

Friern Barnet *Newsletter*

Published by Friern Barnet & District Local History Society

Issue Number 47

December 2011

A CELEBRATION AND A WAKE

by David Berguer

On Sunday 9 October 2011 a Centenary Festival Eucharist was held at St John the Evangelist Church in Friern Barnet Road. Amongst the attendees were the Bishop of London, the Rt Revd and the Rt Hon Dr Richard Chartres KCVO; the Deputy Lord Lieutenant for Barnet, Martin Russell; The Mayor of Barnet, Councillor Lisa Rutter and the MP for Chipping Barnet, Theresa Villiers.

The church was designed by the noted Victorian architect John Loughborough Pearson whose many other ecclesiastical works included Truro Cathedral, St John's Cathedral in Brisbane, Australia and St Augustine's Church in Kilburn where Prebendary Frederick Hall was assistant Curate for a time, before moving to Friern Barnet. He was obviously impressed by Pearson's work and commissioned him to build a church for the rapidly expanding population of Friern Barnet. Hall had visited a ruined Cistercian monastery in Heisterbach, Germany and he asked Pearson to design the eastern end of his new church in a similar style. The foundation stone of St John's was laid in 1890 and the church was completed on 10 October 1911.



In this view from the early 1900s the distinctive eastern end is clearly visible; it is now hidden by trees

A more sober event took place at South Friern Library on 26 October 2011 when the final meeting of the Friends of Barnet Borough Libraries took place. The Friends was formed in 1991 and in the next twenty years they managed, through donations and subscriptions, to raise enough money to provide coffee machines and children's play areas in all of Barnet's libraries. Sadly the loss of several committee members had meant that the group could not continue to function but they still had a balance £5000 left which was entrusted to the Barnet's Head of Libraries to spend on facilities for the benefit of library users.

It is particularly sad that, at the very time when libraries are under threat throughout the country (including, of course, our own Friern Barnet Library and North Finchley Library) such support groups should be unable to continue, but their efforts in the past are much appreciated.

GET OUT YOUR SLIDES!

In the past, several of our members have offered to lend us 35mm colour slides so that we could copy them and put them onto our website. Since we had no facility for digitising these we have had to politely decline the offers but we have now invested in a Digital Image Copier which can do the job.

Considering that many pieces of electronic kit are very complicated to operate (and often require the assistance from a six year old child), we were pleasantly surprised how easy the process is. The slides are inserted into the machine and the image is scanned and turned into a digital file which is copied onto an SD card (like the one in a digital camera) which is then inserted into a card reader that connects to the USB port of a computer and voila!, a useable image is available for uploading to our photographic website www.friern-barnet.com.

So, if you have any slides of the local area, please contact us. We will, of course, return the slides to you after we have copied them. Just a word of caution, however. Whilst they may be of great interest to you and your family, we don't really want photographs of your holidays in Benidorm or the Swiss Alps, only the ones that include scenes of Friern Barnet and the surrounding area.

MY STORY – PART 7

by Ray Lewis

Our next door neighbour at Brunswick Park Road used to work at the BBC and he was the first person to teach me how to play golf. He took me to the East Barnet 9 hole course and taught me a lot of the basics before I joined South Herts. He was a lighting manager and he would often get us tickets to see shows like Morecambe and Wise and many others. I started making 8mm films with a group that I had met, one of whom was a chap called John Hough. He started work at Elstree Studios as a Runner and progressed to direct a number of Hammer horror films as well as others including *Biggles*. He moved to America and directed a whole range of films and music tapes and DVDs.

Mixing with him and going to the studios made me really interested in the business. I used to drive some of the guys at work nuts, talking about film and wishing that I was working in that line instead of engineering. One of the engineers I used to associate with worked for the CEGB and we used to play in golf tournaments together. He came into work one day and told me he had

arranged an interview for me at BBC Studios at Ealing. Of course, I immediately thought he was joking. Apparently, his next door neighbour in a village in Hertfordshire was a chap called Mel Cornish and he was the director of *Top of the Pops*. It turns out that he had mentioned to him one day that he worked with a fanatic and that I was interested in working in the TV business. By this time I was twenty three years old and I had indeed got an interview at Ealing Studios.

