Friern Barnet *Newsletter*

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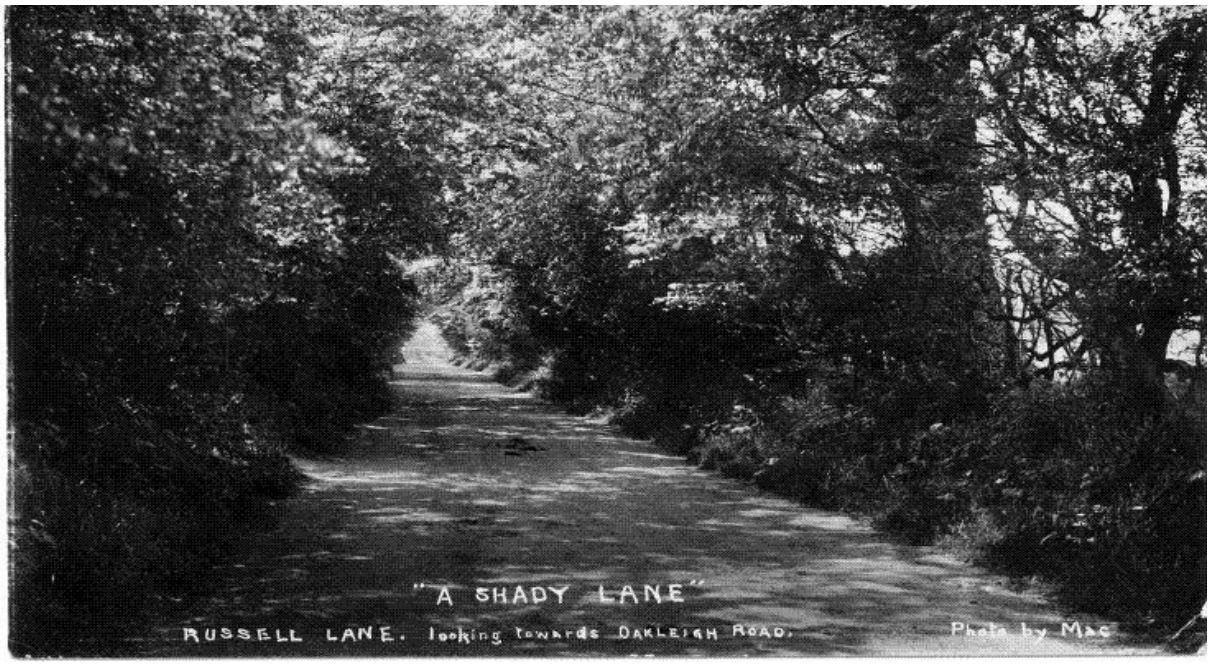
A RUSSELL LANE ENCOUNTER

In his autobiography, *Alf's Memories Part Two*, Alf Matthews recalled an amusing incident:

> "Way back around 1919-20 my father was walking down Russell Lane with Harry (a cousin of Connie Stevens) at dusk one winter evening, and as they entered the "tree tunnel" they saw someone whom they thought to be a certain young lady by the name of Miss Thrussell. Now it was the custom of either the Stevens, the Moleys or the Matthews to call out: "Hullo, Miss Thrussell" it's just to reassure her; for she had long and lonely walk to a house in Osidge Lane. On this occasion Harry called out the customary greeting and quickened his patch to catch up. However, the young lady thereupon began to run and Harry, realising his mistake, hastened forward to explain. The girl broke into a panic-stricken run, with Harry still running and calling out what he thought were reassuring words. My father called to Harry to "come back you stupid so-and-so," but the noise created by the girl's screams and Harry's footsteps drowned the words, so my father began to run to catch up with Harry, who then realised his foolishness and stopped running. The girl, however, ran on down the lane screaming her head off.



For a long time my father would comment: “I would like to know who that girl was, so we could explain and apologise.” My father died in June 1971, at the grand old age of just three weeks short of 95, , but not long before, he said in the course of going back over the years: “I would have liked to have found out who that girl was we accidentally ‘chased’ down the lane. Now, to continue the story, Having been a friend of the Multiple Sclerosis Society (MS), I was sitting at a table eating sandwiches, cakes, etc on the occasion of the annual party given by the Barnet branch to all the MS helpers.

A lady opposite me said: “When are you going to start your write-up about Russell Lane?” When I had finished replying, the old lady sitting next to me said: “Oh, did you know Russell Lane in the old days?” “I most certainly did,” said I, “I lived at Oaklands until 1927. Did you know it then?” “Oh, yes” she replied: “and I’ll never forget the evening two men chased me down the lane and I ran for my life and they didn’t catch me.”

