Friern Barnet *Newsletter*

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ON THE BUSES IN 1955

by Michael Mayers

As a 19 year old student at Birmingham University in 1955 I quickly discovered that my Major County Award which was supposed to fund my living expenses was not enough to keep me in the essentials of all students in those days, namely beer and tobacco. So when the long summer vacation came along, I got myself along to the Labour Exchange (I believe they call them Job Centres now) in Finchley. I was offered the job of a temporary bus conductor at Muswell Hill bus garage officially located in Sydney Road, but I used to get to it via the ramp in Hampden Road. But I am ahead of myself. First of all I was sent for training at a London Transport centre in Chiswick. Here I was shown how to punch tickets on the Bell Punch machine and how to issue instructions to the passengers (not customers as we are now) such as *"Fares please"*, *"Pass down the bus"* and for double deckers, *"Plenty of room on top*". Having been fully trained I turned up at Muswell Hill garage ready for duty and raring to go.

At this point, for the students of London Transport bus history, I took the trouble to contact the London Transport Museum to make sure that I have got my facts

TD 24 waits at Burnt Oak ready for the return trip to Arnos Grove *Photo J Aston*

right about the buses and the routes for which Muswell Hill bus garage was responsible in 1955. These are shown below:

Route number	*Route*	*Bus type*
43	Friern Barnet Town Hall to London Bridge Station	RT double deck
125	Golders Green Station to Southgate *(extended peak hours and hospital visiting times to Highlands Hospital)*	RT double deck
210	Golders Green to Finsbury Park	RF single deck
212	Muswell Hill Broadway to Finsbury Park *(starting 12 Oct 1955 express buses were introduced on this route in peak hours)*	RF single deck
244	Winchmore Hill (Capitol Cinema) to Muswell Hill Broadway *(extended to Archway Station in peak hours)*	RT double deck
251	Arnos Grove Station to Burnt Oak (Edgware Road)	TD single deck

From about mid-June until early September I worked the shifts that I was given, on all the buses. I became quite adept at using the ticket machine that I had strapped onto me. It was not a Gibson roll ticket machine – these came later to Muswell Hill. I carried a rack of tickets of different denominations according to the fare stage chart that was provided to me for each route that I worked. Of course, all the fares were in pre-decimal currency. You could travel quite a long way for 2 old pence. I do not recall any tickets exceeding 2 old shillings even on the 43s, but if I am wrong I am sure that at least one transport history buff who reads this will correct me. The money (almost entirely in coins) collected from the fares went into a leather bag that hung from a strap on my shoulder. At the end of a shift all the money had to be counted and checked against the tickets sold before I was allowed to go home. I seemed not to have had any problems.

Most of the time that I worked on the buses was fairly uneventful with two notable exceptions. The first was when I was given an evening shift on the 251. The main feature of this route in those days was that it had a pub at either end (the *Arnos Arms* at Arnos Grove and the *Bald Faced Stag* at Burnt Oak). My driver on this occasion made it his ambition to sink a pint of beer at each end. Well, needless to say, his driving became…how can I put it…increasingly erratic as the evening wore on. I noticed too that we tended to reach each destination long before the time the time laid down in the official timetable. Luckily we did not pick up many passengers throughout the evening, but one gentleman did remark *"Blimey, he's a bit fierce ain't he?"* What I did learn from this experience was that it is not wise to drink several pints of Courage ale and drive a single decker bus at 60 mph along Totteridge Lane at dusk.

My second memorable experience was being invited by my Muswell Hill bus garage colleagues to play cricket for them against a team from Walthamstow

bus garage. Perhaps 'invited' is not the right word. I was asked if I would make up the number as one of the regular team members had to drop out. It was an away match so we went by bus (of course) to a park somewhere in Walthamstow. Apparently the Walthamstow team had not been beaten by Muswell Hill for many years. It was a very hot day and the pitch, which sloped sharply, had been baked hard during a preceding warm spell of weather. Walthamstow batted first and made about 180. Then it was our turn to bat. I was given the 'honour' of being last man in. By the time it was my turn to bat we needed 11 runs to win. Walthamstow had a demon fast bowler who had taken most of their wickets and I had to face him. I remember this gentleman. He was not tall, about my height in fact. However, he had amazingly long arms that even an orangutan would envy. When he bowled, he took a long run, jumped and released the ball from what seemed to be an incredible height. He bowled all the time down the slope so the ball was really flying at great speed. I watched him running in to bowl at me. I saw him release the ball. I did what I always do against demon fast bowlers - I closed my eyes and swung my bat hard and…..glory be, I connected. When I opened my eyes I found that I had produced a perfect straight drive for four runs. This left seven to win. My drive for 4 runs seemed to completely unnerve the bowler. He just could not bowl straight after that. So we got the seven runs from running byes which their poor wicket keeper simply could not reach.