For the next few weeks, all my fellow engineers were taking the Mickey, saying that I would have to be gay to work in TV. The word "gay" was not a term they used in those days! Unfortunately, this got to me a bit when I went for the interview. Dad also said that I shouldn't talk with Bill next door because of the old school "you do it by your own means" and you shouldn't "use" people. Slightly different from today's attitude with "every little helps".

At my interview, I was greeted by a man in his thirties wearing leather trousers and a decorative shirt. Immediately I was on my mettle. Any sensible answers went out of the window and I had forgotten to take samples of the 8mm film I had shot with John and the group. When I was asked what I would like to be I said that I would like to train as a director or film cameraman. He basically told me that I was too old to start at this position and would I be prepared to do something else? Like a fool, I told him that this was really where my heart was and this was what I wanted to do. After leaving the studio I realised that he was trying to get me to say that I was prepared to do any job to get me in. Bill later told me, of course, that there were gay people in the business but this shouldn't have affected my decision. I had blown the one and only chance I would ever have!

CORRECTION

In Ray Lewis's article in Newsletter 46, he stated that Frankie Vaughan was not allowed to become member of South Herts Golf Club on religious grounds. Percy Reboul, a member at South Herts, informs us that Frankie was, in fact, a member of the Club.

LOUISA TWINING

by John Heathfield

She's been completely forgotten and it's just not fair. After Joseph Baxendale's death in 1881, Woodside House was let to tenants and in 1888 it was offered by his son, J Lloyd Baxendale, to the House for Infirm and Incurable Ladies. Originally there were 45 beds and by 1907 it was running short of money and that's where Louise Twining comes in, for she made a donation of £500 and also left a legacy in her will.

Louisa Twining was born in 1820, a member of the tea and coffee owning family. She was educated at home where she showed a marked talent for drawing and painting. Indeed she had two books published, *Symbols in Early Christian Art* (1852) and *Types and Figures of the Bible* (1854). In 1853 she visited her old nurse in the workhouse and, like many others, she was horrified by the conditions. She organised a group of ladies to visit and converse and say prayers but she was told by the Poor Law Board that their visits were regarded as an unwarranted interference.

She believed that upper class women had a natural aptitude for helping the poor and published *A Few Words about the Inmates of Union Workhouses* and began

visiting workhouses up and down the country and followed this up with a series of letters to *The Times* and the *Manchester Guardian*. The result was the formation of The Workhouse Visiting Society, with herself as Honorary Secretary. She campaigned for the separation of the old, sick and infirm in workhouses and she and Florence Nightingale together set up a scheme whereby trained nurses visited the homes of the urban poor. She also organised art classes for women at the Working Men's College in Camden Town, taught by herself. In time she became one of the first women Poor Law Commissioners.

In 1879 she and Angela Burdett-Coutts set up a house for art students and also set up homes for elderly, epileptic and incurable women throughout London. She was involved in the foundation of the Elizabeth Garratt Hospital for Women in Euston. Not surprisingly, she was a strong supporter of women's suffrage and firmly in favour of temperance and she was close friends with the early socialists Sydney and Beatrice Webb.

Louise lived in Albion Terrace in Kensington together with Rhoda Spinks, her cook, Ellen Fletcher, parlour maid, and Alice Lister, house maid. She died in September 1912 and is buried in Kensal Green Cemetery. Woodside Home eventually specialised in housing fairly well-to-do ladies, some of whom brought their maids with them. The Home closed in 1937. Surprisingly, despite her life devoted to helping others, there is no blue plaque in her memory.

WEBSITE UPDATES

Among the recent additions to our photographic website (www.friern-barnet.com) are the following:



This photograph of the Pearks' shop at number 22 High Road, New Southgate is undated, but probably comes from the 1950s or early 1960s. Pearks was one of a chain of grocers and this is typical of the many such shops at the time. The lady on the left is Nin Spurrier and the other was known as Gert



A new sign has recently been erected outside St James's Church in Friern Barnet Lane recording the fact that the church is now used by the Greek Orthodox faith. The church now has very large congregations both for regular Sunday services and for weddings and funerals

The website now has 2827 images and 157 people have posted comments on it. We recently had an email from someone congratulating us on the site and claiming that he was so enthralled by it that he had spent three hours searching through it. If you haven't visited it yet, please have a look for yourself and let us have any comments. Better still, you can add photographs yourself – just follow the simple instructions.