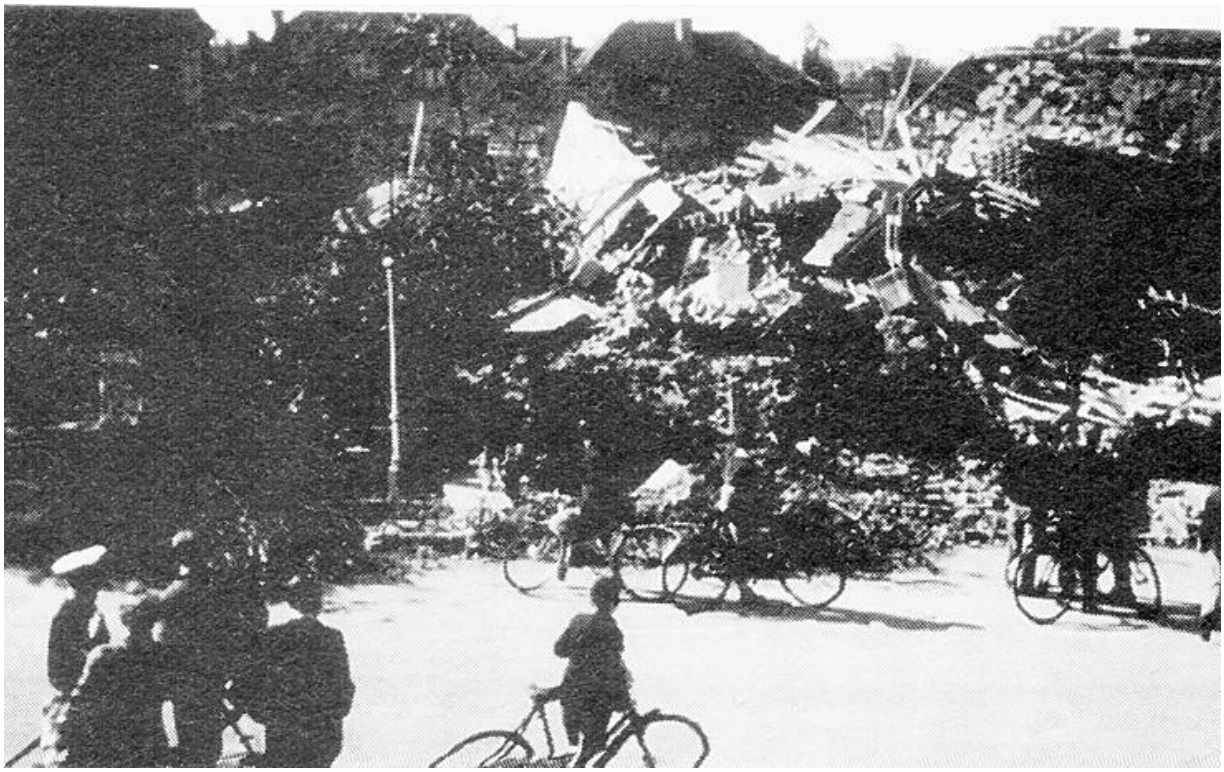
Talk about “knocking me down with a feather,” I could have been “knocked down with a sandwich for I almost dropped it in amazement. After a mutual reminiscence, we both agreed that it was a most unusual coincidence. (I did not make a note of the lady’s name and address, but I hope she bought a copy of my two books, volumes One and Two.)

A WARTIME CHILDHOOD - 2 THE BLITZ

by John Philpott

In August 1940 the Battle of Britain and the air raids on London began. During air raids we took shelter in the basement of 45 Highbury Hill – I still remember all gathered there. Pat and Celia had planned to calmly carry David and John, respectively, downstairs – in the event, with the sound of falling bombs, it became a precipitous rush.

By this time Pat’s sister, Hilda, her husband Gerald and their children, Anne and Jennifer, were living in Abingdon, to where Shell, Gerald’s firm, had been evacuated. (He was later to become an officer in the Royal Artillery and was wounded following the D-day landings in 1944.) We had an invitation to join them there if conditions got too bad in London. On 2 September 1940, Bert came home on one of his brief breaks from duty and insisted that Pat take David and me to Abingdon. That day we, together with Pat’s mother, were driven to 75 Swinburne Road, Abingdon, in a hired car. It was only many years later that Bert explained the reason for his insistence: the previous night he had recovered the body of a boy of about my age from a bombed house. The boy had been in bed, the contents of his pockets placed on the table beside him, as was my practice. Bert felt he could not go on with the fear of that happening to us. For David and me, the time at Abingdon, with our cousins the same ages, respectively, as ours, was fun – not so for the adults coping with four young children in a furnished house, and conscious of the situation in London and elsewhere.