The cricket match I remember well. My recollection of the team's celebrations in a pub after the match is non-existent, possibly because I did not have to buy any drinks. So if anyone reading this happened to play in that match, perhaps you would be kind enough to tell me who took me home that night. I wish to thank them.

LOCAL BOY MAKES GOOD

We came across the following piece from a local newspaper in December 1955.

"YOUNG VIRTUOSO THRILLS AUDIENCE
Classic guitarist at 14
A slightly built dark boy with glasses, and the unspectacular name of John Williams, held a Friern Barnet audience spellbound on Wednesday evening last week.

John, who is 14 and a pupil at Friern Barnet Grammar School, was taking part in a school concert. It was the first time that the school had attempted anything of the kind, and John's performance helped to give the new venture an auspicious start.

When the curtain rose, John looked very small sitting there alone on the stage. He held his guitar, fine instrument, with the loving embrace of a real enthusiast. From the moment the first soft chords went across the footlights, the big audience knew they were in the presence of a virtuoso. They were so quiet that young John might have been alone in an empty hall.

The sparkling Gavotte and Musette by Bach with its intricate fingering of the fretted keyboard was the first evidence that here was a rare instrumentalist, Without a flaw, and only short pauses for bursts of applause between items, John went straight through five major guitar works, developing the mood of each in the high, classical style reminiscent of the world's leading guitarist, Segovia. There

was a reason for the resemblance. For the Friern Barnet schoolboy is a pupil of that master. John has been playing the guitar since he was seven years old. The son of Mr and Mrs Len Williams, of Maidstone Road, N11, his teaching was begun by his father, who is also a guitarist.

There is little doubt that John's career, as a concert guitarist, is assured. Segovia speaks highly of his future. With the school's summer holidays, John leaves each year for Italy where he studies intensively at a leading music conservatoire. At home his father keeps up the training. John's school pals are proud of his talent. They slapped his back when he left the stage after his performance. One day the school will be proud that he is an Old Boy."

Footnote: John Williams was actually born in Melbourne, Australia and had studied under Andes Segovia from the age of twelve. He later attended the Royal College of Music where he studied piano, because the College did not have a guitar department. When he graduated, he was asked to create a guitar department which he ran for two years. Although he went on to become a leading classical guitarist, he also dabbled in classical-rock fusion with his band Sky and performed the first ever rock concert to be performed in Westminster Abbey. His most well-known recording was that of the piece "Cavatina" by Stanley Myers which was used in the film "The Deer Hunter".

THE INFANTS' TREAT

The following article appeared in *All Saints Parish Magazine* for July 1903:

"On June 29th, forty-six little people were made supremely happy at the Infants' Treat. At 4.30 they sat down to a substantial tea, to which they did full justice, in the Vicarage Garden. During the meal a little spray of pink rosebuds was presented to the Superintendent, Mr Whitten, by the tiniest infant girl. After tea came the great event of the day – the drive. Oh! the joy of seeing two brakes drive up - with such horses. Oh! the delight of the so-called "big" children in being allowed to sit on the high seat behind the much envied driver; while the happiness of the babies was no less great as they were carefully packed in behind, where they could each wave "the flag of Old England" in perfect safety. Thus, amid shouts and cheers, we drove off in fine style, and the cheers never relaxed, except when "sweeties" were handed round; and they were loudest of all when, after a drive of nearly two hours, we returned up the Oakleigh Road, where a great many of "our muvvers" live, for we like to pass our homes and let our "muvver" see what a happy time we are having. When the merry little crew reached the Vicarage they were quite ready for more cheers, and also for something else, which appeals to the British infant even more than cheers, namely "somefink to eat; and then home they went, with the beautiful sunshine of innocent joy on each little face, to dream of tea and horses and sweeties and cheers."