BROTHERS

by John Philpott

As you enter St James's churchyard by the gate opposite Friary Park, there are, immediately to your left, two graves of from the First World War, those of Private F Sherrington, Bedfordshire Regiment, and Private R Sherrington, Royal Army Ordnance Corps. Nearby is the Second World War grave of Wing Commander J D Stephens. On his gravestone is also commemorated his brother, Squadron Leader H B Stephens, who is buried in Jonkerbos War Cemetery, near Nijmegen.

Frank Theodore Sherrington was born in 1883, the second of the four sons of Samuel and Sarah Sherrington of Plantagenet Road, New Barnet. Ralph Hughes Sherrington, born 1889 was the youngest. Samuel and Sarah were greengrocers;

Samuel was also a school attendance officer and parish clerk. In 1908, Frank, a clerk with a shipping firm, married Florence Osborne, daughter of the New Barnet postmaster, and they moved to Hexham Road, just round the corner from their parents.

Neither brother seems to have served overseas at any time. Frank served with the 3rd Battalion of the Bedfordshire Regiment, a reserve battalion based at Harwich and providing home defence and training drafts for the front line battalions. Ralph served with the 72nd Company of the Royal Army Ordnance Corps, based in Hampshire. Ralph died of spinal meningitis on 5 May 1916 in the Alexandra Hospital, Cosham near Portsmouth. He was 26 years old. On 2 July 1918 a son was born to Rowland Sherrington, eldest of the four brothers, and his wife Florence. The baby was named Ralph Hughes after his dead uncle. Three days after his birth, his uncle Frank also died, at the age of 34.

Harry Bernard Stephens was born in 1912, the son of Arthur, a gas engineer, and Mary. By 1918 when John Douglas Stephens was born, the family had moved from Hendon to Friern Barnet and were living in Oakleigh Road. At the time of John's birth, his father was serving as a gunner in the Royal Field Artillery. John became a pupil at Woodhouse School. He joined the RAF in 1936 at the age of 18 and after training as a pilot he was posted to No 31 (Army Cooperation) Squadron in India. Before the War Harry was working as the representative of a hosiery firm.

After the outbreak of war, John, back in England, converted to flying the Sterling heavy bomber. At the end of 1942 he was posted to 149 Squadron, flying from Lakenheath in Suffolk. During the first half of 1943 he flew night operations to Germany, Italy and France. The furthest mission was to Turin; take-off 1811 hours, landing 0150 hours the next day. Other targets included the Krupps works at Essen in the Ruhr and the U boat bases at Lorient and St Nazaire on the coast of Brittany. He was awarded the DFC. In June 1943, at the age of 24, he was promoted to Wing Commander, and given command of XV Squadron, flying Stirlings from Mildenhall, another Suffolk airfield. Operations continued, still with the same seven man crew that came with him from 149. On 17 August he led five of his squadron's Stirlings to take part in the 600 bomber raid on Peenemunde, the establishment on the Baltic where the V-weapons, flying bombs and rockets, were being developed, one of the most successful and significant bombing operations of the war. This was his last operation. On 30 August he left Mildenhall on a local fight, piloting a Defiant single engine, two-seater fighter aircraft. Immediately after take off the engine failed and the plane crashed, killing him and his passenger, a ground crew corporal.

