

Friern Barnet *Newsletter*

Published by Friern Barnet & District Local History Society

Issue Number 79

November 2019

A LOCAL BOY MAKES GOOD

by David Berguer

Many of you will recall Terry-Thomas, the archetypal upper-class Englishman (remember the waistcoat, cigarette holder and monocle and the punchline “You’re an absolute shower”). The reality, however, was somewhat different.

His father was Ernest Frederick Stevens and his mother was Ellen Elizabeth Hoar and they had four male children, John, Richard, William and Terry Hoar Stevens and a daughter, Mary. Ernest’s parents were rather well-off and lived in Shepherd’s Hill, Highgate. Apparently, Ernest had a typical London accent whilst Ellen tried to speak like a duchess.

In his 1990 autobiography *Terry-Thomas Tells Tales* he wrote:

“Actually, how such an immaculate character as Terry-Thomas can have emanated from Finchley is something I shall never be able to answer. I’m sure few people have thought about Finchley in depth (except, I suppose, Margaret



Thatcher whose constituency it is.) It certainly curdles my blood to think of that part of London where I was born, on 14 July 1911, in a house called Glenfern, in Nether Street.

“I found the people and the area quite extraordinarily rough for even as a nipper I was a snob and I soon grew up to hate the place. Having as much style and originality as I thought I had; I knew I didn’t fit into that part of the world. My own family were graced with very little style; indeed, they were positively coarse.

Try as I did, I never felt part of that family. I could never fathom out what they were supposed to be. How strange it was, I used to ponder, that I’d got such a peculiar background

It annoyed me terribly that I should ever have to introduce some of my relations to my friends. Except for my mother and sister, I was ashamed of the lot of them.

My mother had been one of twelve children, who had all gone to different schools and subsequently spoke with various nondescript accents. None of them had the accent I was looking for – posh! Yes, that’s it, posh! Years later one of my aunts asked me, ‘Tom, why do you have such a peculiar way of talking?’ That intrigued me because I thought that *she* had.”

When he was about ten his mother started to take him to the Golders Green Hippodrome and the London Hippodrome and the Coliseum and to the Bohemia cinema at Church End and the Odeon Golders Green and his interest in the theatre led to him trying to speak grammatically at all times – he reasoned that good speech automatically suggested that you were well educated and made people look up to you.

After attending various prep schools in Finchley, he was sent at the age of thirteen to Ardingly School in Sussex. He was disappointed that most of the boys did not have posh accents although one of the teaches spoke with a wild accent – ‘Boy, go and get your garse masque (gas mask).’

At the age of seventeen he joined his father in Smithfield Market and he started to sport a buttonhole and a long cigarette holder which did not go down well and he became known as “the man with carpet slippers’ because he wore suede shoes. He joined the firm’s amateur dramatic society. He left Smithfield at the age of twenty-two and became an electrical engineer and then a door-to-door salesman.

In his mid-twenties he left Finchley and, with a friend, moved into a flat overlooking Lord’s cricket ground. The friend was a film extra and one day Terry stood in for him at Pinewood. He made his debut on film in 1937 in *Rhythm in the Air* where he played ‘someone who looked like a cad and a drunk but who could tap-dance.’

It was around this time that he changed his name, figuring that Tom Stevens did not sound all that attractive. He liked the sound of Thomas Terry but decided against it as people might have thought he was trying to cash in on Ellen Terry’s name and fame, so he turned his Christian names around and added a hyphen for an individual touch. And Terry-Thomas was born.

WARTIME MEMORIES OF BARNET – part three

by Philip O'Donoghue

Arriving in Barnet when we did, my parents had no opportunity to get to know the local schools, so I was sent for a year to the Greenhill Preparatory School in Station Road, New Barnet, run by Mr and Mrs Johnson or Johnstone. The school, on the north side just past Warwick Road on the way to Plantagenet Road, with a bus stop conveniently outside, was an ordinary house albeit a large one as most were in Station Road (in fact it was one of the smaller as, for example, opposite was a blocky Victorian detached house with a triple-arched greenhouse filling the roof). It was also the family home and when lunch was served (I remember fish pie) the baby daughter (Ann?), worrying her parents by a disinclination to talk, would often join us.