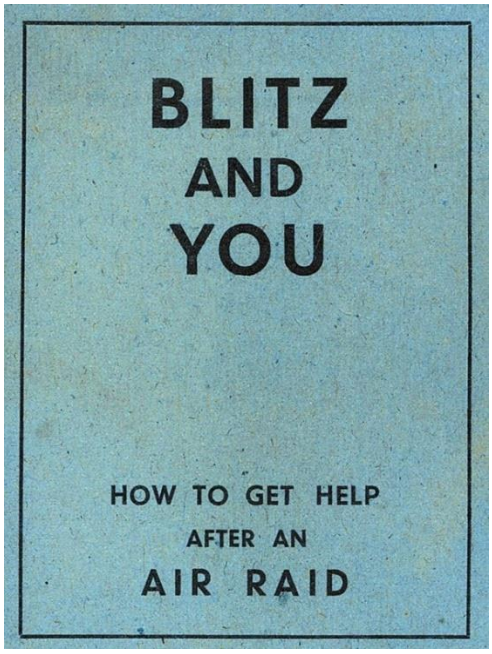
A victim of the Blitz. Number 53 Lewes Road, N12 in 1940

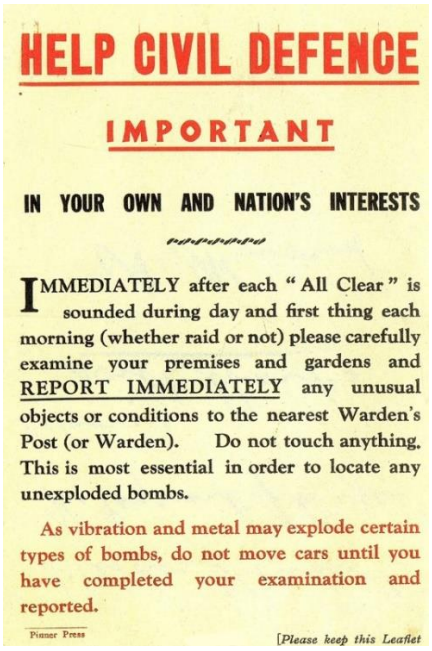
Anne and I went to St Edmund's School. The infants were taught in one large room, the three classes separated by curtains. Apart from the youngest, the classes were taught by nuns. There were services in St Edmund's Church next door, and once the children were taken out into the playground for a military funeral in the adjoining churchyard.

By 1942 the worst of the Blitz was over. Number 45 Highbury Hill had been rendered uninhabitable by a nearby landmine. Bert's mother, sister and aunts had moved to Muswell Hill, a rented house at 11 Goodwyns Vale. When off duty Bert would go there, and when the time came when he felt we could return, he cycled round the area looking for a suitable house. Passing Friern Barnet Fire Station, he stopped to ask a fellow fireman, the man outside on "gate duty", if he knew of one. He was directed to a landlord, Mr Reynolds in Friern Barnet Road, who had one of his houses vacant, 35 Goldsmith Road. On 15 March, we moved to that house, with Pat's mother nearby in a rented room in Stanford Road.

I know little of Bert's experiences, just the occasional reminiscence triggered by some place or event. Some were amusing incidents. There was an occasion when the driver misjudged the width available when driving through Chapel Street market, and they had the canopies of stalls trailing behind, to the annoyance of the stall holders, and another, in the blackout, when the driver tried to turn up the steps of a cinema. Once, when he was on a fire escape appliance (the escape was an extendable ladder with two very large wheels at the base), the escape became detached as they were descending a hill, and, as they slowed, it passed them looking like a strange giraffe.

There was an occasion when Bert was at the top of an extended escape manning a hose. A man was needed at the bottom to counterbalance the one at the top. The man





HELP CIVIL DEFENCE

IMPORTANT

IN YOUR OWN AND NATION'S INTERESTS

IMMEDIATELY after each "All Clear" is sounded during day and first thing each morning (whether raid or not) please carefully examine your premises and gardens and REPORT IMMEDIATELY any unusual objects or conditions to the nearest Warden's Post (or Warden). Do not touch anything. This is most essential in order to locate any unexploded bombs.

As vibration and metal may explode certain types of bombs, do not move cars until you have completed your examination and reported.

