

Friern Barnet *Newsletter*

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WHEN THE OLYMPICS CAME TO FINCHLEY

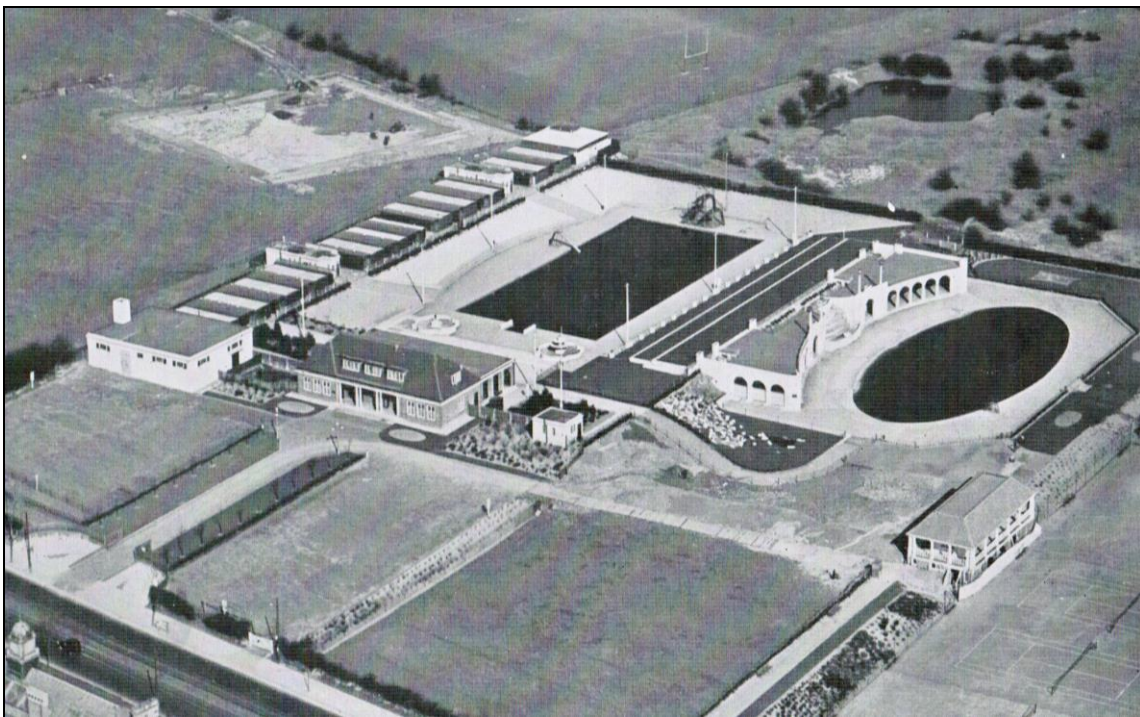
by David Berguer

The Olympic games are held every four years but the after the controversial Olympic Games in Berlin in 1936, known as Hitler's Olympics, there was, of course, a break during the Second World War and the Olympics scheduled for 1940 and 1944 could not take place.

Despite still recovering from the ravages of six years of war, Britain offered to host the XIV Olympics and they duly took place in 1948 in London, with a record number of 59 nations taking part in 19 sports, although, understandably, Germany and Japan were not invited and Russia felt unable to send any athletes.

The main venue was Wembley Stadium, although the water polo matches took place a bit nearer home – at Finchley Lido. In the foreward to the Souvenir Brochure, the Mayor of Finchley, Percy Lawrence JP, wrote:

“It is with great pleasure that the Finchley Borough Council have placed their Open Air Swimming Pool at the disposal of the Olympic Games Committee, and on behalf of my fellow members and all the inhabitants of



The Children's pool is on the right and the Great North Road and Finchley County School can be seen on the bottom left

the Borough, I am indeed pleased to extend a welcome to our visitors.

In these difficult days, when no country is without its post-war troubles, it is a happy omen for the future that the representatives of so many peoples are gathered in sport and it is I am sure in the spirit of good sportsmanship, mutual understanding and co-operation that we shall establish international friendship and goodwill.

It is our earnest hope that all members of the Olympic Teams who compete at the Finchley Pool may thoroughly enjoy their visit here, and carry back to their homelands happy memories of the 1948 Games and of Great Britain.”