In the June 1907 issue was the following report, which seems from its style to have been written by the same person:

"THE INFANTS' TREAT (or "the little trip" as it was called the other day by one of the little people who so enjoy it) was as happy an event as ever. The proceedings opened in fine style at 4.15 with a "dance round" to the stirring tunes of a barrel organ in the Vicarage Garden. At 4.30 the little people sat down to tea on the lawn accompanied by *"Farewell my Bluebell"* and other popular tunes on the

much appreciated “music.” After tea, without any prompting, the happy crowd danced again, and then skipped round to the school playground where they awaited the brakes which were to take them for the long-looked-for drive. At last they came: those thrilling vehicles which represent, for the time being, the height of infant bliss. Dear reader, imagine for a moment that you are an infant; that you are lifted above your fellow creatures in the brake behind those spanking horses; that you are waving your little flag and singing the little ditties which generations of little people have sung before you. Now you are driving past water, what a fascination it has for you! Now you are passing through Hadley Woods, still shouting with all your might. Presently the horses stop; what is this? Some fresh excitement? Yes. Here comes a lady (kind Mrs Vernon) through the big gates carrying flowers and fruit, as her contribution to the afternoon’s enjoyment, and most heartily we thank her for her generous gift. You give her a hearty cheer and say “Thank you”, then off you go again, but your shouting has ceased for the time being, owing to the fact that the exit through which such deafening sounds proceed, is blocked by a rosy apple. Now you are nearing home, and if you are an Oakleigh Road infant ten to one you see your mother waving her hand and sharing your joy. At last the Vicarage is reached, and on to the lawn you run to find your supper which you eat with much relish. Then the fruit and flowers are divided out and you give three cheers before going home. Another infant asks if you are tired, to which you reply “not ‘alf.” At least, that’s how one of our infants put it that evening. Yes! They were all tired may-be, but they were “happier for having been happy,” and so they will be twenty years hence.”

These examples of the innocence of youth and the way things were in England in those days makes one nostalgic for the past. Nowadays, of course, there would have to be Risk Assessment done before the event could take place, every adult would have to undergo a Criminal Record Check, the food could only be prepared in an approved kitchen and Health and Safety laws would require the children to have seatbelts during the ride. And as for waving the Union Jack…….

FAIR FRUZ WE WUZ

by John Heathfield

Despite the winter just gone, we don’t get cold like we used to in the old days? In the winter of 1739-40 *The Times* reported that *“birds dropped stiff from the sky and bread hardened into rocks on market stalls.”* The Thames froze completely in 1789 and again in 1813-14. There were Ice Fairs and whole oxen were roasted, which was a mistake as the river suddenly thawed and many were drowned.

On 18 February 1771 *“a poor boy who had crept into a dunghill at Edgware in order to preserves himself from the cold was found frozen dead by the ostler”* (Coroners Inquest, Middx Sessions Reg). In 1798 a man was found dead in Whetstone High Road with his hair frozen to the road surface.

The winter of 1939-40 was so cold that the bearings of the searchlights operated by the Barnet AA Battery froze solid and had to be thawed by a combination of the language of the Sergeant Major and buckets of boiling water. In January 1941 the snow was so bad in Hendon that the Civil Defence lorries could only get through after snowploughs had been sent out. At Underhill School in Barnet the school dinners were delivered by fire engine. The winter of 1944-45 was the coldest for many years and that coinciding with a shortage of coal and no shortage of German rockets meant a miserable time for most families huddled

into one room with a fire made of nutty slack. When the V2 landed in East Barnet in January 1945, rescue work was severely hampered by ice and snow. The bomb victims were allowed extra coal – 4 tons of washed smalls.

The winter of 1947 was even worse with the Thames freezing over and coal being distributed from communal dumps and a widespread loss of bird life. The tube trains at High Barnet station froze to the rails. Coal lorries could not get through and families collected coal from the local railway station using prams or trolleys for transport. Snow fell from 24 January to 16 March and households were told not to use electricity between 9am and midday and again between 2pm and 4pm to conserve fuel stocks at the power stations. In some areas power to industry was turned off altogether.

Most of us can recall the winter of 1963. It had started to snow on Boxing Day of 1962 and it continued on most days until 6 March when the snow started to disappear. February was the worst month with Force 8 winds and a blizzard lasting 36 hours. All sporting fixtures were badly affected; one FA Cup match was postponed 15 times and the fixtures were not completed until June.