Pinner Press

[Please keep this Leaflet

at the bottom was a new recruit who deserted his post at the sound of falling bombs, and Bert found himself slowly tipping over into the fire. A nearby officer took in the situation and ran to retrieve it just in time. One night the area of Paternoster Square to the north of St Paul's was devastated by incendiary bombs, and Bert was there six days extinguishing the fires. Many days were spent, too, in the docks, with who-knows-what burning in the warehouses and contributing to the smoke they were inhaling. On one occasion a warehouse was alight the other side of a dock entrance and they could not reach it as the swing bridge was open. He was scathing about the dockers who refused to leave their shelter to close the bridge, but this was unfair: only recently I have learnt from a former docker that they had strict instructions to ensure the bridges were left open during air raids as damage in the closed position would make the dock unusable and trap the ships within.

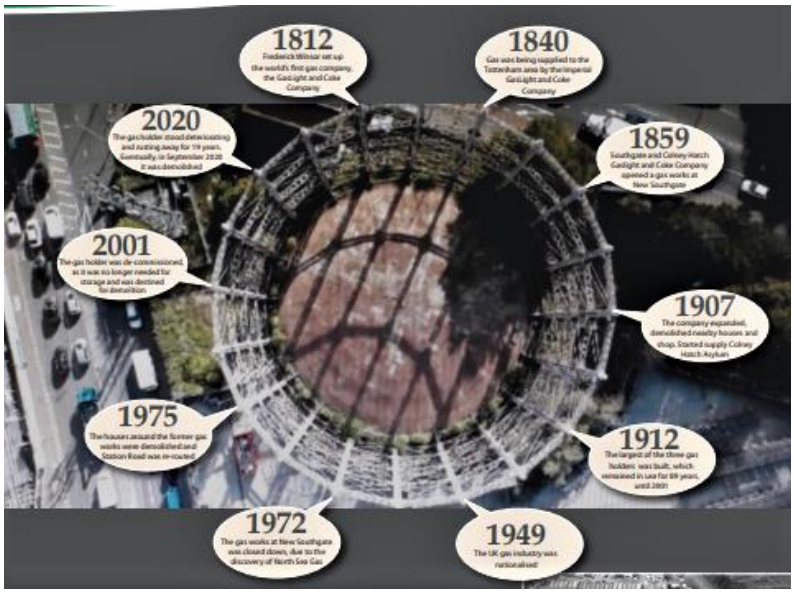
There was concern at possible looting from bomb damaged buildings. At a factory fire, one of the firemen was given permission to take some damaged sheets of cardboard to cover blown-in windows at the fire station. He was stopped by a policeman, charged with theft and found guilty. We kept chickens in the back garden, for which Bert used to bring home kitchen scraps in an attaché case strapped to the carrier of his cycle. Twice he was stopped by a policeman and took delight in opening the case to reveal its contents.

INTERPRETATION BOARDS FOR THE GAS HOLDER MEMORIAL

by Colin Barratt

In the July newsletter I explained how the New Southgate gas holder was dismantled and the memorial finials prepared and installed. When the announcement was made by National Grid in 2019 that the gas holder was being taken down, they asked for ideas for a memorial. My initial suggestion was for an interpretation board which gave the history of the gas works that had operated on the site for over 100 years.

Several years ago, Enfield Council restored a nearby open space in Grove Road, New Southgate. Someone had the inspired idea to create an interpretation board which showed a timeline of the history of the space, using an image of a stone arch that stands at one end of the area. I wondered if I could produce something similar for the gas holder. National Grid had made a video of the gas holder site, using a drone to fly around it. The video ended with the drone directly above the holder, then descending towards the dome.



I thought that the image of the holder from above would make a good basis for a timeline. There were 20 columns around it, so I selected 10 events, covering the past 200 years and showed the date and a brief note in a series of speech bubbles, attached to alternate columns. The idea was that the gas holder was speaking to us about the history of domestic gas production and the local gas works. You could perhaps also think of them as bubbles of escaping gas. This formed the central part of the board, as shown. I then wrote some text on one side about how gas production began, while on the other side was a history of New Southgate gas works. Along the top are four large scale maps, showing the development of the gas works between the 1860s and 1950s. Along the bottom are various photos of the gas works site. I then realized that I hadn't included anything about the gas holder itself, or it's dismantling, so I designed a second board which explained how the gas holder worked and the process of dismantling. Alongside this are photos linked to the text.