My cousin had previously attended grammar school in Chelmsford and so had some sort of right to transfer to a similar school here. However, he was plainly unwelcome to the headmaster, who struck us as a bullying sort of man with no compassion for a boy who had recently lost his father. My aunt moved him to a comparable school as he was made so unhappy. My cousin's loss was my gain, as my parents therefore entered me for a place at the new and innovatory grammar school in Chestnut Grove, the East Barnet Modern School – later Grammar and County, although I forget in which order. This was part of Hertfordshire's very forward-looking education policy in the immediate pre-war years, spearheaded by Alderman Vialou who was still active in my schooldays and attended prizegivings and so forth. A schoolhouse was named after him, so I presume another was named in tribute to a Mr Juniper, although I know nothing of him. The third was Hadley. The executive of this policy was the most able and persuasive Chief Education Officer, who also visited the school on occasion. His name will be remembered and honoured elsewhere, so the fact that it had slipped from me is of little consequence.

The East Barnet school was co-educational. Boys and girls taught together has always struck me as more natural and socially normal than enforced separation from 11 to 16 or 18 years of age., when we all have to put up with one another again. It certainly encouraged tolerance, respect and friendship for girls whom I should not otherwise have met.

As headmaster they had appointed Alan Clayton. Very soon after arriving he was faced with the herculean task of establishing a new school, of rather a new type, in the degenerating conditions imposed by the approach and then outbreak of war. And starting his own family into the bargain, as I learned long after. He was to little boys a figure of alarming authority, well-built, upright and well over six feet tall, with a knob on his forehead that I suppose was not really very large, but which was immediately apparent to every schoolchild. He assembled and maintained, despite losses into the armed forces, a dedicated and able staff. Characteristically he strode about everywhere with his gold rimmed spectacles glinting and his black academic gown billowing behind him. One of life's treats was to see him disappear into a classroom and shut the door without giving his gown time to follow. The black triangle remained outside would then receive a ferocious tug, after which the door would be reopened a crack to admit it. Despite his vigour he was a gentle man. Girls were never caned at all, and caning boys so distressed him that on some occasions he had to go home after doing so.

All graduate teachers – and I think that we had no specialist games or physical training staff during the war – wore gowns while teaching. Somewhat later short gowns were

introduced for 6th form pupils: at the very least they eased the way for those who went on to university, helping us to feel less self-conscious and less self-important when obliged to wear gowns there.

The entrance examination for the EBMS disclosed me as admissible but not clever enough for a scholarship so my parents paid, as I recall, £5 a term until fees were abolished early in the war. So, on moving from preparatory school I continued to catch the 107 bus from outside the crescent of small shops in what had been the entrance to the Victoria Cottage Hospital (moved to Wood Street). Later in the war the comfortable AEC buses were replaced by chocolate-coloured (why was that paint but not red available?) Guy buses, wooden seats, unheated and with only a single skin, bringing austerity home to thin children on a winter's day.

When I arrived at the EBMS in late 1940 the two air-raid shelters were being completed, well down the playing field and constructed each as a square zigzag or very plain Greek key – a lot of right angles end to end, made of vertical concrete sections and roofed the same way. They were half buried in the ground and covered with the earth dug out for them. So, there were a few steps down into them, with a right angle at the bottom designed, like the endless corners of the shelters themselves, to limit the effects of blast should one suffer a direct hit. Early in the war – or early after things hotted up after the eerie calm of much of 1940 – there were a lot of daylight raids including a dog fight of fighter aircraft over Barnet, which my mother saw but to my fury I did not. When the alarm sirens (mainly mounted on the roofs of police stations) sounded soon after lunch we trooped out of our classrooms to the shelters. With only candle lanterns for light, lessons became unrealistic and normal discipline tended to degenerate into whispers and giggles. Around the half-lit and still gowned figure of Mr Clayton, of course, there was no suspicion of slackness, and we learned how to pronounce the alphabet in French a number of times. A born teacher, if he had a weakness it was that when called upon to give a casual lesson his thought processes led him to the same conclusion every time. So almost every raid was time for the French alphabet, just as every scripture lesson where he stood in for some absentee began with a prior consideration of ideas other than Genesis. We had a number of parallel and illuminating introductions to the scientific approach to creation, one for each unexpected absence of the regular scripture teacher, and never reached Genesis at all. Happily, neither school nor shelters were bombed. Most days the air-raid ceased about teatime. And we were able to scuttle off home to prepare for the night attack – usually a more serious affair as far as suburban civilians were concerned. On a few occasions the German airmen apparently decided to miss their tea and we had to be kept at school until a parent or the like came to fetch us – on foot or on bus, there were no cars for such journeys.