Sadly Great Britain did not feature in the medals; the winners of the water polo were Italy who beat Hungary in the final, with the Netherlands gaining the bronze medal.

Many of you will have spent many happy hours at the Lido but you may have been unaware of some of the statistics, which were quoted in the Souvenir Brochure. The main pool, which was constructed in 1932, measured 165 feet by 80 feet and held 456,250 gallons of water which was circulated at 90,000 gallons per hour. Chlorine was, of course, added to the water and aeration was achieved by pumping the water over the two large fountains. The children’s pool opened in 1934 and had a capacity of 138,000 gallons. In the summer of 1947, the number of people admitted to the pools was 194,770 and the largest number attending on one day was an amazing 11,137.

OLYMPICS IN FRIERN BARNET

In a run-up to the Olympics in July and August this year, the Olympic torch is being carried throughout the country by a series of relay runners. On Wednesday 25 July the torch will be carried, between 12pm and 3pm, from Finchley Central, through North Finchley, up to Whetstone and then down Friern Barnet Lane and along Friern Barnet Road to Bowes Road and thence to Southgate. It will be a once-in-a-lifetime event, so make a note in your diary to be there with your camera!

LOOK IT UP ONLINE

If you hold a library card for Barnet Libraries you have a wealth of information at your fingertips completely free of charge. If you go into Barnet Council’s website (www.barnet.gov.uk) then click on to ‘Leisure & Culture’, then ‘Libraries’, you will come to a section headed ‘24/7 Online Reference Library’. After you click on this, you will be asked to insert the number on your library membership card and from then on you will have access to a huge range of publications including *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, *Oxford English Dictionary*, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, *Who’s Who* and a large number of national and regional newspapers including *The Times*. All of these are searchable: type in a keyword and you will have access to hundreds of references to your subject of choice. The on screen pages are printable, too.

So, if you are keen to do some research of your own, try it out and, if you haven’t got a library card and you live in the Borough of Barnet, get to your nearest library and ask for an application form. You will need proof of address and some form of identification. Good luck!

PEARK'S

Our member Pam Brown emailed us with the following:

Thank you for my *Newsletter* (number 47). I wonder if you know that Peark's became Sander Bros. as my mum worked at Sander Bros during the War and at the branch in North Finchley in the mid 1950s and this looks very much as I remember both shops. The name Spurrier rings a bell but I do not know why. Unfortunately all the people that knew are no longer with us, except my Dad who had just had his 90th birthday.

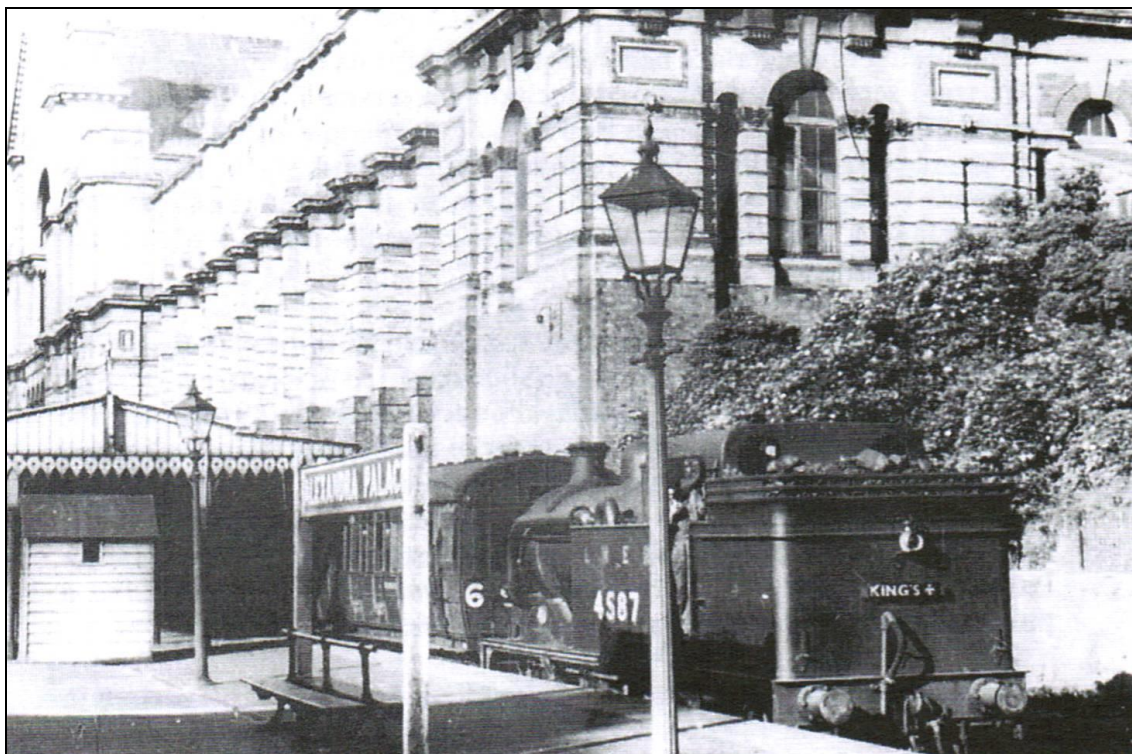
On the subject of Garfield School, Dad walked home to lunch from Garfield to Holly Park Road (Glenthorne end) every day and then returned to school. Would they do that today?