These two boards were produced by a company in Grimbsy, DSB Graphics, who had previously supplied natural history boards for the Millennium Green. We decided to get DAB to install them, as well as deliver them. This was a good decision as it took several hours of digging and drilling to make the deep holes through clay and broken brick and concrete. They now form a striking memorial and history of the gas works and gas holder, next to a main path through the Green.

Why not visit the Millennium Green and have a look at these memorials? They are near the entrance next to the bus stop in Station Road, New Southgate. The finials are at the other side of the Green, on the corner of Inverforth Road and Weld Place.

MORE MEMORIES OF WOODHOUSE

by Jane Clemens

I was very interested to read the article in the June Newsletter by Barbara Eastmure about Domestic Science at Woodhouse.

I was at Woodhouse between 1959 and 1964 and like Barbara found it a most unhappy place to be. I agree with her analysis of Mr Proctor, the music teacher. He pitched all his lessons to those in the class who were musically talented and the rest of us didn't matter. I also know the tyrant of a French teacher who was dreadful! The Head and Deputy Head were the main cause of the dysfunction at the school. It was a co-educational school but the girls were not allowed to mix with the boys and they even drew a white line across the field so at breaks, the girls were on one side and the boys were the other and heaven help you if you crossed the line!

However, Domestic Science was different. I also had to do the scrubbing of the wooden tables – quite pointless as Pat says. But luckily after a few weeks in the old kitchen with wooden tables, we moved to the new kitchen with the new cookers and Formica tops and never had to scrub the tables again. Miss Buselle was rather stern but one of the nicer teachers and in our 'O' level course we learned to cook quite a few dishes and each year at Christmas we made and iced Christmas cakes. One I did looked like a basket. What was really important is that we had to plan how to cook a 2-course meal in 2 hours which was an invaluable lesson. The first class of the week would be planning and the second would be cooking the dishes. The planning had to include washing up and cleaning. So, the new kitchen was well used in the end

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JOHN BAKER - A LOCAL CRIMINAL

A number of people lived at a lodging house at 30 Mint Street, Southwark. They were Emily Matthews and her partner Enoch Clark, John Baker, Clark's close friend, James Smith, known as Muffin Jack and another man, Curly Wooldridge.

At six o'clock on 2 March 1881 Clark told Emily that he and John Baker were going out saying: "I shall see you about 9 or 10 o'clock if I don't see you before." Emily did not see Clark that night, but Baker returned alone the following morning and said that Clark would be along "in a minute or two". While Emily was washing in the kitchen, Baker

said: “Look here, look at the state I am in”, pointing to the leg of his trousers which had a few stains the colour of port wine. Clark then produced two tablecloths, one large and one small, and asked her to wash them, which she did. After mangling and drying them she was asked by Clark to pawn them and Emily gave them to a friend who managed to get 2s 11½d for them.

At about 2 o’clock she asked him if he had seen Clark and he replied: “If he is not here soon, I shall go down and see if I can hear anything about him.” He then said that he and Clark had been going along a fence and there were two policemen, one on horseback and one on foot, and the one on foot had looked over the fence and Baker had produced a port wine bottle from his pocket and hit the policeman over the head with it and he then hit him a second time and knocked him out. He then looked for Clark and thought that the policeman on horseback must have chased him.

Baker lived with, and apparently slept with, Emily Matthews for a few days and during that time he produced a number of further items which he asked her to pawn – several pairs of boots and shoes, some silver knives and forks, a meerschaum pipe and even a silver flute. Around 7 March Emily read in a newspaper that a body had been discovered in a wood at Finchley but did nothing about it until the 16th when the police took her to Kentish Town Police station where she was shown a photograph of the body and some clothes from the dead man which she recognised as belonging to Clark.

A Walter Brinkley was a wireworker who travelled the country with his van and he, his uncle and another man were camped with the van on 4 March at Irish Corner, near the Smallpox Hospital, apparently a place where gypsies frequently camped. The three men got up in the morning to look for their pony which had strayed and discovered the body of a man in the wood covered in blood. They went to the hospital and reported it to the porter and then the police.

On 20 March William ‘Curly’ Wooldridge, was taken by the police to Colney Hatch Cemetery where he saw and identified the dead body of Enoch Clark. Woolridge testified that he had gone with a policeman to Colney Hatch Cemetery where he saw the body of Enoch Clark. He had earlier told the police that Baker had shown him a combination knife and told him: “This is a funny sort of knife”. Some days later Baker had taken him by train to Finchley and they had walked to a wood where there were some gypsies and Baker had asked to borrow his basket. Baker returned after half an hour and gave him the basket back which had boots and a silver flute in it. They then walked to Alexandra Palace and caught a train to Farringdon and then back to Mint Street. A William Alexander Hill, who lived at St Albans Villa, Friern Park, returned home on 4 March to discover that a number of items were missing from his home including several pairs of boots and shoes, some silver knives and forks, a meerschaum pipe, a combination knife and a silver flute. His maid reported that she had locked up at 10.40pm the previous night and on getting up at 7am she had found the dining room and drawing room doors were open, cupboards were open and things

were scattered about the floor. It seems that the thieves had entered by forcing the hasp of the back kitchen window.

