

Friern Barnet *Newsletter*

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TRAMS & TROLLEYBUSES

by *David Berguer*

As I have had a lifelong interest in public transport, I decided when I joined the Society that I would try and compile a history of trams and trolleybuses in the Friern Barnet, North Finchley, Whetstone and New Southgate area. After five years of thinking about it, I have finally made a start!

There are numerous transport books, almost too many to count, but in the main these deal with the vehicles themselves; my aim is to try and capture the feel of the times and relate what it was like to work on and travel on them. I struck gold when local historian Percy Reboul very kindly gave me copies of taped interviews that he had conducted with a tram driver and conductor and I have already started interviewing local residents who responded to my letter in *Barnet Times* on 3 March.

Unfortunately there are few people who remember the trams (they ceased running in the area in March 1938), but many people will recall the smooth, quiet ride offered by the trolleybuses which lasted until January 1962. If you are one of them, or if you know anyone who worked on the trolleybuses, please get in touch with me on 020 8444 3089. I will be delighted to share your memories.



A trolleybus working on Boxing Day at Whetstone in 1961 (Ron Kingdon)

MUGS OF TEA, CHEESE ROLLS - AND BABIES IN THE BATH

by Sylvia Stilts

At school in North Finchley the top classes were encouraged to help the War Effort by doing voluntary work at weekends and during school holidays. Some friends and I joined the Women's Voluntary Service as "helpers" and we were told that after we had worked our first thirty hours, we would be given a badge to pin on the green beret we wore with a green overall. There was a joke going round that when a Polish airman asked a woman what WVS on her hat stood for, his comment at her reply was: "We have to pay for ours".

Every Saturday morning several of us went to Simms Motor Unit in Oak Lane to help serve the elevenses. In the canteen we paired up and carried trays of rolls, sandwiches, sausages rolls and buns to the various shop floors, accompanied by apprentices shouldering a large urn or an enormous enamel teapot. Milk and sugar had been added to the tea in the urns, but milk only to the teapots for those who were sweet enough already. The system was that the girls who had the farthest to walk left first, and so on, because we had to be in position the minute the tea-break bell rang. In all weathers we walked down a slippery iron staircase, across a cobbled yard and through noisy workshops that smelled hot and oily. As soon as the bell rang a queue formed instantly in front of our serving trestle. Grimy hands, sprinkled with aluminium filings, grabbed rolls, etc. while we frantically tried to add up the amounts, and boxes of ten or more mugs were thrust at us. As the teas were poured, the men holding the box manoeuvred it until every mug was full.

The Canteen Manageress had warned us about the dodges the men got up to, so we were prepared to spot the Irish pennies palmed on us, and to make them pay fourpence for a ham and cheese roll when they offered only tuppence, pretending that they had just taken a buttered roll. Tea cost a penny for half a pint and tuppence for a pint, and another trick on us was when a pint mug was offered with a penny for a half a pint of tea to be poured in. It was easy for us to automatically fill the mug up to the tannin ring at the top, so we learned to ask for the money after we'd poured, and say "You should have said when" to any protests. But they were a cheerful lot of men, working hard for long hours in not very good conditions.

On Sunday mornings I went along to the Wright Kingsford Home in Granville Road to help look after the babies and toddlers. There is a block of flats on the site now. The youngest baby was only ten days old and had been found on a doorstep on a Monday by a policeman named John, so guess what the baby was then called! There was a three-month old baby girl and nine-month old twin boys. I couldn't tell one from the other, although if you sat them on the floor, the same one would always bang his head on it, which helped me to sort them out, especially if I were worried that I might bath one of them twice, or give him two helpings of cod liver oil. I know that sounds callous, but I had to be matter-of-fact or I would often have become tearful. There was a little girl of eighteen months and the rest were mixed infants, aged from two to three years.

The nurse in charge was a placid little soul who was due to retire, but she was staying on as she had no other life. She used to give the children her chocolate ration and I do not know how she managed to look after ten of them; I suppose she had other help when I wasn't there. On my first day, she was pleased because it meant the children could use the full size bath. She always used a large tin bath unless she had assistance, so I was told to 'swim' the babies up and down while she attended to drying and dressing. The babies loved it of course, and I decided to put toddlers in two at a time, one at each end, but it was pandemonium and I got very wet.

