

Friern Barnet *Newsletter*

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WOODHOUSE DAYS

by Caroline Wright (née Cooper)

On my first day of school in September 1960 we gathered outside the entrance to the new science block. We were put in form 1L with Miss Busselle as our form teacher. She taught Domestic Science and I don't think she was ever seen without a white coat. Form 1L turned out to be the top set – the others were 1M and 1C but I never knew the significance of the letters. We were based in the Music Room for our form room and were arranged alphabetically, but boys and girls were sat separately.

I was most nervous about school dinners as I wasn't sure I would want or be able to eat the food served. As it happened, I preferred school dinner to Mum's; the first meal I remember was sausage and mash. We sat at a Formica topped table for about 6 to 8 and were looked after by a prefect called Hilary who was in the sixth form but wore white ankle socks. Two of us would go up to the kitchen serving hatch to collect the food and it would then be served from the dishes onto our plates. Two would then go and collect the puddings and gorgeous creamy custard in a large metal jug. The teachers would all sit at a separate long table.

The school had lovely grounds and playing fields. There were also grass covered



Woodhouse sports field in 1955

mounds where the air raid shelters remained. There was an invisible line across the playing fields where boys and girls were meant to keep apart.

When I was in either year 2 or 3 I had to go into hospital – the Royal Northern in Holloway. Every six months after that for two years Mum and I would catch the bus to go to the hospital for a check-up but combined it with a day off from school and a bit of shopping in Holloway. I fell in love with shiny black heeled shoes on one of those trips but it was not to be. We would go to a Lyons tea room and Jones Bros among other places and there was a pet shop by the bus stop.

Mum and I also used to like going ‘up to town’ shopping in Oxford Street. C and A’s and Peter Robinson were my favourite shops. I went into C and A’s and bought a brown cardigan for 19/1d but paid in 1d. Whether it was on the same occasion or not I do not remember but I realised that I had left my black corduroy box handbag somewhere in C and A’s , but got it back safely.

At Woodhouse we went to different classrooms for the lessons and had to take our satchels with the right books with us. The cloakrooms for the lower school were in the new science block. I do not remember very much about the first few years but I do remember a Domestic Science assessment with Miss Busselle when we had to clean an oven. Marks across the group ranged from 61-68%. I got 62% and have not cleaned an oven since! We never cooked anything. We also embroidered samplers which I found hard work. I did, however, make a winceyette nightdress with elasticated cuffs. The first night I wore it, I woke to find my arms had swollen and gone a shade of blue as the circulation had been cut off.

My French had been improved over the years thanks to an exchange visit to Le Raincy, a suburb of Paris, which was twinned with Finchley. My brother Chris’s school, Friern Barnet Grammar, had arranged the exchange but Chris did not really want to go on his own and they allowed me to go with him. We stayed with the Pavy family in a very modern flat amongst hundreds of identical blocks of flats. Chris wouldn’t speak much French at all so I was working hard. I was amazed to find myself actually speaking in French before too long. Chris did learn the words for ‘cake’ and ‘water’ and his famous phrase that he learnt and still remembers was: “Est ce que je peux avoir une douche?” and also “Plus de gateau s’il vous plait”

My best friends at school in year 4 onwards were Christine Ruge, Catherine Crack, Evelyn Legg and Daphne Crist. I remember thinking that if I could marry a girl I would marry Daphne Crist. We had a gang and pretended we were cowboys with Daphne and I being Frank and Jesse James. Evelyn was the marshall I think and the others were deputy sheriffs. We role played this both at break at lunchtime at school and at our houses mostly Chris Ruges’ I think. We even dressed up in cowboy gear. I can also remember though meeting up at Friary Park and perform plays. The five of us organised a youth hostelling tour along the Pilgrim’s Way to Canterbury. We stayed in different youth hostels. I remember Tanners Hatch and Boxhill. In my diary at the time are listed Tanners Hatch, Chaldom, Cudham, Crockham Hill, Kensing, Doddington and Canterbury. We got lost one day and Catherine and I decided to hitchhike to the next hostel but I was too scared to even consider it. We had to have special cotton sleeping bags, slept in dormitories and had to do washing up etc after meals.