Police Inspector William Thompson visited Mr Hill's house in Friern Park on 3 March and traced footmarks in the garden – there had been a white frost in the night – and he traced these down through two fields to the corner of Woodhouse Lane. PC Edwin Webb had been on horse patrol on the night of 2 March along Friern Lane, Summers Lane, Woodhouse Lane and Friern Park and then on to North Finchley. He reported that he had not seen two men, he had not been in the company of another officer and he had seen nobody hit with a bottle. At his trial at the Old Bailey on 1 May 1882 John Baker was found guilty of the manslaughter of Enoch Clark and was sentenced to penal servitude for life.

SHOPS IN FRIERN BARNET

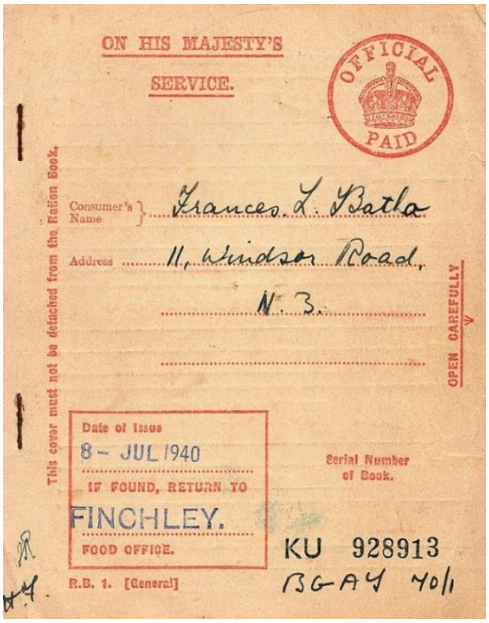
by Barbara Eastmure

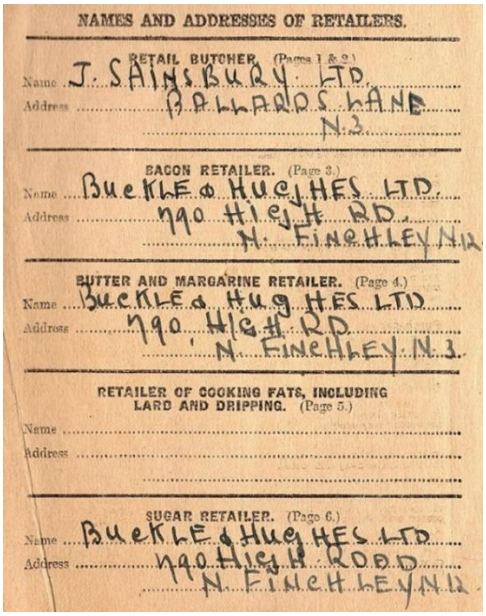
The years of the Second World War were passing and I was growing up. Because of the rationing that was now a part of daily life and the scarcity of the symbols of life my parents were not able to give their daughter even the treats they had experienced in their childhood, which, although not luxurious by any means had at least been full of many small items that could not be had in wartime London. The shops had sparsely covered shelves and there was no such thing as choosing where to buy your weekly rations. The system was that you had to register with a particular grocer and butcher and then go only to that one for your allowances. Kinghams at 231 Woodhouse Road was the one that my mother chose – it was not the nearest but still managed to give a prewar feel inside. It was a double fronted shop with shuttered windows either side. Once inside bare wooden floor was a herring bone design and I would play a sort of hopscotch while my mother queued with the other women at the various counters. Long wooden topped counters ran down either side of the shop and each side represented two different sections. As you walked in the shop the first things you saw on the right was the boxed and packaged goods whereas on the left was a section with bacon and cheese and this had an old-style marble counter top with a glass barrier to stop customers coming into contact with the bacon. A little way down was the slicing machine to cut off a thin slice or two for each person's ration. There was also a huge board for cutting cheese which had a wire to pull across the cheese to make a portion.