In more recent times, there was skiing in Oakhill Park in 1981. Modern central heating is a huge benefit – mine even switches itself on and off. We don't have to clean out the ashes every morning either. In particular I enjoy my £250 winter fuel allowance.

EVACUATION, BEFORE AND AFTER

by Pauline Chandler (née Kearey)

I lived with my brother John, in the house next to Palmsville Garage (no 204 Colney Hatch Lane) which was owned and run by my father who had taken over the business from my grandfather.

I started at Tollington Prep school aged 5 – presumably in January 1936. My brother John and I walked unaccompanied to school along Greenham Road and we used to call for someone halfway up on the right hand side. At lunchtime the two of us would get a lift with the Lindsey brothers, we would have lunch at home and we were then taken back to school with them. Astonishingly I walked home alone after school, often with Harry Howells to see the progress of his new house being built on the corner of Creighton Avenue and Tetherdown. If it was raining I was not allowed to go home on my own and I used to go to John's classroom to remind him to collect me. He was quite cross at me coming into his classroom! It is quite incredible that at the age of five I was left all alone in the classroom desperately looking out of the window and scared stiff that he would forget me. We sometimes went to the "caves" which were on the left going down Muswell Hill and which led to Alexandra Palace

In 1939, on the Friday about nine days before the outbreak of War we were staying at the bungalow at Napier Avenue, Jaywick Sands. Mother and Dad went back without us – I don't remember whether it because of "The Crisis", or dad's back was bad. We stayed on with the maid, Bridget, and were on the promenade at Jaywick with Una and Gillian, watching "Uncle Peter" when Mum and Dad came back to fetch us. They took us back to London, leaving a note for Bridget to make her own way home.

War was declared on Sunday 3 September 1939 and every day for a week we went to school in the morning with our suitcases and lunch and waited to see if this was the day we were to be evacuated. For the first four days we waited around for a good while and then were told “not today”. We then went home, after buying a bottle of Tizer on the way, and ate our sandwiches in the back garden. Afterwards we went to the swimming pool at Tollington and I remember that I almost learned to swim, but it took me another seven years before I could actually swim properly! On the Friday we left the school to go on a train to Abbotsley in Cambridgeshire. I have no remembrance of how we got to the station, or which station but I remember being excited as I had never been on a train before, and John and I were together. When we got off the train we went into somewhere that had been adapted as toilets. It was like a bench with straw in it – most odd! We then walked along a line and were given a carrier bag in which was put various tinned food and condensed milk – and a big bar of Cadbury’s chocolate! We took these carrier bags to our foster homes. When we got to Abbotsley we waited in a hall to be allocated and no-one seemed to want a brother and sister. Finally a Mrs Wakefield said she would take us and we walked with her through the village and along a road with hay fields on the right and a field with cows in on the left. A young boy came running towards us and stopped dead when he saw us with his mother. She explained we were coming to stay with them. Also staying with the family was her sister, Mrs Scanes, and her newborn baby. I remember seeing her quite openly breastfeeding the baby and I was fascinated, having never seen anything like it before.

The first night we slept in Mr and Mrs Wakefield’s double bed and during the night I was sick all over their blue eiderdown. I wasn’t told off, but John was for not waking them earlier before I was sick! I loved staying there. We would play in the field right next to the house and one of our classmates (he was very naughty, but I can’t remember his name) used to jump into the cowpats. We had to share the school with the village children and we went for walks in the country for half the day and the other half we used the school. The children didn’t like us and they shouted to us if we went past the school when they were in the playground. I seem to remember we used to stop by a fallen tree and sit around presumably having some kind of lessons. One outstanding memory for me was being in the classroom with Miss Waites and doing writing on ruled paper. The teacher told me my writing was too small so I did the next line with my letters filling the two horizontal lines. The teacher went mad and shouted at me and showed my writing to the other teachers nearby – I was not trying to be naughty, but thought I was doing what she said. I have never forgotten the incident. At half term we went home - I don’t remember how we got there, but I suppose Mum and Dad fetched us. When we got home everything looked so big, especially the dresser in the kitchen with the china on it.