My O level results were the poorest of the group apart from Dennis Gepp who had only four passes. Nevertheless we were both allowed into the sixth form for A levels. I chose English Literature, French and Spanish (initially as an O level after year 1). I got B in French and a C for English with an O level pass for Spanish in the first year but lower grade for the A level i.e. less than an O level pass. Our form teacher was Miss Margerison who taught Latin and who Christine and I kept in touch with for a couple of years after we left. At this time, second year of sixth form, having bypassed being fifth formers, our tutor group included those who had come up via fifth form so they were a year older than us. People I remember included Rosemary Snowden (the cleverest and who went on to Oxford), Elaine Slack, Jane Stilwell, Stephanie Mason and Carolyn Norman. We used to get together at each other's houses for a year or two after we had left. We went through a silly phase when in the sixth form having discovered and become obsessed with Winnie the Pooh. Never read any of the stories as a child but discovered them as being really funny and cool. We used to recite the poems and illustrate them.

We were taught English by Miss Fry and Miss Hughes, French by Mrs Lawn and Spanish by Mr Stephenson. He was very young and very anxious to be one of us and I'm afraid we gave him a hard time. We would sit in the back of his class, pass chocolates around and would stretch the boundaries whenever we could. He was the only teacher I can ever remember having been cheeky to in my entire life. Miss Fry was very scary – she had a limp – and would throw things at people and slam desk lids down etc. Miss Hughes (Spike) was a sweet little old lady and Mrs Lawn was one of the scariest people I have ever met – nostrils used to flare with anger. She got very upset when we didn't know what a triptyque was or the words of the French National Anthem. I used to dread Thursdays because we had an extra lesson of French and Mrs Lawn was on duty and you used to have to make sure your hair was tied back. Miss Fry got very cross with us one day when she wanted us to take parts in *Hamlet* to read in class but everyone was far too laid back to do it properly. We had to go away and practise so it would be better. I was Ophelia and she was very pleased with my performance eventually.

Our headmaster was Mr King and he took us for RK (Religious Knowledge) lessons sometimes in lower school. When he used to ask us about careers I said I wanted to be an architect but he was very dismissive when I said on another occasion that I wanted to be a teacher because he said it wouldn't be possible as I had not taken Latin at A level – somewhat dated career advice even then.

I got into trouble with Mr King once when we were all in the library during a study period. There was supposed to be silence in the library at all times but mostly ignored by sixth formers. One day I was nattering away not having seen him come into the library behind me and he came over and told me to report to him at the end of school. I was terrified. He used to stand at the top of the stairs outside his office at the end of each day. Our form room was nearby so we had to pass him on our way back at the end of the day. I thought he had forgotten as he didn't say anything as I went past him that day but later in the week he did stop me and I just said I had gone to report to him but he wasn't there. He had obviously forgotten why he wanted to see me.

The only other time I can remember being in trouble was when Hilary and I arrived at school late one morning and had to report to Mrs Lawn. We said that Hilary had forgotten her glasses and had had to go back for them even though it was the first (and

last) time that we had been late and she said that we had given her an excuse not a reason. It was a long time before I could work out the difference.

I can remember very few instances of any pupils behaving badly but Kay W set off the fire alarm on her last day at school and we were all called into a school assembly where she was publicly shamed and told to leave the assembly. Three boys were once 'punished' in a similar way with a walk of shame but I don't remember what they did wrong.

To be continued.....

FRIERN BARNET IS SAVED

The 3 January 1936 issue of *Finchley Press* contained the following:

**“FRIERN BARNET’S VICTORY.
MINISTER OF HEALTH NOT TO ENFORCE ABSORPTION WITH FINCHLEY.
ADVANTAGES DO NOT OUTWEIGH OPPOSITION.**

Friern Barnet is to remain an urban district. The Minister of Health has stated that he does not propose to take further action in regard to the proposal that Finchley should absorb Friern Barnet.