Nearer to the back of the shop, past the baked goods were rows and rows of boxes and tins. The most interesting of these was the home of the biscuits. The age of packaged biscuits had not arrived and the system was to look through the glass top of the boxes to make your choice. Once this was done Mrs Kingham would walk round to the front, lift the lid and count out what she thought was the right quantity into the scoop from the scales. If there were too many they would be carefully returned to the box. Then came the making of the packing; there would be a pile of rough cut dark blue paper squares and she would take one of these and fold it to make a cone into which the biscuits were placed and the top folded over. When it got to Christmas and

people were hopefully trying to buy dried fruit this would be packaged in the same way. Over on the other side of the shop would be butter if available, but more likely margarine. This would be cut into quarter or half pound portions and wrapped in a greased paper.

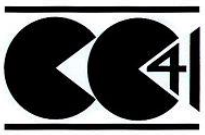
Each time a rationed item was chosen, the ration book had to be handed over and out would come the scissors and the little squares would be carefully cut out. An alternative for some items was for the little box to be cancelled with an indelible pencil. Perhaps I should explain that each person was entitled to their own ration book the colour of which varied as and when the issuing period changed. People would try and go without and save up their coupons if they had a special event, although how they managed in the intervening time was a mystery. The same system applied for clothes as well but at least you could shop at any shop which had an item you wanted. Women would give younger sisters their clothing coupons instead of a birthday present or if there was a wedding planned, and they were really like gold dust. It was the age of Utility Goods and the Utility Mark was something that became very





A Ration Book from 1940

well known. It was supposed to represent goods that had been manufactured at a minimum cost and to registered standards. Previously unknown foods began to appear on the shelves – dried egg, snoek, whale meat to name but three and people of my era had known of no other took to them quite happily and in later years, when better quality goods became available, found it quite difficult to adjust.



The Utility mark from 1941

To be continued

THE GAS HOLDER

We received this letter from Shirley Gardiner our member in Wilshamstead, Beds:

> "My family Gould came from Enfield to New Southgate in the second half of the 1800s. They lived in quite a few roads before settling in Palmers Road. They frequented various houses from number 36 down to number 2.Number 2 was the greengrocers shop and yard directly next to the original *Sir John Lawrence* public house whose "Gents" window opened directly ontp number 2s back yard drive! As a child I always checked the open window.
>
> Several of the shops from 36 to 2 were occupied by various members of the Gould family, one being a teashop for a while. This was run by my grandfather's brother, known as 'midget' locally. My section of the family were William and Adelaide Gould and their eight children, one of which was my mother Winifred. My grandfather and his brother at number 36 delivered greengrocery using horses and carts.
>
> Having been interested in family history for the past thirty years one topic of conversation with my young family concerns the fact that my grandparents raised eight children 'opposite the gasometer'! I was delighted to read Colin Barratt's article referring to the gasworks particularly as my uncle 'Japhet' unloaded coal from the local railway station during WWII and delivered it to the gasworks.
>
> Shirley Gardiner (Mrs) previously of Reservoir Road, N14. Born Oakleigh Road.
>
> PS I had a good laugh having read the article about Domestic Science at Woodhouse School"

ALLOTMENTS

Rathbone Allotments

by John Heathfield

The Rathbone allotments occupy one of the most interesting sites in the district. The brethren's land included the manors of Whetstone, Sarnes Barnet and Halliwick. Roughly speaking, the land from Friern Barnet Road to Bethune Park and Friern Barnet Lane to Oakleigh Road was called the Cistercian lands. The Hospitallers, the Templars and the Cistercians were all granted freedom from tithes (taxes) by the Pope.

Part of the Cistercian lands was Friern Little Park. A 'park' was usually enclosed by fences or hedges. The Cistercians were great sheep farmers and it possible that the park was fenced to prevent the sheep from straying. In 1821 James Bethune Bostock sold to James Wood "all that piece of ground commonly called Little Friern Park Wood containing by estimation 19 acres….also Hungerdown or Clover fields of 6 acres also a parcel of Arable, Meadow or Pasture land called Plough Field of 5 acres". In 1807 the land had been owned by John Bacon. It was Plough Field that was to become the allotments. The land between Plough Field and Hungerdown Lane (later renamed Oakleigh Road North) was let by way of mortgage in plots of one acre or more and 6

cottages were built in a terrace. These were numbers 1-6 Rathbone Terrace and later Ryalls Terrace; in 1939 they were renumbered 420-428 Oakleigh Road North.

