection by the



Railway debris, a danger to subway users

lurid graffiti decorating the walls. If I knew then what I know now, I could have exhibited it at the Tate. In February 1993, the vandals found their way across the track to the back of the builder's yard and threw down two tins of paint (one white and one blue) which burst, doing a Jackson Pollock beneath the Crab Apple tree. Upon reflection, I suppose I was lucky that I wasn't walking through the subway while the stuff was actually raining down.

I am probably drawing near to the end of these reminiscences now. Although

I walked to and from from The Standard for nearly twenty-four years many of the episodes I have related were repeated time and again, and I don't want to wear out my welcome. As you have seen, the monotony of my daily grind was alleviated by my communion with Nature to and from work in all weathers. Before I finish this little series, I'll recap each of the seasons in turn, and add just a couple more anecdotes from life at STC (including tales of a pipe band and a thinker).

During my years at STC, my desk was located in various offices in one or other of the three huge, three-storey buildings that dominated the STC site. As I've mentioned before, the management were always refurbishing these buildings and, just before I took up residence on the middle floor of Building 8 (Bldg 8), its floor plan was completely reorganised. Originally, that vast space had been divided into individual rooms delineated by ceiling-high glass walls. The folk who worked in each secluded office looked on it as their own little 'empire'. Each office had a glass door that opened onto a long corridor running the whole length of one side of the building. If you were in one office (say, Accounts) and wanted to be in another (Computers, Engineers, Purchasing etc.) you had to go through your door into the corridor, then back in through another door to the second office. Although the inhabitants of each little empire were quite happy with the arrangement, you can imagine what a hindrance to communication such little cells were, and that was the thinking behind The Big Change that was effected after I'd been at STC a year or so. The whole floor was emptied and all the fixtures and fittings removed, including the ceiling-high glass walls and the doors. The management had decided that one huge open-plan office was just what was needed to increase efficiency.

Eventually, all was finished and the folks moved back in. For a week or so there was little work done, as the office workers showed the site maintenance chaps where each desk, computer, filing cabinet and photocopier had to go. This was to be the start of a new way of working; each person would sit at his/her desk and be able to see every other person on the floor (probably a hundred or so). No desk would be more than a few steps from its neighbouring desk. Engineers would rub shoulders with purchasing staff and computer experts and buyers and typists.

I set up that scene laboriously for you, because I want you to just imagine the panic that set in! Folk were going to lose their little empires, and they were *not* happy; rebellion was in the air! As each section unpacked its belongings from the crates, and lugged desks and filing cabinets around, a pattern set in. The people in each department used their cupboards and cabinets as a sort of wall on either side of their allotted area, stretching from the windows to 'the path.' Inside that stockade, desks were set out, all looking in towards each other. Within a fortnight, the original floor plan had been reinstated (at ground level at least) and 'empires' were restored. Of course, now the folk all breathed the same air and, had they stood on their desks, could have waved to folk in other sections, but all sections were *separate*. So much for management's quest for improved communication.

What was 'the path' you ask? Well, the corridor which had been running the whole length of the building, was moved to somewhere near the middle of all the 'empires'. Being just a gap between all sections (with no 'walls') however, it was not actually a corridor. Furthermore the path was used (at first) by both people *and* the forklift trucks that brought large amounts of stationery, etc to the offices. After a few weeks the trucks were banned, mainly for safety reasons, but also because they were damaging the new carpet tiles. I observed all these shenanigans with a wry smile; it all helped to relieve the boredom of work.

(To be continued)

NORMAN BURGESS

by David Berquer

It was with great sadness that we learned of the death of Norman Burgess on 21 October 2004. Norman was unable to give us his talk on The Two Stephens's back in January, sadly due to illness, but we were looking forward to hearing him talk next year. We will all miss his presence at our meetings where his knowledge and kindness were greatly appreciated. Norman was a great supporter of our Society from the very beginning and he would often ring me up after a meeting to say how much he and Betty had enjoyed themselves. A typical example of his generosity was his recent donation of a carousel slide projector to the Society; alas this made its debut at our meeting on 27 October, too late for him to see it in action, but fortunately I had been able to thank him personally a few weeks previously.

The Committee decided that the proceeds of our raffle at the last meeting would be donated to the Stephens Collection, so we sent them a cheque for £50 in Norman's memory. Our thoughts are with Betty and the family and we know that there are countless people in Finchley who will mourn the passing of a dear friend and tireless campaigner on local issues.

SHOPPING AS IT USED TO BE

Inspired by the article in our last Newsletter, Sylvia Stilts put pen to paper and produced the following memories of pre-war shopping:

"We lived in Sutton Road, the last but one road in South Friern Barnet, next to Hornsey, which is now Haringey. The parade of shops round the corner in Colney Hatch lane comprised a large shop on the actual corner, which frequently changed hands, but I dimly remember that for a few weeks it sold shoes and the assistant stood me on a small machine which X-rayed my toes through the new shoes I was trying on. I half expected them to glow in the dark when I went to bed that night. There was a painter's and decorator's shop where Dad bought rolls of wallpaper and I watched the shopkeeper feeding them through the trimmer. Then there was a dairy and the choc shop which had a lending library at the back, and a public telephone in a cubby hole under the stairs. When the door slid open, a light came on and inside a stool stood in front of the shelf on which stood a black 'daffodil' telephone, and the box into which two pennies were inserted and button A pressed when the number dialled had been answered. I always pushed button B before Mum started, in case someone had forgotten to retrieve their unused coins. Foot-

steps often juddered overhead as customers climbed the stairs to the Hairdressers above.