It was one of his last actions of the last year and a letter came as a New Year gift to Friern Barnetonians. The Minister “has come to the conclusion that the advantages of the proposal are not such as to outweigh the opposition to it.”

Public opinion in Friern Barnet has triumphed, for the entity of Friern Barnet as a separate Urban District is to continue. This is the decision reached by the Minister of Health, Sir Kingsley Wood, after considering the dossier relating to the public enquiry into the Ministry’s proposal that Friern Barnet should be absorbed by Finchley, the whole to form an extended Finchley parish.

The Minister’s decision was communicated in a letter under the date of December 31st last to the Clerk of the Middlesex Council.

The letter reads:

“LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT OF 1929 REVIEW OF COUNTY DISTRICTS.

I am directed by the Minister of Health to refer to his proposal for the extension of the Borough of Finchley to include the Friern Barnet Urban District.

The Minister after carefully considering the Inspector’s report made after the recent enquiry has come to the conclusion that the advantages of the proposal are not such as to outweigh the opposition to it on the part of the County Council and other parties concerned, and does not propose to take further action thereon.

Passing to the proposals made to the County Council for boundary adjustments between Friern Barnet Urban District on the one hand and the Borough of Finchley and Hornsey on the other hand, the question whether the Minister has power in the circumstances of the Middlesex County Review to give effect to these proposals under Section 46 of the Local Government Act of 1929 raises a legal issue similar to one which has been made the subject of proceedings against the Minister at the instance

of the Hampton Urban District Council; and he proposes to defer further consideration of this question until he knows the result of these proceedings.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant

E H RHODES
Assistant Secretary”

So a page in the history of Friern Barnet closes to the satisfaction of the inhabitants. Amalgamation, or absorption, has threatened for the past five years. The anxiety has existed since the Middlesex County Council reviewed the districts of the County under the Local Government Act 1929.

When the County Council first commenced the review there was a proposal that Hornsey, Finchley and Friern Barnet should form one huge borough. However, that was not proceeded with. Another proposal was that Friern Barnet should be dismembered, that the South Ward should be given to Hornsey and the remainder to Finchley. That, however, did not receive the consent of the County Council. Vigorous opposition came from Friern Barnet.

The General Purposes Committee of the County Council recommended the amalgamation of Friern Barnet with Finchley, but the recommendation was defeated. When the County Council submitted to the Ministry of Health changes in the compositions of the various districts there was no suggestion of Friern Barnet ceasing to be an Urban District standing by itself.

The then Minister of Health communicated with the County Council and hinted that reconsideration should be given to making Finchley and Friern Barnet one. Once more the County Council declined.

For some months the question was dormant. Ultimately it was revived by the then Minister (Sir Hilton Young). Intimation was given that the Minister considered there was a prima facie case for Finchley to absorb Friern Barnet. In due course a proposal was made public on those lines.

A public enquiry concerning the proposal was held at Finchley last November. Strong opposition was made from Friern Barnet Council, Friern Barnet Ratepayers' Association and other organisations. Apparently the Minister has heeded the feelings of the residents of Friern Barnet. It was publicly stated that the present minister (Sir Kingsley Wood) would give the matter his personal consideration.

Cty Cr C H Barber has been a great opponent of amalgamation and absorption and at County Council meetings he has taken the lead in opposition. That Friern Barnet continues as a separate entity is largely due to Cty Cr Barber's work and the residents of Friern Barnet are grateful.”