I have many memories of the area; you don't see a line of folks outside the chip shop on a Friday lunchtime like you did in the High Road in the mid 1950s. It went once round the shop and past two windows of the next shops. And the live eels at Macfisheries!

MEMORIES OF ALEXANDRA PALACE

by Sylvia Stilts

During pre-war school holidays the park surrounding Alexandra Palace was our playground. My friends and I used the Duke's Avenue entrance and shouted gleefully to produce echoes as we ran under the railway bridge. Then we would turn left and clamber into the big oak tree which overlooked the railway line ending in buffers just below the roller skating rink. There we sat as engines shunted back and forth and we talked to the drivers when they stopped to boil water for tea in a can on top of the hot coals.



Alexandra Palace Station . The last train left in 1954 and the disused line to Finsbury Park then became the Parkland Walk

Then it was off to The Grove for a game of cricket and to entertain each other with impromptu turns on the bandstand, until the band turned up and we had to scarper. The Grove was a good place to collect conkers and acorns and I once put a biscuit tin full of them in a cupboard under our kitchen dresser. My mother was unaware of this until the day that maggots came wriggling out under the door.

During several hard winters the lake froze solid and my brother and I skidded along the slides we made and wished we possessed ice skates. In summer we paddled canoes on the lake and played pitch and putt on the sloping course.

Mum always took us to the annual North London Exhibition which was very successful with about 200,000 visitors over ten days. Samples of all kinds were handed out and I always made a bee line for the stalls distributing Ovaltine, rusks and chocolate. The latest kitchen gadgets, mostly vegetable cutters and egg whisks were demonstrated and Barratt's of Wood Green demonstrated a machine which wrapped boiled sweets in coloured cellophane at almost the speed of light. Exhibits of various kinds were often displayed on the terrace and I remember being thrilled to see Malcolm Campbell's *Bluebird*. When a Mr Ahmed Hussein walked across fire burning in a pit dug in the grounds, we were inspired to try it ourselves over raked-out embers of Dad's garden bonfire. Nobody said: "*Don't do this at home, kiddies!*"

There was often a crowd of autograph hunters round the steps up to the TV tower and I collected several from celebrities I didn't recognise because we didn't have a television at home. One autograph I failed to get was from George Cansdale of the zoo programmes fame, as he was occupied with controlling a wriggling, furry animal inside his coat. There was excitement one day when the London Fire Brigade staged the rescue of TV announcer Jasmine Bligh from a top floor window in the Tower. When war was declared our excursions to Alexandra Palace ceased of course.

Footnote from David Berguer

I lived a few hundred yards from the gates of Ally Pally and, like Sylvia, it was my playground too. I particularly remember two winter incidents. One particularly harsh winter when the lake was frozen a friend and I walked over to the island in the centre and did some exploring; the island was, of course, off limits and we felt quite adventurous, although there was actually nothing much to see.