The parade also included an ironmonger, two greengrocers, a newsagent, two butchers, two off-licences, haberdasher, baker, wet and dry fish shop and a laundry collection office. There were in addition, two grocers, neither of which were visited by my mother. The first had sawdust on the floor and a counter full of sweaty cheese, bacon and cold meats, exposed to the air and buzzing flies. The second had a sub-Post Office at the end and as people stood in line down the shop, the grocer made insulting remarks about those who didn't buy from him.

On the other, eastern, side of the road, next to hoardings which have now been replaced by *The Minstrel Boy* pub, there was a radio shop. A school friend lived in the flat above and when I went to see her, we stood behind the curtains at the open window, squirting water pistols at the bus queue below. Next came a sweet shop, a workmen's diner, a woodyard and a chemist's, where people took their babies to be weighed, and one could buy two or three pennyworth of cough mixture, liniment, nail varnish remover etc. if one proffered an empty bottle. Everything was wrapped in white paper and sealed with a red blob.

Once a week, Mum took a bus up the hill to Muswell Hill Broadway to order groceries to be delivered from a shop well-known for the aroma of its roasting coffee. Sugar and dried fruit were weighed out on to pieces of thick "sugar paper", deftly folded and the top tucked in, and biscuits were chosen from glass-lidded boxes and put in paper bags. The bill was paid to the lady at the high desk at the end of the shop. She was very affable, unlike David's dragon in Sainsbury's.

Mum's next stop was Boot's the Chemists Lending Library, where the subscription was twopence a week. Then to Sainsbury's where she queued at separate counters for butter to be patted, cheese to be cut with a wire, and bacon and cold meats to be sliced and weighed. Eggs were served from baskets down the centre of the shop and put into paper bags".

Footnote, by David Berguer: The roasting coffee shop Sylvia refers to is called Martyn's. It is still there and the delicious aroma still pervades that part of The Broadway. If you want to see what shops used to be like, go inside and you will find things have hardly changed from the time that Sylvia recalls. Sylvia's mention of wallpaper reminds me of the times when I would help my father trim the selvage on both edges of rolls of wallpaper with a large pair of scissors. This was done because it was cheaper to buy the wallpaper untrimmed, and money was tight in the Berguer household!

CHRISTMAS PARTY

Our Christmas Party will be held at 8.00pm on Wednesday 15 December at our usual venue, St John's Church Hall in Friern Barnet Lane. In order to help us cater, admission will be by ticket, price £3 each. If you were unable to buy a tickets at our last meeting, please ring David Berguer on 020 8444 3089.

THE CHANGING FACE OF WHETSTONE

John Donovan's policy of photographing buildings that he thinks may be under threat paid off when he recorded the following series of photographs:



1986. Whetstone Lodge, 1500 High Road Whetstone



1988. The house has been demolished and builders have moved in



The result: Wessex Court as it is today

NEXT YEAR'S MEETINGS

Janet Liversidge, our Events Secretary, has devised an interesting and varied programme of meetings for 2005. Five of the meetings will have a local theme and four will deal with topics of general interest.

Friary Park is currently in the news with the fate of Friary House still unresolved and at our first meeting on 26 January Helen Hooper will be relating the history of the park, from its inauguration in 1909 to the present day. On 23 February the speaker will be Janett Durrant who has been the driving force behind the transformation of Avenue House. Our old friend John Heatfield will be relating some Totteridge Tales on 27 April in his own inimitable style and on 22 June Gillian Gear, Chairwoman of the Herts Association for Local History, will talk about Church Farm School. In the second half of the year Mike McKie will be telling us about the history of the Incognito Theatre, where David Jason started his acting career.

Those of you who like chocolate (and who doesn't?) will be catered for on 23 March when Ruth Hazeldine will be telling The Story of Chocolate and will also be giving away some samples! On 25 May our Annual General Meeting will be followed by Holiday Memories where we will be asking for your reminiscences. On 28 September Mike Hooper (no relation to Helen!) is going to relate the Story of London's Underground, from its birth on 10 Jan 1863 to the present day. We round up our 2005 programme on 23 Nov with a talk on Literary London by Diane Burstein. Those of you who attended a previous meeting when Diane talked about Theatrical London will know we are in for a real treat.

CONVENIENCE FOOD

by David Berguer

John Donovan and I have, for some time now, been giving talks on local history to various groups, ranging from pensioners to women's organisations. These have proved to be very rewarding as we are able to tap into their memories and one of the techniques we use is to display our collection of old photographs and postcards and relics from the past. My particular favourite is an old packet of Batchelors Dried Peas where the instructions read "*Cover the peas and enclosed steeping tablet with boiling water and stir until the tablet has dissolved. Steep for 12 - 16 hours, then rinse. Place peas in boiling water (use enclosed net). Add sugar, salt to taste and simmer (not boil) for 20 - 30 mins, or until tender.*" This, more than anything brings home to me just how things have changed. Can you imagine anyone today having the time or patience to spend on the preparation of such a simple dish?

A Happy Christmas and a Healthy and Prosperous New Year

**Friern Barnet & District
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