In the same issue of the paper is a letter from Councillor Barber:

“Sir,

The absorption of Friern Barnet by Finchley has at last been settled by the Minister. I always fought strenuously for our district, knowing the ratepayers and people were behind me. Our Council and myself could see no public advantage whatsoever in proposals which would break up an efficient organisation, in order to substitute another, and we should have lost the County services on which we County Councillors

and the public place the highest value. An ex-councillor said at our ratepayers' meeting: "the public have a right by legislation for their representative to look after their existence." which is true. For years I have come into contact with most of the local residents and they, with the leading organisations, always decided against being annexed and wanted to preserve the District of Friern Barnet. The case has been going on for between four and five years and it has harassed me and caused a great deal of inconvenience and very many sleepless nights, besides great waste of time and money involved in defending the interests of the people. The attention of the County Council and the District Council and its officers have been diverted from their duties, to answer this threatened encroachment. Finchley said: 'We do not want Friern Barnet' but they were certainly quite willing to have the district, if given to them.

Some may be disappointed by our victory, which means little or nothing to them but a great deal to those who have contributed to our success. We must congratulate our Clerk to the Council (Mr G T Fletcher) for the skill in which he presented our case to Counsel at the Enquiry. My grateful thanks to all who have helped us during this long and trying period.

Yours sincerely

C H Barber."

The editorial column summed up the Finchley vs Friern Barnet saga:

"It seems scarcely necessary to wish a Happy New Year to our Friern Barnet readers. The terms in which the announcement was made leave no doubt that nothing but the dogged persistence of the citizens of Friern Barnet in their refusal to be amalgamated or absorbed could possibly have saved them. The amalgamation was regarded by the permanent officials of the Ministry as a forgone conclusion. The engagement of Counsel to represent the views of ratepayers was regarded as a needless expense seeing that the Ministry had made up its mind. The final Enquiry of the Inspector was intended to be but a safety valve for allowing the effervescence of the opponents to the amalgamation scheme to escape and cease from troubling.

But when the Inspector came to the spot he found public opinion too much for him. It was a different position for the defenders of Friern Barnet, for the reasons for the amalgamation (apart from some general routine reasons as to the necessity of reducing the number of urban districts) had never been disclosed. They had to defend themselves from an attack from an invisible and an undisclosed opponent. The Inspector must have been impressed by the fact that Friern Barnet was to be extinguished not for any tangible definite reasons connected with its administration, but to satisfy some doctrinaire principle which had been kept secret from the ratepayers concerned. He evidently advised the Ministry that discretion was the better part of valour in dealing with Friern Barnet, and the Ministry had the good sense, at this late hour, to accept his advice.

And so, "All's well that ends well." The citizens of Friern Barnet will remember the New Year of 1936 as bringing to an end a prolonged and irritating nightmare, that seemed too bad to be true, and yet they might at any time wake to find that it was only too true. They may now remain in peace, with the certainty that their fears have been finally dispelled."

Footnote

G T Fletcher, the Town Clerk of Friern Barnet, who is mentioned above, was the father of the comedian and creator of the 'odd ode', Cyril Fletcher, who attended Friern Barnet

Grammar School. Readers may recall his catchphrase: "Pin back your lugholes". Cyril died in 2005 aged 91.

POTHOLES

Nowadays we are used to many of our roads having potholes of various sizes, but was it always like this? This comment in the 14 August 1936 issue of *Finchley Press* explains that it was:

"Not a few residents of Oakleigh Park South are getting anxious about the state of that road. One must confess that at present a car ride along its length is guaranteed to stir the most sluggish liver, test the stoutest car springs and at the same time give the most accomplished driver a test in steering wide or between the pot holes which abound. While, apparently some desire an improvement, the majority fear that any better surface will immediately encourage all and sundry to use the road as a quick cut to the northern end of the district. As soon as that came about the road would lose its rurality - but it's the old question of having one's cake and eating it."

A year later, on 12 February 1937 the following appeared:

"I should imagine residents in Oakleigh Avenue will be glad when their turn for road making arrives. Choice pot holes and boulders which would do credit to Rannoch Moor abound, to the intense discomfort of motorists and pedestrians alike."