To be continued....

MEMORIES OF FRIARY PARK

by Mabel Hammett

I lived in Barfield Avenue, Whetstone from 1941 to 1965 and it was a straight route to cross Oakleigh Road North up Raleigh Drive, bear left down Manor Drive, past Manor Drive Methodist Church then at the bottom we went past Bethune Park and up the hill, across Friern Barnet Lane to Friary Park.

In the summer school holidays of the 1950s several children of different age groups would decide to go to Friary Park for a picnic. The mums would make up sandwiches - cheese, fish paste or maybe jam, with homemade cakes and a lemonade bottle of hot tea. Three were put into a cardigan then wrapped around the bottle to keep warm until we got to the park. The picnics would be put into the dolls' prams and about ten of us would set off.

On reaching the top of Manor Drive we would see if there was a gap in the park fence, if so, the one with the prams would have to turn left and go up to the park's main entrance and the others would climb through the fence.

We would then decide where to lay out the army blankets and have our food and drink. When the picnic was over, we would possibly walk via the pond to see people playing with their model motor or sail boats, dip our hands in the water and then go down the to the stream. This was always approached the same way. As we went down the hill, we would start at the left-hand side. I cannot remember the name of the crossing, but we were expected to jump from one side to the other and finish up at the grid where the water disappeared under ground.

Next we would go up to the swings near the beautifully laid out flower beds. All the plants were in straight lines and the colours were wonderful. If anyone fell off a swing and grazed their knee, then it was off the Park Keeper's office where he kept the first aid equipment, but it was usually just a plaster needed. I do remember going over one Boxing Day with my brothers and twin cousins who were staying with us over Christmas. They came from New Barnet and we always had to walk over there on Boxing Day morning to feed their cat as the buses did not run on that day. So, in the afternoon we were in the park and one of the twins fell into the brook and we had to take him home soaking wet and explain to our mums as to what happened.

Back to the park. After the swings we would wander around the corner past the big house where you could go up the front steps and buy an ice cream (if you had the money) then stop to see the men and women (in their immaculate white outfits) playing bowls. After this a big decision would be made – should we walk all the way back to the main entrance should we go out the side entrance past even more impressive flower beds.

A wonderful park and a wonderful time had been spent there by all of us children. If any of the little ones were tired, they would sit on the biggest doll's pram for a ride home.

My friend Ken Barker told me that his mum with her close friend would walk with the children from Muswell Hill to Friary Park. One day Ken, who was about seven years old was sailing his small wooden boat when he needed to get into the pond to retrieve it. He then cut his foot on a piece of broken ceramic pipe which was under the water and had to be taken to hospital by ambulance.

The biggest event of the year was the Summer Show. Huge marquees were erected in the front part of the park. All the local clubs would compete for prizes. Cut flowers, jam making, vegetables etc. I can still remember the heat and smell of the flowers as you walked into the tents. On this special day my friend Stan said he and his friends always looked for a hole in the fence to get through to avoid paying the entrance fee.

It is many years since John Donovan told me that the Society was going to run a stall at the Summer Show. I could not resist taking my sister and we reminisced and thoroughly enjoyed ourselves. Friary Park still holds its charm.