We then went to Wolverton (did Mum and Dad take us?) and we were billeted with Mr and Mrs Isted at number 43 Stacey Avenue. I got on well there and stayed two years, but they had a down on John and got him moved. They said he put dirty football boots and socks in his drawer. He was moved, but I saw him at school. We had a school in the new scout hall – we were moved there because the girls’ school was being evacuated and we should be in the same place. It was obviously better from an education point of view as we could have schooling all day and not share with village children. What a change though! It had been lovely in the country and now we were in a commercial town whose chief claim to fame was that the Royal Train had been built there and was permanently housed

there. Mother and Dad visited us quite a bit and I remember going to Cambridge and picking up chestnuts by the river - it was a wonderful day. One day they came and collected us from the scout hut and somebody overheard them telling a teacher they had brought me a doll. I had to pretend it was a great surprise when they gave it to me. I've still got the doll!

After a year John was accepted at QE and went home. I stayed for a further year until I took the exam for QE Girls and passed, so I started at QE at the age of ten (almost 11), one of the youngest in the class all the way through my schooling. Years later Mother told me they expected me to complain about being left in Wolverton without John and if I had they would have taken me home as well. It never occurred to me to complain!

One pre-war memory was having a television in 1937. One evening Dad came and got us out of bed to watch it with him. There were some dancers on skates and the man let the woman go and she went straight through the set. They stopped the broadcast and Dad took us back to bed and told us not to let on to mother that we had been down looking at television.

The bungalow at Jaywick was not brick built (plasterboard perhaps?). I remember worrying about earwigs on the pillow at night. There was no inside toilet but there was a shed in the back garden with a sort of bucket in it. One had to put a notice in the window about twice a week when staying there to let the men know the toilet needed emptying. Grandad Kearey used to be there and spent all his days on the upstairs balcony with his binoculars watching all the golf. Nana did not go there much; I don't know why but she didn't like the bungalow.

At Palmsville I think the garage and pumps were open until 10 o'clock. We used to be in bed and see the shadows of people walking up and down to the workshops and I found it quite frightening. John and I shared the middle bedroom and the maid slept in the back bedroom that John occupied later. Before the war I used to go for a walk with Grandad, Dad and Peter, the wire-haired terrier. We always used to walk down the lane to the North Circular (no roundabout then) and along past the allotments (Pinkham Way) up Coppetts Road and back through Halliwick Road. There were no houses then, past Albion Avenue – it was all allotments, quite different from today.

Before the war there was a huge garden behind the workshops at Palmsville. Granddad Kearey had a wonderful garden with a greenhouse where he grew his chrysanthemums, for which he won many medals (which I still have). He also kept rabbits and he had a wonderful orchard. He built himself a room called "The Cabin" where he used to go every afternoon after lunch and sleep. He had Mr Mocsy working in the garden with him and later a house was built at the back of the cabin with an entrance in Wetherill Road. Before the war there were two grass tennis courts immediately behind the workshops and there was a tennis club called Wetherill Tennis Club. The members came in through a gate in Wetherill Road. During the war the tennis courts were not in use and we kept ducks in that part of the garden. We had a lot of eggs, but sometimes the whites were green! Dad wrote to a magazine called *Duck World* and the reply came that perhaps the ducks were able to find acorns somewhere. Of course, we had all these big oak trees where the ducks were roaming. Dad penned them in so they could not go under the oak trees and the problem was solved.

The allotments in Colney Hatch Lane photographed in 1933
(Photo © TfL from the London Transport Museum Collection)

After the war a tennis court was installed (but no club) and we used to play many a game there. We had a shelter in the middle of the garden (behind Palmsville garage) and we spent many nights there. The bombing always seemed worse when the children were home for the holidays. It was horrible sleeping in the shelter when Mother and Dad sent the two of us out there for some time before they arrived. I used to think of them being killed near the garage and us being left on our own in the garden! I remember the original workshop at the garage had an upstairs that you had to reach with steps and then grab a rope to get right into the loft and Grandad kept pigeons there originally. Our back garden gradually got smaller as more space was taken for the garage.

Every summer after the war there was a carnival at Jaywick and we entered our car decorated with loads of coloured balloons and we would drive along the promenade with the other cars. It was great fun and we won some prizes for our entry. A clear recollection was just after the war staying at number 22 The Close when the ice cream van arrived. We queued up waiting for it as we had not had any during the war. On one occasion John and I were waiting for the 134 bus to go to school and mother rushed down calling out to us that John had the workshop keys. She fell over as she ran and it was awful as I thought she had been badly hurt, but she got up and did not complain, once she had the keys!