I learned to make hospital corners when I changed beds and also the knack of bottle-feeding and de-burping. The only time I was taken aback was when she approached me with the twins in her arms and I was already holding a baby. "Swap!", she said. However I didn't drop one.

At dinner time, chairs were arranged round a table and bibs tied round the children's necks. A spoon and a bowl of mashed potato and gravy were put in front of each child. Some of them had to be helped and the others ate quietly until, inevitably, one of them espied a minute piece of dark skin in the potato. He or she would point to it and yell "Yuck!" and the others would join in the chorus. Then they were given fruit and custard, followed by a spoonful of cod liver oil and malt. They put their fingers in the spoon and in their mouths and then wiped them on my hair as I bent down. Such fun!

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Our Annual General Meeting takes place on Wednesday 25 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 10 May. Also, if you have any item that you wish to raise under Any Other Business, please notify John Donovan by Wednesday 18 May at the latest.

SO WHAT IS A MANOR?

by John Heathfield

If you want to delight Medieval historians, ask them to define a manor. They will spend many happy hours disagreeing with each other while ordinary folk get on with their lives.

A manor was an administrative unit. The Lord of the Manor had duties for which he charged a fee; he kept records of land transactions and acted as a kind of local magistrate. The records of his manorial court were kept on rolls of parchment and so were known as the court rolls. Whilst a Manor was a civil administrative unit, a Parish was a religious unit; they were not always the same and their duties were quite separate. The boundaries of the Manor of Totteridge, for example, were always the same as the Parish boundaries. Friern Barnet had two Manors within its boundaries, Halliwick and Whetstone.

To add to the confusion, the Lord of the Manor was not always a Lord, nor necessarily a single person. For instance, Queen Elizabeth I was Lord of the

Manor of Totteridge and the Dean and Chapter of St Paul's were Lord of the Manor of Whetstone. Other multiple Lords of the Manor included the Oxford and Cambridge Colleges and Eton and Winchester schools.

The richest or most important person resident person in a district was often awarded the courtesy title of Squire, however this term has no meaning in ancient property law. So the Lord of the Manor may or not be a squire, and the squire may or not be the Lord of the Manor. Confusing, isn't it?

The Manor of Whetstone in the parish of Friern Barnet ran roughly from where the former Friern Barnet Town Hall is, to the High Road Whetstone and along to the County boundary, near Lyonsdown Road. What is now Colney Hatch Lane was known as Halwykstrete in 1398 and Friern Barnet Lane was Wolkstrtete; the word *strete* is of Saxon origin. I believe the road to be over a thousand years old and invite readers to prove me wrong!

The first settlements probably lay on the south facing slopes bordering the road. Halliwick ran from the more southerly ridge (now Woodhouse Road) and Whetstone from the northerly one. Halliwick ran from about where Lyndhurst Avenue is today, over Coppetts Wood to the boundary with Hornsey. Its early history is obscure but the name probably comes from John Halliwick, who was involved in a land dispute with Henry de Audley in 1234. By 1810 Halliwick was estimated to contain about 350 acres. The manorial land was sold to George Curtis in 1801 and part of this to George Knights Smith in 1848. The manor house was built by John Trott by 1602 and it stood just to the south of Friern Barnet cross roads, on the south west side. There was water nearby in Strawberry Vale brook.

What became Friary Park has good soils, and Blackets Brook was at the foot of the slope and there was originally plenty of timber nearby. The Lord of the Manor was ordered to build a Manor House in 1551 which was to contain a hall, parlour and sufficient chambers. It was eventually built by William Clark, who died in 1586. It was usually called The Friary or Friern House. The Hearth Tax return of 1665 shows it occupied by Sir William Gromvill and, with 17 hearths, it was by far the largest house in the district.

The alley leading to St James's Church was set out about 1783. In 1797 it was described as having an east front with five bays and two wings built around a central core which probably included a hall by about 1660. It was often sub let and John Bacon lived there from about 1797 until his death in Feb 1816. He is buried in the churchyard.