NORTH LONDON HOSPICE

When St Columba's Hospital in Hampstead closed in 1981 it left a large gap in the treatment of the terminally ill in North London. A local GP, Dr Chris Hindley, brought together a small group of people who were determined to create a replacement. This was the beginning of the North London Hospice Group and the recently published book, *An Act of Faith: The Story of North London Hospice* tells the fascinating story of how this group with committed individuals from the local community came together to create one of the most world renowned organizations and achieving national and international recognition as one of the best in hospice care.

When the Friends of Finchley Memorial Hospital was dissolved in accordance with its constitution and discharge of outstanding liabilities, the organisation had some money left over in their kitty and it offered £1000 to our Society to research and publish a history of North London Hospice. Our committee member, Dorrell Dressekie undertook to take on the task.

The book chronicles the story of how the group went from a modest cash-strapped beginning to a multi-faith hospice, with a purpose built in-patient unit, hospice at home service, day care service, and a day centre, all providing care and respite for hundreds of local members of our community each year.

Early members of North London Hospice Group included Harriet Copperman, a nursing sister with knowledge of hospice care, Rabbi Julia Neuberger, Dame Albertine Winner, Mr Melvyn Carlowe, Elsa Perkins, Norman Civval and Dr Chris Hindley. Various committees were set up: a professional sub-committee, finance sub-committee, publicity and public relation and premises sub-committee, all with set objectives. The group held its first public meeting September 1984, at which over 400 people attended.

The North London Hospice Group chairman, Elsa Perkins, addressed the audience:

“We have come here tonight to meet you, to hope that we command your respect, your support, both moral, physical and financial without which no great venture, which I believe this one to be, can succeed.

May I end by saying that what we have started is an act of faith in which we all deeply believe.

Add your strength to ours and we cannot fail.”

The title of the book, *An Act of Faith*, pays homage to that address.

The book provides a compelling look at the creation and operation of the Hospice and of the power of a local community when it comes together to achieve a common goal. You may purchase your own copy of the book for £10 from the Hospice, at their Charity shops in Barnet, Enfield and Haringey, or from the Publisher, Chaville Press, The Green Room, 7 Grand Arcade, North Finchley, N12 0EH.

All the proceeds from sales go directly to benefit the worthy work of North London Hospice.

HOUSING UPDATE

The number of new or converted properties in the area continues to increase. Since our last report in the February 2019 Newsletter the following planning applications have been submitted to Barnet Council:

	<u>Houses</u>	<u>Flats</u>	<u>Total</u>
<u>Friern Barnet</u>			
246-256 Friern Barnet Lane (Friern Court)		12	12
4 The Broadway Friern Barnet Road	1		1
34-36 Queens Parade		2	2
6 Ramsden Road (conversion)		2	2
<u>New Southgate</u>			
115 Brunswick Park Road	1		1
93 Waterfall Road (HMO – House in Multiple Occupation)	6 people		6
<u>Whetstone</u>			
2 Athenaeum Road (converted from offices)		21	21
283 Friern Barnet Lane		4	4
33 Friars Avenue, rear of	1		1
1359a High Road (HMO – House in Multiple Occupation)	5 people		5
Kendal Close, adjacent to no 1	1		1
51 Russell Road		2	2

A COMMUNITY BUS

Cars and other vehicles are not allowed into Friary Park as they could pose a risk to pedestrians. So, what was a single deck bus doing making its way from Friary Road to Friary House on the morning of Friday 20 September? The answer lies in The Community.

Barnet's 'Together We Are a Community' programme endeavours to help people join together to 'help to celebrate Barnet'. The operators of TfL's route 383, Uno, had conducted a survey of people using the 383 bus route and found that there was definitely a community spirit amongst passengers and, in particular, how friendly the bus drivers were. Comments include "Everyone's so friendly – people are really happy, we have a little joke" and "I love the drivers, they always have time for us". Uno decided to use this to rebrand their buses which included upgrading the interior with new seats and décor, including posters explaining the history of the area and of the company itself. The outside of the buses now have a banner above the side windows outlining the route (Woodside Park, Whetstone, Oakleigh Park, New Barnet, Barnet).