In 1941 Harry followed his younger brother into the RAF, joining the Volunteer Reserve. He too became a bomber pilot. In 1942 he married Dorothy Westlake and the couple moved into 59 Pollard Road. From February 1942 he was flying Mosquitoes with the 109 (Pathfinder) Squadron, which had pioneered the development of the Oboe radio target location equipment. By May 1944 he had flown on nearly seventy operations; not many bomber crews survived that long. He too was awarded the DFC. In 1944, in preparation for the Normandy invasion, targets were switched from locations such as the Ruhr, Hamburg and Berlin to concentrate mainly on rail and road communications in north-west Europe. At 2130 hours on 6 May he took off from the squadron's base at Little Staughton in

Bedfordshire, the target Leverkusen in north-west Germany. The squadron's operations record book for that night reports that his Mosquito was followed over the target by an aircraft from another Pathfinder squadron and was seen to turn off in the normal manner; "nothing further is known". It was some months before the squadron or their families received the news that Harry Stephens and his navigator, Flight Lieutenant Norman Fredman DFC, had been shot down and were buried in Holland. Harry and John Stephens are commemorated on the war memorial in All Saints Church.

On the 1939-45 war memorial in the chancel of St James's Church there are two further pairs of brothers: Stewart and Allan, sons of Alexander and Jessie McAdam. Stewart was the husband of Vera. Both brothers were pilots in the RAF. Stewart died, aged 24, in April 1941 and is buried in Norway. Allan died in January 1944, aged 23, and is buried in France. The other brothers are Norman and Howard, sons of John and May Skinner. Norman was husband of Gladys. Both brothers served in the Royal Army Service Corps and both were killed on 7 June 1944, the day following D-Day, Norman aged 38, Howard 32. Both are buried in Hermanville Cemetery, Normandy.

DORIS COLE'S STORY

One of the most interesting and rewarding things about getting involved with local history is the chance to talk to people and hear their memories. The Society has conducted several oral histories and we are planning to do more. Fortunately one of our members, Percy Reboul, had been interviewing people long before the Society was formed and he has kindly lent us his tape recordings which are being transcribed by Patricia Cleland and copies are being deposited for posterity in Barnet Local Studies & Archives at Hendon Library.

Percy interviewed Doris Cole (née Catchpole) in June 1988 and we have edited the tape with the following fascinating insight into life in the early part of the last century:

Doris Catchpole was born on 5 November 1903 at number 3 Jaques Cottage in Whetstone, on the eastern side of the High Road about where Turnberry House now stands. She was the first baby to have been delivered by Dr Wakefield who lived in Coldharbour, the big house which still stands at number 1064 High Road. Her father was born in the same house but her mother came from Long Ware. Doris had a brother, Alf, and she believed that her mother had also had another child that had died and which was never talked about. Her father once said: "*I don't want anything mentioned in this house like that*".

Doris went to All Saints School in Oakleigh Road North and she recalls that she used to play up. One day she bought some sweets and was also given some balloons which she put in her pocket. When she got back late after lunch the headmistress, Miss Goodship, said: "*The girl that's got balloons in her pocket is getting six strokes of the cane*". and she was caned in front of the whole school. Girls doing cookery had to walk to Garfield Road School in New Southgate and anyone wanting to ride there had to write a letter giving the reason.

The family never knew who actually owned the cottage and they used to have different landlords, and as one man died another would come and collect the rent. When she was twenty she was still living at home with her parents and her

brother Alf and she was working for a Chartered Accountant in Hadley Wood which was fortuitous because when they were approached by a representative of the landlord who offered them £99 to move out she was able to ask her boss for advice. He told them not to accept any money and to stay put, which they did and they heard no more about it.

Each of the six cottages had its own outside flush toilet but they all shared water from a large tank behind the cottages (there were no individual back gardens). The cottage had two rooms downstairs and two bedrooms upstairs. Lighting was from oil lamps – they never had gas – and each room had a coal fire in a black leaded stove, apart from the kitchen which had its own oven. There was a similar one in the front room but it was cracked and so could not be used, although Doris's mother used to keep her butter and eggs in it in the summer. The kitchen also had a copper in it, in front of which her father had rigged up a curtain. If the fires started to smoke, Doris would be sent to Rose's, the ironmongers, to buy two pennyworth of gunpowder which her mother would roll in paper and put on the fire. Her father would then climb on the roof and scrape the chimney pot to dislodge the soot.