JACK THE RIPPER

We received the following letter from our member in Orpington, Doug Smith:

"The article in the last Newsletter concerning the suspects of the Jack the Ripper murders was of particular interest to me albeit on a strictly personal level. At the time Aaron Kosminski was committed to the asylum at Colney Hatch, my grandfather, Sidney Benjamin Smith, was an attendant there. We cannot know whether their paths crossed but it is reasonable to assume my grandfather would have known of his presence there. However, on another level, we as a family have found my grandfather's story quite fascinating.

He was born in Yeovil, Somerset in 1842 and was by trade a stonemason. We can only speculate how or why he found his way to Friern Barnet but possibly it may have been linked to the development of the area at the time. Nor do we know why he chose to give up stonemasonry for work in the asylum but we do know that the 1881 Census shows him to be at the asylum on census day.

His wife, my grandmother, Sarah Ann Ward, was born in Capel St Andrew, Suffolk and she found her way to the area sometime during the 1870s. She was a 'domestic servant' and in 1881 employed by a Charles James Giles and family in Woodland Road, New Southgate. Again we can only guess how she came to meet Sidney, but Woodland Road and the asylum were not far apart. They were married in 1882 in the Parish church which I guess was that which still stands in Woodland Road. On the marriage certificate he gives his age as 32 (he was 40) and that his status was 'widower', although we have never been able to trace an earlier marriage so we think that was another fib and assume he was a little concerned that he was twice Sarah's age.

What we do know is that they had 13 children of which my father, William, born in 1888, was one. So two people born miles apart in the west and east of the country met together in Friern Barnet 140- odd years ago and led to me as a member of the History Society writing about it today.

NEW SOUTHGATE'S LOCAL HERO REMEMBERED

by Colin Barratt

You may recall the article on the front page of our *Newsletter* in April 2016 about the commemoration paving stone laying ceremony in Oakleigh Park North for the Captain Rev. Noel Mellish, who was awarded the Victoria Cross in WW1. This was one of many commemorations which are taking place around the country for those who were given a VC during WW1. Each is planned, if possible, for the day 100 years on from the action which resulted in the award.

We have another of these on our patch on 1st December this year. It's for Allastair McReady-Diarmid, who was born in Grove Road, New Southgate in 1888. If you Google his name you will find the details of why he was awarded a VC. The ceremony is being organised by Enfield Council, and the stone will be mounted into a granite block and set up on the recently restored Grove Road Open Space. I don't know if it will follow the same pattern as Oakleigh Park, but it should be an interesting event, if you would like to be there. The start time is provisionally 10.30am, but may end up being a little later. Final details will be available nearer the time. There will be a full report of the event in the February *Newsletter*.

TELEVISION ARRIVES

by David Berguer

On 2 November 1936 the Postmaster-General performed the opening ceremony for the world's first high-definition television broadcast which was made from Alexandra Palace. Two systems were being tried out – the Baird system which had 240 lines and the Marconi-EMI system with 405 lines. Viewers of the Baird system actually saw the opening ceremony some 40 seconds late, during which time a film was developed, printed and projected. The Marconi-EMI system was, in contrast, instantaneous and, not surprisingly, in February 1937 it was decided that the Baird system would be dropped and 405 lines remained the standard until 1964 when the BBC introduced 625 lines.

Initially programmes were only broadcast for two hours a day, one hour in the afternoon between 3.00 - 4.00pm with most of this being repeated in the evening between 9.00 - 10.00pm. Coverage was limited to some 12,000 to 15,000 households within a small radius from Alexandra Palace.

The following advertisement appeared in the *Finchley Press* on 2 April 1937, a mere five months after the first broadcast. The price of a 10 inch x 8 inch receiver was 60gns, or 80gns for a larger one with a screen size of 12 inches by 10 inches. This would be equivalent today to £3261 or £4150 - or £49 per week and it would be interesting to speculate how many householders in the *Finchley Press's* circulation area could actually afford that kind of money to watch an 8-inch image in their living rooms.