When I was very young my Dad had spent days making me a very solid wooden sledge with steel runners and we hauled this up the hill to the slopes near The Grove. I sat on it, he pushed andwe went nowhere. It was a case of over-engineering I'm afraid – it was too heavy to move. Meanwhile, kids on tin trays and pieces of cardboard were whooshing madly down the slope. After we had dragged the sledge home, accompanied, I have no doubt, by much laughter from the winter athletes, my Dad broke it up and we burned the wood on the coal fire in the front room.

I had a dog, Mick, a black Labrador/setter cross and in those days we used to let him out on his own and he would be gone for hours. One Tuesday he came back home smelling to high heaven. It turned out that on that particular day there had been horse racing in the Palace and he must have rolled in the slops from the beer tent. I don't know if you have ever tried to manoeuvre a large dog up stairs

and into a bath when he doesn't want to go, but it's not easy. He smelled really nice afterwards though.

MERRY ENGLAND WAS ALSO SMELLY ENGLAND

by John Heathfield

The latest fad is for lying in your warm bath with scented candles floating round you. I suppose that the water has to be deep enough to cover any sensitive parts.

It was different in Victorian times. The first problem was the bath itself, this was sometimes made from wood like a barrel but usually it was made from galvanised mild steel sheets; it hung on a nail outside the kitchen door. It came in on Saturday nights and was placed in front of the fire. Hot water came from the coal range with additional water from kettles. Everyone had the same bath – the order was children first, then Mum, then Dad, then the dog, then Grandma. After everyone had finished the next problem was disposing of the, by now, grubby water. Saucepans would be used to laboriously empty the bath and the water would be thrown on the garden. In later years the construction of sewers and their connection to houses was a great boon.

In 1915 Finchley Corporation tried to help by providing slipper baths next to the Squires Lane swimming pool. This public spirited and forward-looking gesture was promoted by Councillor Grocott. Slipper baths consisted of about ten bathrooms with hot and cold running water and they were linked to the sewers. Mr Gray, a local chimney sweep who lived opposite, was a daily visitor.

Some houses had a coal-fired copper to heat water and this was later replaced by a gas ring. Later still came the geyser which had to be lit with a match and usually produced a very loud bang. Some houses had a back boiler which heated the main room and a tank of hot water at the same time.

GAS BATHS.

BATHS AND GEYSERS COMBINED.

No. 1007. THE "QUEEN" GAS BATH, COMPLETE WITH "CHAMPION" GEYSER.

The Bath is japanned White Marble inside, and Green Marble outside, with wide roll edge.
 The "Geyser" is made entirely of Copper, and polished: but can be had to match Bath at same prices.

No. 1006 is same as 1007, except that the top edge is narrower

	Length inside, ft. in.	Length over all, ft. in.	Gives Hot Bath in	Gal- lons.	Price No. 1006.	Price No. 1007.
No. 1006A ...	5 0	5 6	25 min.	20	157/6	187/6 each
„ 1006B ...	5 3	6 0	20 „	25	187/6	217/6 „
„ 1006c ...	5 6	6 6	15 „	30	215/-	240/- „

Soap is made by the action of lye, a strong alkali, on animal and vegetable fat, with glycerine as a by-product. The famous Pears soap had the glycerine retained which enhanced its purity, while Lever Brothers' Sunlight soap had citronella added to give it a pleasant lemony smell. Carbolic acid was added to some soaps which acted as a disinfectant; the distinctive tarry smell is remembered by

generations of children. For many years soap was considered as a luxury commodity and until 1853 it was taxed which discouraged its use by the working classes and the less well off. Cotton towelling did not exist before the building of the great cotton mills of Lancashire in the early 1800s and woollen cloth was expensive and therefore rare. Small boys ran themselves dry!

SWEARING

For those of you who are offended by the frequent use of four-letter words in public and in the media, the following from *All Saints' Parish Magazine* from September 1903 may be interest:

“By an old, but unrepealed, Act of George II profane swearers are still liable to be mulcted in sums varying from one shilling up to five according to their condition in life; the ‘gentleman’ swearer being, very properly, liable for the largest sum. Acting upon information thus given, a clergyman is going to have extracts from the Act hung up in his parish, “plain for all folks to see.” It is a capital idea. It is simply monstrous that one cannot go along the streets without having one’s ears assailed by foul language. “O, but nobody will prosecute or convict,” we fancy we hear some one say. Will they not? Then the Act has a rod in pickle for them. If a constable neglects his duty in this respect he is liable to a fine of forty shillings: if a magistrate, to one of five pounds. We really were not aware how much we owed to King George II. The Act is out of print so far as the ordinary means of procuring it are concerned; but it can be found among the “Statutes at Large.” It is somewhat lengthy, being couched in the usual Parliamentary phraseology; but an excerpt from it will suit all practical purposes; and we really do hope that somebody will, in the interests of the profane people themselves as well as society at large, try a test case.