Rose's at 1325 High Road

(John Heathfield Collection)

Wash day was Monday or Tuesday and if Doris was at home she would help her mother wash all the blankets and put them through the mangle which was kept in the back yard. Her mother was a stickler for cleanliness and, even though she had bad legs, she would be down on her hands and knees scrubbing the floors with soda and Sunlight soap. One day Doris's sister in law came to help and afterwards Mrs Catchpole asked her if she had turned something over and scrubbed it and when she said "No" she was told: "Do it. I want that done underneath". The floors were covered with oilcloth, apart from the front room

which had carpet. As well as housewifely duties, her mother worked as a housemaid for a family in Oakleigh Park for about half a crown a morning. Doris recalled that, no matter what time of year it was, there was always a rice pudding cooking slowly in the oven. Their bread would be delivered every day by Harper's at the corner of Totteridge Lane and the High Road and her mother was extremely particular and was not slow in complaining to local shopkeepers; "*If I want foreign meat, I'll ask for it*".

Despite the conditions Doris recalled that they never went short of anything. When she started work she earned 13/6d a week and her mother told her: "*Five shillings in the bank, five shillings for me and you keep the rest*". She also said "*Don't go on instalments, because if you do, you'll never have a penny to your name*".

We will be including more of Doris's reminiscences in the next Newsletter

GARFIELD SCHOOL REUNION

by Colin Barratt

Garfield Junior School in New Southgate was opened in 1883. It was situated in and named after Garfield Road. It eventually closed on this site in 1974 when the wholesale destruction (or re-development) of New Southgate took place in this area. The school continued at a new site in nearby Springfield Road, but it retained its name.

Many of its former pupils have kept in touch and there have been a number of reunions over the years. The latest was held at the end of August in New Southgate Conservative Club, which is a stone's throw from the old school site. It was publicised widely through Friends Reunited and by emails and about 80 people turned up who had attended the school between the 1940s and 1950s.

The club was a good venue. It has been active as a social club for over 80 years and has a number of old local photos displayed on its walls. We were given a free buffet and the use of the main lounge, although the club did benefit from opening the bar! I was asked by the organiser of the reunion to arrange a display of local views and old school photos, plus some of my project reports. A low stage at the end of the lounge allowed a display to be set up with enough space to look at and discuss the photos and the memories they recalled. We also sold a good number of our Society's *Brief Histories*.

Another feature of the reunion was a guided walk around the immediate area as a reminder to former residents of what had happened to their neighbourhood, and to give some history of it. This was very popular and we had to add a second one, going the opposite way. Even with this, the numbers had to be limited. The two of us leading the walks had notes prepared about each building, road or area we passed, as a guide, but we had difficulty stopping the chatter and sometimes excited reminiscences of those in each group! This was enjoyed by all and if any members of the Society would like to have this tour I could arrange it.

It was good to talk to people who had vivid memories of childhood in New Southgate in the 1940s and 1950s. Some had been friends of my late brother, both at school and in the local football team, and I also met up with a friend I had at Garfield whom I hadn't seen for 50 years. He had travelled from Flintshire in

North Wales to be there. This was such a successful event that plans are already being made to repeat it next year, hopefully at the same venue.

The Head of the present Garfield School had been contacted about the event, but unfortunately she was unable to attend. However, she seemed keen on keeping in touch, so we will do that, as the school still holds some records and artefacts which may be of interest for us to use in the future. The Head would also like some former pupils to talk to the children about their time at the old school.

ST MICHAEL'S SCHOOL LECTURE

by David Berguer

Back in early September Mel Hooper was approached by one of his neighbours who is a teacher at St Michael's Catholic Grammar School in Nether Street, North Finchley. Would it be possible, he asked, for someone from the Society to come along and give a talk to some of their girls about local history? We agreed to do it, but were surprised to learn that it was needed the following week, soon after the start of the new term. We were also told that it should only be about 45 minutes in length.

Despite these constraints, Mel and I agreed to do a joint talk, bearing in mind that two people are often better than one (think of Morecambe and Wise, Laurel and Hardy and Marks and Spencer). We decided that, as local history is such a vast subject and the area we cover is quite large, we should concentrate on just one specific area, North Finchley. Fortunately we have a large number of images of this area on our database, so it was relatively easy to prepare a PowerPoint presentation.