Free

DAILY DEMONSTRATIONS OF TELEVISION

3-4 p.m. (or 9-10 p.m. BY APPOINTMENT)



We are giving daily demonstrations in our showroom of "His Master's Voice" TELEVISION receivers, which are made by the same engineers as installed the apparatus at Alexandra Palace.

There is no charge or obligation, and we extend to you and your friends a very cordial invitation.

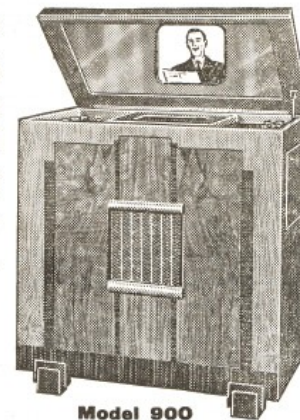
"HIS MASTER'S VOICE" HIGH DEFINITION TELEVISION

The "His Master's Voice" Television Receiver No. 900 illustrated here also brings in radio programmes from all parts of the world, including U.S.A., Canada, Australia, etc. Another model is also available.

Model 900 80 Cns. Model 901 60 Cns.

OR AT THE RATE OF

£1 PER WEEK



Model 900

SPORTS & RADIO STORES LTD.

Telephone - Hillside 1183 (All Depts.)

30 HIGH STREET
NORTH FINCHLEY

21 QUEENS PARADE
FRIERN BARNET, N.II

HOUSING CHANGES

by David Berguer

Barnet has the largest population of any London borough with an estimated population of 393,000 and over the next 25 years this is expected to grow by 19%, to around 467,000. Regeneration of estates in Brent Cross, Colindale, Mill Hill East and the Stonegrove Estate in Edgware will account for 20,000 extra homes but pressure to build new homes will occur in all areas of Barnet if targets are to be met. The coalition

Government introduced changes to legislation which means that planning permission is no longer required to convert office blocks into flats and there has been a large increase in this type of development. In our area the following developments are taking or have taken place:

	<u>Houses</u>	<u>Flats</u>	<u>Total</u>
<u>New Southgate</u>			
Oakleigh Road South <i>(former North London Business Park)</i>		1350	1350*
<u>North Finchley</u>			
886-902 High Road <i>(former Furnitureland site)</i>		60	60
902 High Road <i>(White Rose Motors)</i>	3	14	17
931 High Road <i>(former Police Garage)</i>	10	139	149
<u>Whetstone</u>			
1060-1072 High Road <i>(former emc site)</i>	10	59	169
1136 High Road		13	13
1201 High Road <i>(former B&Q site)</i>	24	100	124
1230 High Road		39	39
1255 High Road <i>(Barnet House)</i>		230	230
1331 High Road <i>(Ivy House)</i>		4	4
1346a High Road <i>(Adams Court)</i>		4	4
1351 High Road <i>(Walsingham House)</i>		3	3
1379 High Road <i>(Northway House)</i>		145	145
1394-1410 High Road <i>(Euro House/Turnberry House)</i>		75	75
1412-1420 High Road <i>(Brook Point)</i>		66	66
3 Athenaeum Road		7	7
272-276 Friern Barnet Lane <i>(former Thorne Printing)</i>		6	6