A WALK TO THE SHOPS IN 1951

by Stan Gilks

I refer to Richard Testar's article in *Newsletter* number 40 and in particular to the mention of the little Post Office in North Finchley where Thomas Cook now stands (number 827 High Road).

I started at University in 1953 and, because my grant was rather “slim”, I applied to the General Post Office for a Christmas job. I attended a simple interview in Upper Street and completed the appropriate forms. Towards the end of the University term I received a letter telling me to report for duty for (I think) ten days at the post office in question in North Finchley. At the time I was still living at home with my parents in Priory Gardens, 100 yards from Highgate Underground station. I was therefore able to travel to and from North Finchley with great ease by means of the 609, 517 and 617 trolleybuses.

My lasting impression of the post office is how cramped it was for all concerned. The waiting/queuing area for the customers was usually filled to overflowing. And it was worse behind the counter! I think there were three (delightful) ladies and myself. My main responsibilities were to keep them supplied with tea and move sacks of parcels and registered mail. That was far from easy because putting a sack down or hanging it up could usually only be achieved by removing the old item already there. It was also tiring work because we (the staff) were on our feet from 9.00 to 5.30, apart from a hurried lunch break when we took it in turns to sit down on an old wooden chair in the stock room. However, there was a lovely spirit on both sides of the counter and I enjoyed my time there. And then eventually it was Christmas Eve and I got paid. I cannot recall how much I received but I do remember I was given a handsome monetary bonus paid in silver Victorian half crowns. And what did I do with them? I spent them! Idiot!

MY STORY – PART 1

by Ray Lewis

Murray Cornes (Jenny’s husband) and I are cousins, on our mother’s side. We were both born in Motherwell in 1940, eleven months apart. As my father was in the RAF and Murray’s dad was in the army, my mother decided to move back down to Finchley in early 1944 to join her eldest sister who had moved there a year or two earlier to find work and to be with her new husband. We all lived in a three storey house in Station Road, Church End. Mum and I lived in two rooms in the attic and all the facilities like water, sink, bath, toilet etc were on the first floor where Murray, his mum Lisette and older brother Evan lived. The three of us became like brothers and over the early years we did a lot together. Another elderly couple, Lil and Jock, lived on the ground floor. Even though they were not related, we still called them Auntie and Uncle, like you do. Jock had a deep wound in his head that he had received from shrapnel in WWI. He would let us put our small fingers in the dent to show that it didn’t hurt anymore. We heard some wonderful rambling tales of his experiences during that period. Auntie Lil used to take me to Wembley to see the Wembley Lions speedway team. I had already been to Wembley in 1948 when dad had taken me to the Olympic Games, so I became used to going there on the bus. It was also my first introduction to popcorn – dry and salted, not like the Butterkist toffee flavour that I grew fond of later.

During the wartime we could hear the doodle bugs, and see searchlights and barrage balloons, all within reasonably close proximity. Occasionally, we could see a dogfight in the distance and some older kids would show us bits of shrapnel that they had collected but at our age we really didn’t know what it was all about. The streets were dark and empty, barring the occasional Ford 8 and Austin 7. When the siren went off we would be dragged down to the Anderson shelter at the bottom of the garden, right next to the Underground line that passed between Finchley Central and East Finchley. At the tail end of the war,

when the sirens were heard, mum used to crawl under the bed with me in tow; the shelter was getting too damp and smelly. Dad and Murray's dad came back from working in the war much to everyone's relief but I obviously didn't really know Murray and Evan's dad. My dad did bring home a green banana though when he came back to Finchley and, to everyone's amusement, I started eating it with the skin on. Just along the road on the other side of the street was a Welshman who had been a pilot in the RAF and had severely burned his face. I remember being quite frightened at such a young age when we saw him on the road. He became friends with dad and slowly my fear subsided. People like that had been nicknamed "guinea pigs" by the surgeon, Sir Archibald McIndoe, who was developing new skin grafting techniques.