These days getting into a school is like trying to break into Fort Knox, with all kinds of checks being required. Fortunately, in view of the time factor, and the fact that they had asked us, we were spared the ignominy of having a Police Record Check although this would not have posed a problem as we are both upright citizens (well, I am, but I can't be entirely sure about Mel). Nevertheless we had to supply photos of ourselves and fill in a form and in due course we got clearance.

The lecture took place in the large main hall and there were three classes of girls, numbering about 80 or 90, who were swallowed up in the vastness of it, but they all managed to look suitably attentive throughout and some even took notes.

The presentation covered the history of North Finchley, starting with Finchley Common and its notoriety (the girls seemed impressed with the idea of there having been highwaymen operating there) and going on to show the alterations to the Tally Ho area from the days of the Gaumont cinema, its demolition and subsequent rebirth into the *artsdepot*. We also covered transport, local landmarks and buildings (look out for dates on the facades of some of them) and street furniture (the pollution monitoring station being an example).

Naturally, being girls, they were more interested in dresses than trams and trolleybuses (although I tried hard to convince them how wonderful they were) and photographs of street scenes showing the fashions of the early 1900s saw them perk up a bit.

Once we got on to shops and shopping they seemed really interested and when we explained what things were like before the day of the big supermarkets, the

changes that had occurred in the area became apparent. One chart, in particular, showing the changes in the shops over the last 50 years brought it all home to them:

NORTH FINCHLEY SHOPS		
	1960	2010
BAKERS	4	1
BUTCHERS	6	0
FISHMONGERS	2	0
FRUIT & VEG	2	0
GROCERS	9	0
SUPERMARKETS	0	3
RESTAURANTS	2	23
ESTATE AGENTS	2	6
PUBS	2	6
TRAVEL AGENTS	1	2
DRAPERS	3	1
DRY CLEANERS	4	1
SHOE SHOPS	10	4
LADIES' HAIRDRESSERS	3	7
LADIES' WEAR	5	12
MEN'S WEAR	14	2
BEAUTY SALONS	0	5
WOOLS	4	0
CHARITY SHOPS	0	5
VACANT SHOPS	0	8
TOTAL ALL SHOPS	137	151

We ended the talk by urging the girls to talk to their parents or grandparents and ask them for their memories of what things were like when they were children. Hopefully, it might spur some of the pupils to take an interest in local history. In any event, they gave us a round of applause afterwards, and we don't get that every day!

WHAT WERE YOU DOING IN 1962?

In next year's Newsletters we would like print some of your reminiscences of fifty years ago. Just to remind you what was occurring then:

- Marilyn Monroe died
- The Cuban Missile Crisis was taking place
- James Hanratty was sentenced to hang
- Sunday Times published a colour supplement
- John Glenn became the first American in space

- Brazil won the World Cup
- The first hovercraft entered service
- Nelson Mandela was jailed for five years
- 60 people died in London smog
- The last trolleybuses ran on London streets
- Rod Laver won Wimbledon for the second year
- Decca thought The Beatles would never make it
- *Stranger on the Shore* and *Let's Twist Again* were hits
- *Lawrence of Arabia* and *Doctor No* were released



A local advertisement from the early 1960s

So, please sit down and let your mind wander back to those days when a Wimpy cost 2/2d and a new Mini could be bought for £469. 15. 10. What were you doing? Who were you doing it with? Please let us know by dropping us a line to 46 Raleigh Drive, Whetstone, N20 0UU or by emailing us at friernbarnethistory@hotmail.co.uk . All contributions welcome. See your name in print!

NEXT YEAR'S PROGRAMME

With this Newsletter is a leaflet showing our programme of lectures for 2012 which has been arranged by our Events Secretary, Janet Liversidge. As usual, Janet has put together an interesting and varied programme and we look forward to seeing you at some or all of our meetings. Please keep it in a prominent place and enter the dates in your diary or Blackberry or i phone or other electronic device.

***May we take this opportunity to wish everyone
a Happy Christmas and a healthy
and prosperous New Year.***

Friern Barnet & District

Local History Society ©

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Important
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N.12

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