The present house was built by Edmund Richardson in 1871. In 1909 it was bought by the Council, with financial help from Middlesex County Council, and subsequently from Sydney Simmons. When John Miles bought the nearby Manor Farm in 1851, he renamed it Manor House, thus sowing the seeds of confusion. The last time I saw the Friern Barnet Court Rolls they were in the Guildhall Library.

DECLINING STANDARDS

by David Berguer

If you who think that things in the neighbourhood are getting worse, you may be interested to know that even 31 years ago people thought the area was going downhill.

At a Valuation Court held in Avenue House on 2 April 1974, a resident of Raleigh Drive claimed that people carrying bags of washing to and from a launderette contributed to a general decline in the area. It was claimed that people going to the launderette parked their cars outside houses in Raleigh Drive and unloaded their washing, so that visitors often had to park away from the house they wish to visit. The resident was also unhappy about the hot steamy smell that came from the launderette and also the noise caused by people visiting the local pub and the banging of doors and shouting at closing time. In addition he complained about the volume of traffic using Raleigh Drive and the fouling of the grass verge by dogs.

The Valuation Officer considered all the complaints and, rather surprisingly, agreed to reduce the assessment by £5, to £175 gross, £126 rateable. Somehow I feel that if we claimed a reduction on our rateable value today on the grounds of noise and traffic, we would get very short shrift from Barnet Council. However, if you are willing to give it a try, I wish you lots of luck.....

A GLIMPSE OF THE PAST

Iris Sande very kindly gave us a picture of the house that used to be at number 11 Friern Barnet Lane, on the corner with Goldsmith Road. The photograph must have been taken shortly before it was demolished, as there is a board from Alfred Slinn & Son announcing that it had been acquired. There is now a block of flats, *Tiffany Court*, on the site.



GRIDLOCK AT TALLY HO

by Patricia Richardson

In 1972 Finchley Ladies Circle was looking for a unique idea to raise money for their chosen charity that year, the Marie Foster Home in Barnet. The Chairman had been to an Antique Fair in Surrey and suggested that we hold a similar event. Antique Fairs were virtually unknown at that time and I believe this was might have been the first one to be attempted in North London.

The Chairman chose her committee to run the event, and proceeded to visit the local antique shops and dealers to sell them the idea. They were asked to pay £5 to have a sales table in the Conservative Hall, in Ballards Lane and they would keep the profit from any sales. The public would be asked to pay a 10p admission charge.

Fear of failure drove the publicity officer to overplay her hand somewhat. She had visions of perhaps half a dozen disinterested people drifting in on the Saturday evening, and a room full of disappointed dealers. To overcome this scenario she had the event publicised in all the local newspapers, with photographs, and even the *Evening Standard* ran an article. She even managed to get the event mentioned on the radio, as something worth visiting that weekend. Leaflets were printed and an army of Circlers, myself included, toured the local streets dropping them through letterboxes, and when we found we still had a few hundred spares we went off to Finchley Central Underground car park and put them under people's windscreen wipers.



Two committee members examine some of the antiques

The evening of 14 October duly arrived, they hall was prepared, dealers had set up their wares and we were expecting a few people to turn up. The reality was somewhat different. The publicity had worked so well that there were over 1,000 people queuing at the door, the hall was bursting at the seams, dealers could not cope with the volume of customers and valuable jewellery had to be put away out of sight. The crush was so great that we had to close the doors with people still trying to get in. The *News Shopper* later quoted one dealer as saying: "Portobello Road was never like this." Then some embarrassing news reached us: Tally Ho was gridlocked and buses had come to a standstill. It is amazing what chaos a small group of Circlers managed to cause that night.

Flushed with our success (we raised over £300 for the charity) we decided to repeat the exercise, but this time we decided we would hold a bigger and better event to accommodate all the thousands who would want to attend such a splendid occasion, so we booked the hall in the TA Centre, next to the Finchley Lido for Saturday 24 March the following year.