The Tithe award of 1844 shows: “James Wood, owning 2 cottages, William Rathbone owning 4 cottages occupied by Joseph Cox, Jno Turner, Charles Ryall and William Liles. The cottage on the west end was used as a beer house and later became *The Woodman* pub. By his will of 22 May 1873, W J Rathbone left his “freehold land with three messuages and two cottages and all that piece of land called Little Park Wood (the ‘Friern’ has gone) also land formerly known as Ploughed Filed now Five Acres” to his son W Rathbone. The Ryall family, who were greengrocers, lived in the end house for three generations.

Woodhouse Allotments

by Howard Davies

Woodhouse Allotments (Limited) covers approximately nine acres in North Finchley between Grove Road and Warnham Road, and today has 133 plots. Recently discovered in the Allotment trading hut are membership records from 1928 which tell us not just the names and addresses but also the occupations of most plot holders. Taken together these records provides a rich social picture of Woodhouse Allotments and the surrounding areas between the wars. By 1928 the allotments had, to the best of our knowledge, been running since about 1920.There had been a nationwide expansion of allotments following the food shortages experienced in the later stages of the First World War. However, it was in 1928 that Woodhouse Allotments Limited was established under the 1893 Industrial & Provident Societies Act. In essence this was the means by which Woodhouse Allotments were able to exercise greater control of the allotments – up until then Finchley Council was responsible for granting lettings to individuals, and clearly members wanted greater autonomy. Hence the formation of Woodhouse Allotments Limited as a limited liability company and the need for shares to be issued and to record shareholder names, addresses and occupations. The President of the Allotments during the 1920’s was Councillor E.S. Bowen and it may be that he played a pivotal role in navigating these changes. A cup – the Bowen cup – is awarded annually to the best plot, so Councillor Bowen’s contribution is still honoured.

The records also provide some detail on when the shares were paid out i.e. when the plot holder gave up their tenancy. Many carried on in to the 1950s and one plot holder held his plot from 1930 to 1969 (plot 38). It is notable that in 1928 there are no women plot holders, the first – Norah Ellen Stephens, the widow of Herbert Stephens (a nursery hand) , takes up the tenancy of her late husband’s plot (97) in December 1930. (Today roughly half of the allotments are held by women.) The habit of recording occupations seems to have petered out by the early 1930’s, but what we do have here is a treasure trove of fascinating insight.

Most of the occupations are what we would term today as semi-skilled or unskilled manual workers with a smattering of professionals. In essence a reflection of the working class and lower middle-class makeup of the streets surrounding the allotments from which the overwhelming majority of plot holders were drawn.

Woodhouse Allotments straddled the then separate Boroughs of Finchley, and Friern Barnet. Albeit most of the site apart from the Grove Road entrance came at least initially under Friern Barnet. Although that specific boundary appears to come after the creation of the site, as initially it seems Finchley Council was the key body. What this

actually meant in practical impact for the running of the allotments is an interesting question. We know that in 1926 the annual rent was 1 shilling and two pence per plot – so 12p in today's money. By 1945 this had risen to five shillings and four pence (29p) The 1928 documents record the original share costs – ten shillings (50p) which updated for inflation would equate to £31.62. The average annual wage for a working man in 1928 was around £250.

The largest single group are tram drivers and workers who would have worked out of the Finchley tram depot of The Metropolitan Electric Tramways situated at the corner of Woodberry Crescent and Rosemont Avenue (the site is today occupied by Homebase). They seem to have been very enthusiastic in signing up for plots. There are a good number of gardeners and this might well relate to the market gardens then present in the Finchley and Whetstone area. No doubt their horticultural skills were well applied in growing produce for their families. Amongst the more distinctive occupations are brass furnisher, street lighter, coach builder, and horse keeper. The occupations of the largest number of plot holders were:

Tram workers	23
Gardeners, Nursery hands & groundsmen	10
Labourers & navvies	8
Retired	6
Clerks	6
Commercial travellers & salesmen	5
Chauffers & motor drivers	3
Engineers & electrical engineers	3
Bricklayers & builders	3
Postal workers & auxiliary postmen	3

The full list of plotholders , together with their addresses, can be found on our website www.friern-barnethistory.org.uk under 'The Area' and 'Allotments'.

Footnote

The large number of tram workers is particularly interesting. The first trams left Finchley depot at 4.00am, operating workmen's services, where the tickets were half the normal fare. This meant that tram drivers and conductors on early shifts would have time off on the afternoons where they could tend their allotments. A former tram driver, Tom Relf, who was interviewed by Percy Reboul in 1980, made this comment about their uniforms: "some of the men had allotments and they liked to use them there and some were too bloody poor to have a suit and they used to be walking about in their tram uniforms most of the time".