Dad had moved up to Scotland in 1939, where I was born a year later, and he worked at Rolls-Royce in East Kilbride before going into the RAF. Mum wanted to be close to her friends and family. I remember, even when I was young, that the men in the factory were allowed to make gifts for their children for a couple of days at Christmas. Dad made me a fantastic little trike, a wheelbarrow and a glittery parrot on a perch that swung when you gave it a push. This little toddler was the envy of the close. A far cry from the apple, orange and a few nuts we usually got in our stockings. Dad had met mum in Finchley Skating Hall at Church End, knocking her over whilst showing off, like boys tend to do.

Mum had served her "ironing training" as a youngster and come down to work at the age of sixteen, in service, to find fame and fortune in the great metropolis. Murray's mum had already been asked by a Scottish couple to come down to London and work for them. After a few years, mum decided to move back home for a period of six years before returning to Finchley, aged twenty five. That's when she met dad. Later, when they got married, they moved back to Scotland so dad could work at Rolls-Royce. Dad got called up for the RAF for two years but because he had been working on aircraft engines he was summoned to go back to work in the factory. Whilst in Scotland he lived in a two apartment tenement building in Flemington, Motherwell and my auntie Margaret, mum's youngest sister, used to work driving a massively high crane for moving the scrap pig iron into the railway trucks for the steel works. We used to be able to see her from our window. It's amazing when you think of all the jobs that women did in those times. The man next door used to be a train driver, sometimes driving the Flying Scotsman, and we would wave to him, out of the window. Yes, it was that close!

As a young man, dad had served his apprenticeship in Finchley, as a watch repairer then a gas fitter. He claimed that he had made the first clock attachment for a gas cooker "to cook when you wanted to". After the war, this was developed further but dad never did get any recognition. He never patented anything and obviously things progressed out of his hands. In his twenties he went to sea on the Union Castle Line, travelling around forty times to South Africa as a steward. Gracie Fields and Bernard Shaw were amongst the famous people that he looked after. He told me some wonderful stories about his escapades in Durban, like the ways that diamond smuggling was carried out by the workers in the mines and how sometimes the crew and passengers were mugged and had all their clothes stolen. They had to come back to the ship with a newspaper wrapped around them. One day the police were called on board ship and they found diamonds in a microphone stand. I don't think they ever found the culprit.

To be continued…..

FRIARY PARK CENTENARY

Friary Park is one hundred years old this year. The park was due to have been officially opened on Saturday 7 May 1910 by the Lord Mayor of London but sadly the King, Edward VII, died the day before and the official celebrations had to be cancelled, although the park was thrown open for anyone who wanted to visit it.

The Society has joinied forces with the Friern Barnet & Whetstone Residents' Association, The Friends of Friary Park, North Finchley Local Agenda 21 and The Incognito Theatre and we have organised a number of events to commemorate the centenary. We are hoping to take a large marquee at the Friern Barnet Summer Show on Saturday and Sunday 21 and 22 August in which we will be displaying photographs and relics of the park itself and of the area, as well a celebration of the Edwardian era. We have applied for funding from Barnet Council to make this possible.

We are also running an art competition with the Infant and Junior Schools in the immediate area (All Saints, Queenswell, Sacred Heart and St John's). Each child entering the competition will be given a souvenir pencil inscribed *Friary Park 1910-2010* and there will be prizes for the best entrants in the 4-7 and 8-11 year old categories from each school. In addition there will be two prizes for the best entries from all the schools. We had also asked Holly Park School to participate but they declined.

We are also organising a Quiz Supper on 22 May at 7pm at All Saints Arts Centre (behind All Saints Church in Oakleigh Road North). Tickets are £9 per person which includes a good supper and entertainment at half time by the Incognito Theatre Group.

On Saturday 24 July at 8pm at All Saints Arts Centre we are presenting, in conjunction with the Incognito Theatre, an Edwardian Music Hall which will feature a Matchless Miscellany of Music Hall Magic and Musical Moments including Tuneful Turns and Terpsichore, Tantalisingly Translated by Totally Talented Artistes! There is only one performance so book early to avoid disappointment! Tickets are only £10 and they, together with those for the Quiz Supper, are obtainable from Janet Liversidge on 020 8368 3927.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Our Annual General Meeting will take place on Wednesday 26 May 2010 prior to the talk by Gerry Turvey on the subject of *100 Years of The Phoenix Cinema*. With this Newsletter is the official invitation to attend, along with a Nomination Form and a copy of last year's Minutes.

If you have any item that you wish to raise under Any Other Business please notify Patricia Berguer by Wednesday 19 May 2010.