Sadly, on the night those half a dozen disinterested people we thought would be the only ones there on the first night were the only ones who turned up! Experience is a wonderful thing. It enables you to recognise a mistake when you make it again, so that was the end of flirtation with Antique Fairs.

PETS IN WARTIME

by David Berguer

As this year marks the 60th anniversary of the end of World War II, I had a look through our archives to see if we had anything of relevance. I came across a booklet produced in 1939 by the National A.R.P. Animals Committee, under the aegis of the Home Office, entitled "*War Time Aids for all Animal Owners*". Amongst the many hints, tips and warnings, here are some of the most interesting:

Voluntary Animal Guards would be appointed throughout the country, and they would be responsible for visiting every animal owner and issuing them with an individually numbered disc which would be attached securely to the animal. The name and address of the owner would be recorded.

Animals were not allowed in public air raid shelters. It was therefore recommended that dogs were not taken too far afield for their walks in case an air raid took place.

Nervous dogs should be given bromide tablets. For Pekinese sized dogs one tablet; terriers two tablets; spaniels three tablets; and Airedales four tablets.

Cats should be put in baskets and given sedatives in milk. Apparently they were not as much affected by noise as dogs.

Each man in charge of a horse should be provided with a means of tying

the horse night or day by either a strong halter or strong head collar and rope, the rope to be not less than twelve feet in length.

Horses should not be tied to lamp-posts, Belisha beacons or railings. The average lamp-post could easily be pulled over, with consequent dangers of escaping gas.

In a number of public parks, and on cricket and football grounds, "Horse Emergency Standings" were established, where horses could be secured to stout trees or manger rings provided for the purpose.

Gas proof kennels were available, operated by bellows, but for those who could not afford them, a roomy box with one side covered in wire netting would suffice. The netting should be covered with a piece of flannel soaked in a solution of hypochlorite (Milton). Caged birds and mice could also be housed in this way.

A recommended diet for cats or dogs consisted of toasted stale bread; a porridge of oatmeal; scraps of meat; and 4-6oz of skimmed milk.

People being evacuated were often forced to have their pets painlessly destroyed, but for those staying at home this was not recommended as it was felt that they played an extremely important part in keeping down rats and mice. Although it is not mentioned in the booklet, pets would have been a source of comfort to many people who had to cope with the hardships of war. Perhaps our animals were the unsung heroes of World War II.

WALK THE WALK

by John Donovan

On Monday 2 May (Bank Holiday Monday), Barnet & District Local History Society are organising a walk to celebrate the 1000th anniversary of the setting up of Barnet's boundary. The route will be clockwise from Barnet Gate, Barnet Road (at the junction with Hendon Wood Lane) all around the boundary, as far as practicable, and finishing at *The Gate* pub. There will be 'stations' along the route, at which volunteers from each of the participant groups will "check in" the walkers and dispense drinks and information.

To give you some idea of the route, the 'stations' will be 1) Barnet Gate 2) Joslin's Pond, Hadley Green 3) the car park at the foot of Bakers Hill, Hadley Common 4) Chalk Lane, Cockfosters 5) Oak Hill Theological College, opposite the *Chicken Shed Theatre*, Chase Side, where there will be a half hour lunch break 6) Waterfall Park, Waterfall Road 7) Ashbourne Avenue, New Barnet 8) The Drive, off Lyonsdown Road and 9) Barnet Table Tennis Club car park, Barnet Lane (Underhill). From there, walkers will head west along the Dollis Valley Green Walk, up the paved part of Hendon Wood Lane and on to the finish, back at Station 1, in Hadley Football Club, Brickfield Lane (opposite *The Gate*).

Our own Society has been invited to take part in the walk, and we shall be

responsible for Station 5, on the front lawn of the College (close to their toilet). A party of us will walk from there down to the start of our own boundary, at Betstyle, a distance of around one and a half miles. Since part of Barnet's 1000 year old boundary forms part of *our* 1000 year old boundary, we are inviting you to celebrate by taking part in the walk along our common boundary, from Betstyle Circus, through the old STC site, along Gallants Farm Road, past Oakleigh Park Station and up Northumberland Road to Station 8 (almost on the A1000). Of course, there's nothing to stop you from doing *all* the stations (sixteen miles!).