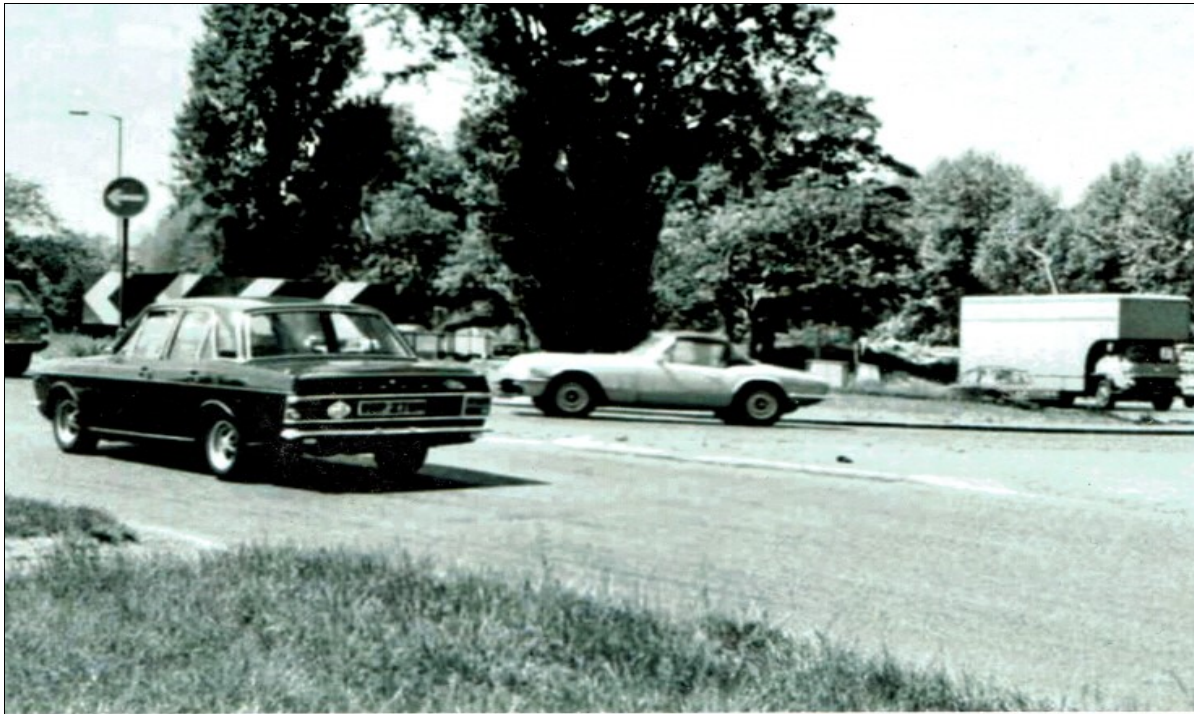
55 Oakleigh Park North (Springdene Nursing Home)		27	27
25 Oakleigh Road North (former Carpet Warehouse)		9	9
Sweets Way	201	87	288
1-3 Totteridge Lane (former offices)		11	11
Well Grove	62	8	70
Totals	310	2480	2790

*NB The plans for the former North London Business Park were turned down unanimously by Barnet Council’s planning committee in June 2017. The developers, Comer Homes, then referred the matter to the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, but he declined to intervene and has referred them back to Barnet Council.

Assuming an average occupancy of 2 persons per household the above plans will result in an additional population of some 5580 and, working on Barnet’s estimate of 1.1 cars per household, an additional 3069 extra vehicles on local roads. Pressure on local infrastructure and services such as schools and doctors’ surgeries will of course increase but there seems to be no provisions for these.

ROUNDAABOUT

Following on from our recent articles on the roundabout at the Colney Hatch Lane junction of the A406, our member Hugh Garnsworthy gave us two pictures that he had taken in the 1960s which may bring back memories.



Looking west, towards Finchley



Looking east, with the dome of Friern Hospital on the horizon

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

For those of you who did not attend the AGM on 24 May, a copy of the Income and Expenditure Account for 2016-2017 is enclosed. The accounts were approved by members attending the meeting.

There were two one-off items in the Accounts – the Society had funded the production and printing of *Whetstone Revealed*, the book jointly written by our President John Heathfield and our Chairman David Berguer. This amounted to £1627 but sales of the book up to the end of March 2017 had yielded £1100, leaving the sum of £527 in debit. The other item was a donation of £1000 which had been received from Friends of Finchley Memorial Hospital to fund the production and printing of a book on the history of North London Hospice – *An Act of Faith*. This amount has yet to be spent. We are pleased to say that, despite a reduction of £1323 in cash available, we do not plan to increase the membership fee for the next financial year 2018-19.

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