The event was attended by the Mayor of Barnet, Caroline Stock, members of the Asian Women's Group who meet regularly at Friary House, and who provided an excellent lunch for visitors as well as providing examples of Indian dances. Another visitor was Ray Stenning, from the company Best Impressions that specialises in graphic design of transport vehicles throughout the country and who was responsible for the new 383 design. If you haven't tried the 383, why not give it a go, maybe you will be in for a pleasant surprise!

WORKING AT STC

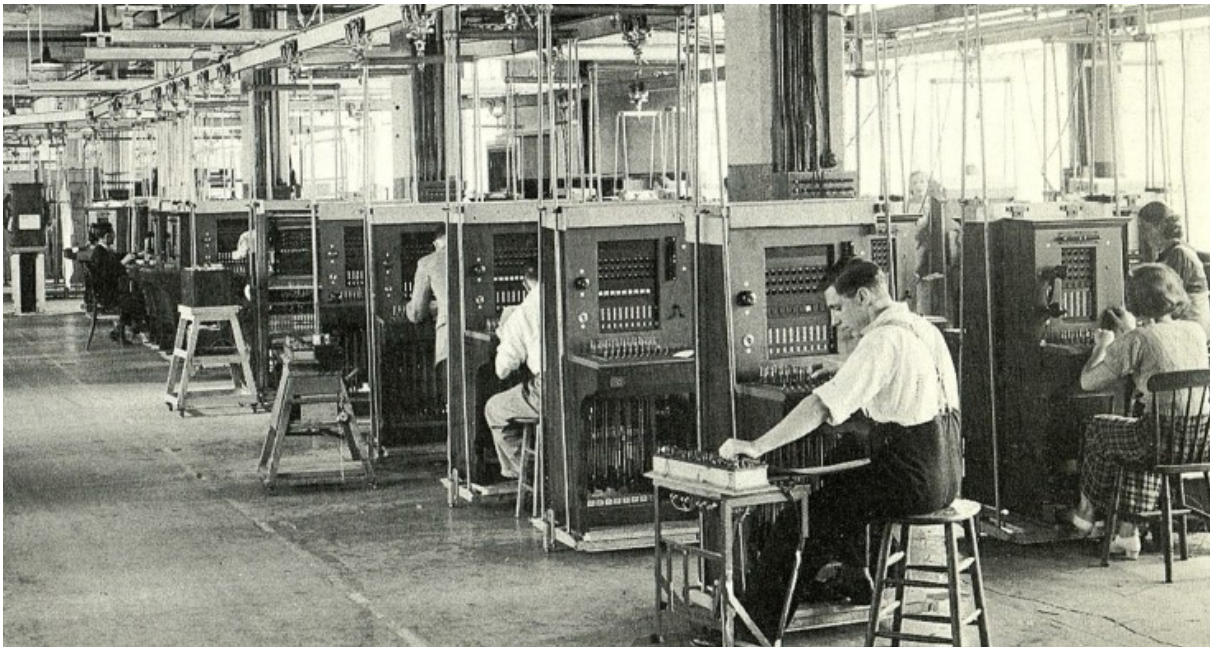
by Terence Kingham

I applied to STC at New Southgate and was interviewed by a Mr. Ted Hart, who was blind, and who offered me an indentured apprenticeship in September 1984. I then had to start in the Training School situated outside the main gate. This Training School was a converted church or chapel, which had the main benches down, what would have been the centre aisle. When I started it was home to about 15 young lads straight out of school and run by a Mr. Fred Painter and a Mr. Fred Bedford, who treated us all like school children.