An illuminated 'charter' will be carried by each group (relay style) from station to station, and will be presented to 'The Bishop' at the final grand ceremony and picnic (bring your own). It is hoped that walkers will dress up in suitable costumes (AD 1005 - 2005). A map and further details can be found in the souvenir *Guide to the Walk*, price £1 from Barnet Museum, or you can phone me on 01707 642 886).

RAILWAY EMPLOYEES

by David Berger

Although we are not a Family History society, we do get asked from time to time to help out with tracing people's ancestors; we normally refer them to Barnet Local Studies & Archives in Daws Lane, Mill Hill, NW7 4SL. Yasmine Webb, the Local Studies Manager (020 8959 6657) will usually be able to point you in the right direction, although she will not be able to do the research for you.

If any of your family ever worked for one of the railway companies you might be able to glean some useful information from their records. Until 1923, there were a huge number of companies (at one time they totalled 988!). The Railway Acts of 1921 and 1923 reformed the industry into the Big Four: Southern Railway; LNER (London & North Eastern Railway); GWR (Great Western Railway) and LMS (London, Midland & Scottish). In 1948 the railways were nationalised to form British Railways (later British Rail).

The railways were huge employers of labour (they actually employed more people than the armed forces) and most of the railway companies kept very detailed records of their employees. A typical record would include: Name; Date of Birth; Place of Birth; Date of Entry into Service; Rates of Pay; Transfers; Fines and Reprimands; Commendations; and Pensions. Every employee had a Staff Number and records are usually arranged by number, so tracing ancestors is made much easier if you know the Company they worked for; the period of employment; their job title and their Staff Number. It is also worth bearing in mind that many railway employees lived in houses built and owned by the companies (typically in roads called Station Road or Railway Terrace).

There were basically three operating departments in most Companies: the Operating Department (clerical and station staff); Locomotive Department (drivers and firemen); and Engineering Department (fitters, boilermakers,

platelayers etc). Employees would often be transferred from one department to another as their career progressed.

Many of the Companies' records are held at the Public Record Office in Kew (telephone first to avoid a wasted journey, 020 8876 3444). They may also have copies of Staff Magazines, which may well include references to your ancestor. In particular, they usually contained photographs of employees on their retirement, so this could be a very useful source; in fact it might be one of the only pictures ever taken of a person!

The British Library Newspaper Office at Colindale (020 7412 7353) holds copies of both *Railway Gazette* and *Transport & Railroad Gazette*, which may include references to senior employees. If your ancestor was involved in a serious accident on the railway, there may be a reference in accident records or departmental or Board of Trade Enquiries.

Of course, not everyone who worked on the railways was employed by the Railway Companies. Construction of the lines was done by contractors like Balfour Beatty, Costain or Wimpey. The individual contractors may have employee records although in the nineteenth century, when the railways were first being built, there were a lot of casual labourers (particularly navvies), who would move from project to project. There is a *Gazetteer of Railway Contractors* which may help trace those companies. The National Railway Museum in York has a large collection of books and periodicals which can be accessed by appointment (01904 686235).

APPEAL FOR HELP

by David Berguer

Our member in Warminster, Mrs Julia Davey, lived in the area until 1968 and wonders if anyone remembers her parents Ralph and Sally Bass. Ralph worked at STC in 1933-34 and would like to share memories with anyone who was there at the time. Julia is also keen to get hold of pictures of the stone lions and centaurs that used to sit atop the balustrade on the terrace in front of Alexandra Palace. Most people will remember them, but nobody seems to recall when they vanished; it was presumably after the fire in 1980. Julia also wonders if anyone has a picture of the drinking fountain that used to be on Duckett's Common in Wood Green, just opposite Turnpike Lane station. I must admit I remember all these, but never had the foresight to photograph them; it just goes to show how even the most permanent looking things have a habit of disappearing. This is why we try and photograph everyday things in the area, just in case. Please contact me if you can help Julia.

**Friern Barnet & District
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