AN ACT MORE EFFECTUALLY TO PREVENT PROFANE CURSING AND SWEARING (19 GEO. II., C.21)

Forasmuch as the horrid, impious and execrable vices of profane cursing and swearing (so highly displeasing to Almighty God, and loathsome and offensive to every Christian) are become so frequent and notorious that, unless speedily and effectually punished, they must justly provoke the Divine vengeance to increase the many calamities these nations now labour under: and whereas the laws in being for punishing those crimes have not answered the intents for which they were designed, by means of difficulties attending the putting such laws in execution...be it enacted by the King’s most excellent Majesty, by and with the advice ands consent of the lords spiritual and temporal and commons in this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same: That from and after the 1st day of June 1746 if any person or persons shall profanely curse and swear, and therefore be convicted on the oath of any justice of the peace for any county, or before the mayor or other chief magistrate of any city or corporate town, or by the confession of the party so offending, every person or persons so offending shall forfeit and lose sums hereinafter mentioned; (that is to say):

Every day labourer, common soldier, common sailor, and common seaman, one shilling;

And every other person under degree of a gentleman, five shillings.

Further clauses provide that any magistrate who shall wilfully and wittingly omit the performance of his duty in respect of such offenders shall be fined five pounds, and every constable two pounds.”

HOW OLD IS YOUR HOME?

by David Berguer

One of our aims when we started the Society was to try and piece together how the area has grown over the years. Broadly speaking Friern Barnet and Whetstone were rural communities up until the early 1900s. Some development had taken place around 1851 when the Great Northern Railway opened their line to the north and built a station at what is now New Southgate (but was then called Colney Hatch & Southgate). The other important development was the building of the Second Middlesex Pauper County Lunatic Asylum, later to be renamed Friern Hospital, with over 1000 patients and a similar number of staff.

The coming of the tramways in 1905 (Archway to Whetstone) and in 1909 (Finsbury Park to North Finchley) really opened up the area, for it became possible for people who worked in London to move further out and away from the overcrowding and poor living conditions that were endemic. Developers bought up plots of land and built a few houses, creating new streets in the process. A stroll along the streets to the north of Friern Barnet Road will give a good impression how the growth took place; there are many different styles of houses, built by different builders at different times and a study of these can help to track down the development over time.

Our Streets database has a separate file for each of the streets in Friern Barnet, Whetstone, North Finchley and New Southgate (256 in total) and, by consulting Council minutes we have been able to pin down a good many of the planning applications for new properties. We also log all current planning applications and visually keep a track of changes, particularly to shops. The net result is a pretty good picture of what has happened over the years, but there are still a number gaps in our knowledge, and that is hopefully where you can help us.

If you know the date when your home was built could you please let us know, and if you have the deeds to the property could you lend them to us so that we can track the history of the property? We will, of course, return these to you.

We plan to eventually put all our Streets files onto our website so that they are available to everyone who is interested in the growth of a small north London suburb. You can contact me on 020 8368 8314 or via our email address: friernbarnethistory@hotmail.co.uk. Thanks for your help!

MIRCO CAMERAS

by David Berguer

We sometimes have correspondence from people who have found something on our website that has intrigued them. A recent query, however, was particularly interesting as it shed light on something that was merely a name and about which we knew nothing at all.

On 2 March a John Furlong emailed us and said that he was a camera collector and had acquired a camera some time ago that had been made by the Metropolitan Instrument Repair Company which was located at 5 Friern Barnet Road (telephone number ENTerprise 6464). John had discovered a photograph on our website of numbers 3-5 Friern Barnet Road and wondered if we knew anything about the company.

I searched through our records and was able to tell John that, according to *Kelly's Directory of Finchley* MIRCO had been at that address from 1939 until sometime before 1975. In June 1955 they had applied to Friern Barnet UDC for permission to use the front living room as an office.