The purpose of the Training School was to introduce the lads to hand tools and small machines, before entering the factory. This was done by having to make a series of small exercises in sheet metal. Each exercise had to be inspected by the Messrs Bedford or Painter, before moving onto the next. This gave our tormentors unlimited power which they took delight in exercising. Firstly, by making us queue up outside the office door until they deemed themselves ready to receive you and then by scrutinising the work piece, and usually rejecting it for some fault – real or imagined. It was rare to have a piece passed on your first attempt. There was a whole raft of other petty rules and regulations, all designed to show the lads who was in charge. This, as you can imagine, engendered a ‘them and us’ spirit, with the lads always trying to get one over on our ‘mentors’. One of our favourite ploys involved forcing one or other of them to get out of their comfortable chairs to come and see what we were up to. Their office was at one end of the building, which had a window that looked straight down the building, but which had been blacked out years ago. The mentors had scratched a tiny spy hole into this covering so that they could sit at their desks and keep an eye on us without being seen. As you can imagine, this was supposed to be unknown to the lads but was an open secret, so occasionally the lad working nearest to the spy hole would casually move a tool or something in front of it. Sure enough, five or ten minutes later, either Painter or Bedford would stroll out of the office to do an inspection of the room and on his way back to the office would attempt to unobtrusively move the offending item – much to our amusement.

I started as an Inspection and Test Apprentice, so I was not expected to need an extensive knowledge of hand tools, so I was therefore subjected to this regime for only about six weeks. Craft lads had to endure at least three months! When my six weeks was up, I was moved into the factory to start my training proper. This consisted of usually three months in each of the departments relative to your destination, and so I found myself in the Radio Assembly Shop in Building 8. This was where electronic devices were assembled and wired and was staffed by around 40 or 50 women. Now I was a naive 16-year-old who had led a sheltered upbringing and attended an academically slanted grammar school, and it took these women about five minutes to suss me out. I must have spent the first two weeks with a permanently red face as they embarrassed the life out of me. For example, I had never heard a woman swear before, so life was initially hell. However, the teasing wasn’t malicious, and it hardened me up considerably.

On my five-year journey around all the various departments I changed course twice, from Inspection & Test to Lab Technician, and finally to Draughtsman in the Radio Division. I remained on the boards for a further six years, with Chief Draughtsman Ben Warren and my Section Leader Charlie Bridden and later Ernie Merritt. In general, a very happy time and a wonderful grounding in engineering which stood me in good stead for the rest of my career. Eventually, having been warned by Ernie Merritt that at STC, once an apprentice, always an apprentice, I took his advice and moved on in 1965. Before moving on, I had met a nice young lady from Personnel, now HR of course, who was Secretary to the Assistant Personnel Manager, a Mr. Fred Nind. This was Pat Pilgrim who became my girlfriend. What I didn’t know when I met her, was that she epitomised the family spirit that was an integral part of STC, as her father, Ernie Pilgrim, worked in the Payroll Department, and her mother, Mary Pilgrim worked in the Post Room. In August 1968 I married Pat, thus continuing the STC family tradition. Pat remained at STC until our first child was born in 1972. Her father Ernie served over 25 years and retired in 1980.



*PBX switchboards being manufactured at New Southgate in the 1930s.
These were superseded by electronic versions in the 1970s.*

After several happy years on the boards, I left in 1965 to join the BBC as a Design Draughtsman. After a while, and after a couple of jobs in other Drawing Offices, I decided to return to STC in 1968, but this time in the Telephone Division in the offshoot that had been established at Chase Side, Southgate, in a building near to where ASDA nowadays is situated. At this site the company was working on the first electronic telephone exchange for small exchanges as a private venture. This used reed relays and was christened TXE2. This went onto be adopted by the GPO and finally went into production. The equipment practice or racking used to carry the electronic units was an original design by Frank Bowes and used a totally new manufacturing process involving aluminium extrusions instead of the standard Strowger rack of mild steel. This did away with welding and painting and made manufacturing very much simpler and cheaper. This equipment practice, as you can imagine, was christened ALEX, a contraction of aluminium extrusions. As mentioned TXE2 was for small exchanges, and with its success, it was then developed for the larger exchanges. These larger exchanges were christened TXE4.