John thanked me for the information and promised to send me a photograph of the camera. I had assumed it would be something like a Brownie or an Ilford Sportsman however it turned out to be a completely different animal. It is a scientific camera and is very heavy and would therefore need the use of a tripod. Apparently the arrangement of the lens and shutter is very unusual – they are usually integrated into the optical system. John said that the camera had used top quality parts – a Zeiss lens, Compur shutter and Graflex rollfilm back and the body was a very intricate casting. It is unlikely that it would have been cobbled together with existing parts and it was more likely a prototype that had been assembled in-house.

John did not have a manual for the camera, but he is making enquiries through his contacts at the Photographic Collectors' Club of Great Britain and if he



The sturdy MIRCO. Not for the average snapper of family photos!

manages to locate one he will give us a copy for the archives. In the meantime, do you know anything about MIRCO, or do you know anyone who worked there?

1962 DIARIES

Two of our Committee members recalled events fifty years ago:

John Holtham

Having tried to remember what I was doing and what was happening fifty years ago without, I must say, much success, I was searching through some old paperwork and came across my father's diary for 1962. You will have gathered from this that we didn't throw much away in our household and I am rather glad of it, as discovering old letters and invoices can be quite fascinating.

I have trawled through the diary and set out some extracts below. Most of it is quite mundane but it does give a glimpse of what life was like back then and, in particular, how much things cost:

5 February	"Strike" (industrial dispute)
10 February	Pay 14s 11d for allotment plot
11 February	Plant cabbage seeds in box
25 February	Plant cabbage seeds in box
3 March	Plant parsnips, lettuce, cabbage on plot
5 March	Buy 7lbs Epicure seed potatoes at 3s 6d
17 March	Plant onion sets
7 April	Plant peas
9 April	Buy 5 rolls wallpaper for £2 13s 6d
10 April	Buy 1 quart of top coat 19s 3d
20 April	Decorate sitting room
29 April	Buy 2 gallons Shell 9s 9d
19 May	Plant out cabbages
2 June	Buy hair clippers 15s 9d
2 July	Buy tickets for coach to Brighton £2 11s 0d
7 July	Buy tickets for Isle of Wight coach tour £4 17s 6d
13 July	Buy shoes for John £2 5s 11d
21 July	Buy nylon mac £3 7s 6d
23 July	Isle of Wight
27 July	Wood Green pullover 21s 0d
28 July	Brighton
17 August	Cream paint 19s 9d
29 September	New Lucas battery for motor cycle £2 6s 6d
6 October	Dig potatoes
17 November	2 taps for sink £1 7s 2d
24 December	Motorcycle coat £7 15s 0d

You will have noticed that there is no reference to what was going on in the wide world then - no mention of the Cuban missile crisis when the whole world was threatened with nuclear annihilation; no mention of the death of Marilyn Monroe; no mention of 60 people dying in London because of smog. However, I think that the diary shows a commendable lack of interest in things over which my father had no control. I wonder how many people today keep diaries.....

Helen Hooper

January 1962, and I had been 13 years of age for two months. For Christmas in 1961 I had been given my very first diary – *Collins King's Own Diary* – and I was going to be good and write in it every evening before going to bed. Now, fifty years later, I have gone through each page for the first time since writing in it. My goodness, what a shallow person I was - I seemed to love and hate people and some lessons at school in equal measure!

There was nothing that really stood out but a few names from my days at Hillside Secondary Modern School in Summers Lane, bits of information and affirmation of my taste in music. I also noticed that the phone numbers started as HILLside, ENTERprise or TUDor.

On the first of January I put down that I went snowballing. It seemed that I went to Friary Park quite a bit during 1962, because I noted it on many occasions. I went with numerous friends, often after school, but also at the weekend. We didn't have a television until I was 14, so Friary Park was my entertainment and my parents let me go in the knowledge that I would be safe. I would take my next door neighbour's dog, Mickey, there regularly for walks. I would play on the putting green.

The Summer Show started on 23 August and it appears I entered the sports and the flower show where I secured first, first and third places (what for? Who knows; I didn't put that in the diary). Mrs Russell, Mickey's owner would invite me to go into her home to watch television. *Juke Box Jury* and *Z Cars* were possibly my favourites, although anything with Cliff Richard would also secure me an invite next door.

I wrote in my diary that for his birthday in June, I gave my brother Peter 7s 6d (it must have been so he could buy a record). Much to his annoyance, Peter used to have to take me see Spurs. On 26 December they beat Ipswich 5-0. It also started snowing whilst we were at the match and, if you remember, the snow and ice stayed with us for a further three months after that.

My annual holiday that year was at Butlin's in Minehead. I would enter competitions there also, never securing anything but a "thank you" for taking part (although I did come second in the fancy dress).

During the year I went to see Elvis Presley in *Blue Hawaii*, Cliff Richard in *The Young Ones* as well as *Carry On Cruising*; *Mr Hobbs Takes a Vacation*; *Play it Cool* (with Billy Fury), *South Pacific* and *That Touch of Mink* I also went to the Radio Show at Earl's Court (remember that?) where the BBC was demonstrating COLOUR television. Guests there included David Jacobs; Frank Ifield; Eden Kane and 'Tom Forrest' and 'Walter Gabriel' from *The Archers* ATV had studios in Wood Green and I saw *The Arthur Haynes Show* and Morecambe and Wise recordings, but having no TV meant that I didn't see the actual broadcast! No, the radio was our listening pleasure. My Sundays were defined by what we listened to. *Two Way Family Favourites* (I later went on to be the Radio Production Secretary on the show when, by then, it had become *Five Way Family Favourites*); *Billy Cotton Band Show*; *The Navy Lark* and *The Clitheroe Kid*. I must have had my first record player by then – a Baird – so records were either bought or given to me as presents. These included *Happy Birthday Sweet Sixteen*

by Neil Sedaka and *March of the Siamese Twins* by Kenny Ball and His Jazzmen. Before going to sleep at night I would listen to Radio Luxembourg. One October evening, I was listening to a programme with Shaw Taylor who was in a helicopter with a young lady who had won a prize. Part of the prize was a helicopter ride with Shaw and at the end she was asked if she would like to have a record played; she chose *Love Me Do* by a group called The Beatles. This would be the start of my love affair with one of the greatest pop groups in history. I took the name of the record and the group to school the next day. My old class mates have since told me that it was me who introduced them to the Beatles. My claim to fame!

Domestic Science in school meant actual cookery classes. We didn't learn about nutritional values, but actually HOW TO COOK (Fish cakes; Baked Cod Cutlets; Toad in the Hole; Steamed Apple Pudding; Baked Jam Roll). Needlework classes were all about making and mending. My own outside school activities were ballet classes with Irene Mills in Ballards Lane and piano lessons with Mr Jeacock who lived in Colney Hatch Lane.

If I was ill I was taken to the doctor there and then – not because we had made an appointment two weeks in advance! Doctor Sullivan and Doctor Driscoll were the family doctors and they came to our house if we were too ill to attend their practice. I wore braces on my teeth, obtained from the orthodontist which was then in Oak Lane, East Finchley. Things were very different fifty years ago – it was not like any 13 year-olds living in 2012. Watching television was a treat, as was going to the cinema. If I went out anywhere, I came home at the allotted time. I wasn't an angel, but no teenager ever is.