By now, as Head of Mechanical Design, I was responsible for taking the equipment practice forward to cope with the new requirements. Around 1970 Chase Side was closed down and the TXE4 unit was moved back into Building 8 at New Southgate. My Drawing Office was now staffed by about half permanent personnel and half contract staff, and included Eric Morris, Reg Webb, Ken Clark, Dave Caspell, Dave Short and Graham Furness. At New Southgate a complete TXE4 exchange was built to test the system. This exchange included racks of Strowger equipment to ensure compatibility between the new electronics and the old existing Strowger switches. As installing and testing of new exchanges took several months, we also developed a method of building and testing suites of racks in the factory and then shipping them complete to site, anything up to 10 racks at a time. Heavily involved in this design was Graham Furness. By now, around 1972, Stan Springate was in charge of the Department.

As TXE4 design work came to an end, BT commissioned the next development, which was designated System X. This was to be a collaboration with STC, GEC and Plessey.

The lead equipment practice development was awarded to GEC and I became the liaison between STC and GEC for the hardware, as all three companies were to manufacture the finished design. This involved me spending three days a week at GEC in Coventry, along with the Plessey liaison officer, Clive Skillicorn. The idea was to ensure all three companies were able to manufacture the equipment, but this was never going to work, as while STC and Plessey were using the Frank Bowes aluminium equipment practice, GEC was heavily into mild steel bars and sheet metal, which involved painting and welding.

It soon became apparent to me that there could be no compatibility between the GEC equipment design and anything STC or Plessey could manufacture. As GEC later took over Plessey, and BT bought out STC involvement, I feel justified in these thoughts. Sometime after moving back to New Southgate, some STC staff, who had relocated to Oslo for a project and who had been promised a job at New Southgate on their return, reappeared and Stan Townsend became head of the Department, with John Aldous heading up the Drawing Office. With STC withdrawing from System X, we were left with tidying up TXE2 and 4, and so in 1980 I decided it was time for a new challenge. John Aldous had left to join the connector company AMP the year before and told me about a job going there as a Product Engineer. I was interviewed and accepted for the post and spent my last 19 working years with them. I retired from AMP in September 1998 at the age of 60.

As a PS, I should add that Dave Short, Dave Caspell and Graham Furness also joined AMP.

ALL SAINTS' RENOVATION

by David Berguer

In early March 2014 pieces of masonry fell from the spire of the church and cracks were found at its base. The situation was so bad that the church was added to Historic England's 'Buildings at Risk' register. The spire had been treated back in the 1970s, but the work had not been done properly with the result that the render had deteriorated and ferrous bands had been corroded. The only way was to renew damaged masonry and to install stainless steel bands.

The Heritage Lottery Fund supplied a grant of nearly £500,000 and in March 2018 intricate scaffolding was erected around the tower and the spire. On close inspection things were a lot worse than expected. The 1970s work had involved replacing the original lime mortar with concrete and the south west corner proved to be so badly worn that water ran freely down the walls of the tower and into the porch and the north walls of the church.

The work was carried out by a specialist firm, SSH Conservation who are based in Wells, Somerset and who had been involved in conservation work at places like Windsor Castle, Woburn Abbey and Carisbrooke Castle. Bath stone and Cotswold stone had been used in the building of the spire, but it was decided that Cotswold stone from a quarry at Syreford near Cheltenham would be used as this was more resistant to weathering. Some 10 tons of stone and lime mortar was used throughout. It took 8-10 skilled masons nearly a year to complete the work. The overall cost amounted to £650,000 and donations were also received from National Churches Trust, All Churches Trust and The Friern Barnet Educational Trust as well as church members.

The vicar, Gregory Patten, arranged for me to have access to the spire so that I could climb to the top and take aerial photographs of the surrounding Whetstone area. On the day, I met the chief stonemason and we climbed up to the first level of scaffolding. I had not anticipated that the ladders were actually mounted almost vertically, and he disappeared round the corner leaving me on my own. At this point I decided that discretion was the better part of valour and there was no way I was going to scale any more vertical ladders. He returned and I apologised for my cowardice. Fortunately, my stepson, despite a dodgy knee, had climbed to the top a couple of days previously and, armed with his mobile phone, had taken several images. We both lived to tell the tale, although for different reasons.

Today the scaffolding has gone and the spire looks wonderful, complete with a golden weathervane.



March 2018 The start....



....May 2019 The finished result

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