HMS FANTOME

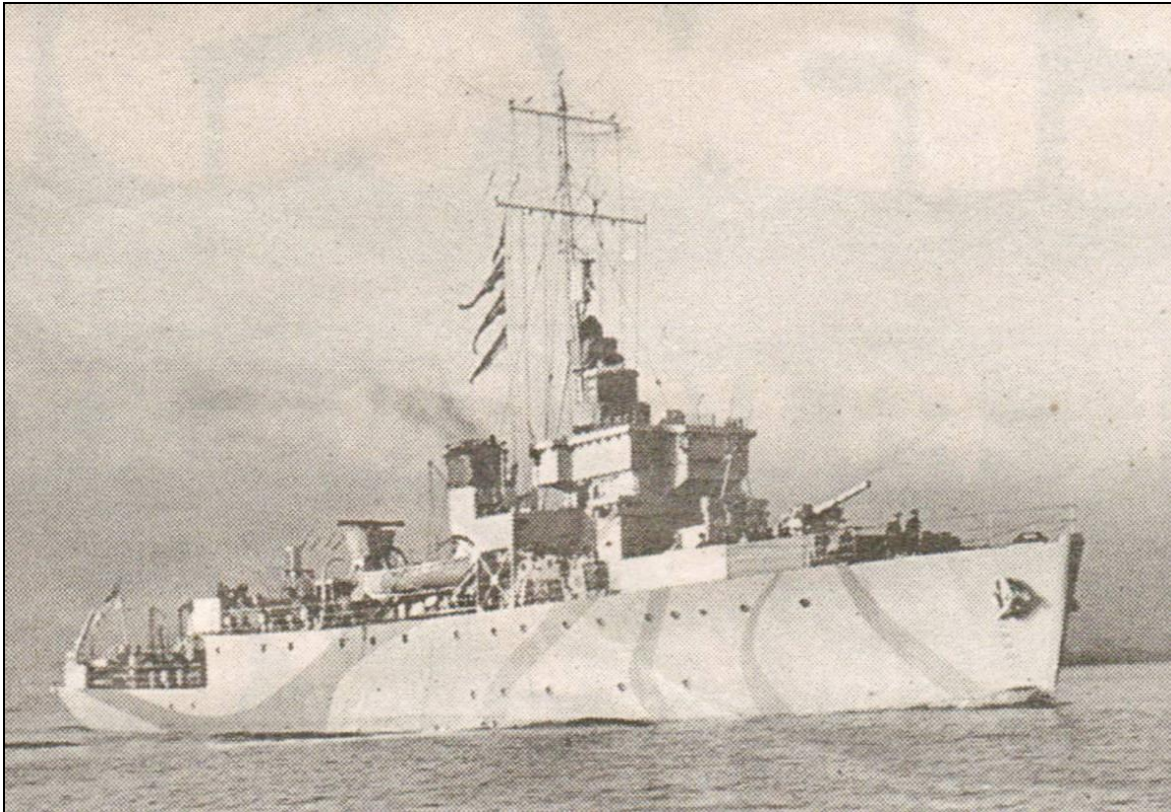
by David Berguer

During the Second World War, local communities were encouraged to “adopt” various naval ships during what was called Warship Week. Large cities and towns would adopt the big capital ships such as destroyers, whilst smaller areas would be allocated smaller ships. In February 1942 the War Savings Committee of Friern Barnet UDC agreed to try and raise £136,000 to adopt *HMS Fantome* (French for ‘ghost’), an Algerine-class minesweeper with a crew of around one hundred. After a number of fund-raising events, including whist drives and dances and variety concerts in the Church Hall, and the selling of War Savings Bonds, the money was raised by September 1942, just in time for her launch.

She had been ordered in November 1940, her keel laid in February 1942, and she was launched on 22 September 1942 and was commissioned on 23 January 1943. She was built in Belfast by Harland & Wolff, builders of the *Titanic*, and sadly she did not have much more luck than that ill-fated liner, as only five months after entering service she was badly damaged by on 20 May 1943 by two mines off Bizerete, Tunisia while on patrol at the head of the 12th Minesweeping Flotilla. The coxswain was killed and several members of the crew were injured and evacuated to Tunisia because it was feared that she would sink. She was declared a “Constructive Total Loss.” She returned to port and was scrapped in May 1947.

In July 2000 the ship's bell was presented to the Mayor of Barnet, Councillor Gill Sargeant by Eric Sibthorp, who was an 18 year-old signalman on the ship at the

time of the disaster. The bell now resides at Friern Barnet County School, along with a commemorative plaque.



(Imperial War Museum)

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Our Annual General Meeting will take place on Wednesday 23 May 2012 prior to the talk by Alan Smith on *The Wars of the Roses*. 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 9 May 2012.

SUBSCRIPTION RENEWAL

For those of you who have not renewed your subscriptions for the year commencing 1 April 2012. A further copy of the Membership Renewal form is enclosed. Please complete this and return it to us if you wish to continue receiving the Newsletter.

Friern Barnet & District

Local History Society ©

President: John Heathfield
email: friernbarnethistory@hotmail.co.uk

Chairman: David Berguer

46 Raleigh Drive, N20 0UU

Phone 020 8368 8314

Website: www.friernbarnethistory.org.uk

Photographic website: www.friern-barnet.com

