

Friern Barnet *Newsletter*

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WHERE'S OUR STATUE GONE?

by David Berguer

The statue in Friary Park has stood there since March 1911 when it was installed after the opening of the park, thanks to the generosity of Sydney Simmons who gave Friern Barnet Urban District Council £7500 to create a 'public park for all time'. Many of our members will have climbed the rocks on which the statue rested until an iron fence was eventually installed.

The origin of the statue was a mystery until our Nick McKie spent some two years investigating its history. It turns out that it was an image of Queen Victoria which had been commissioned by Prince Albert but on his death the Queen ordered that a statue of Albert should replace it behind the Royal Albert Hall. Our statue disappeared for many years and its whereabouts are still a mystery until it appeared in our park.

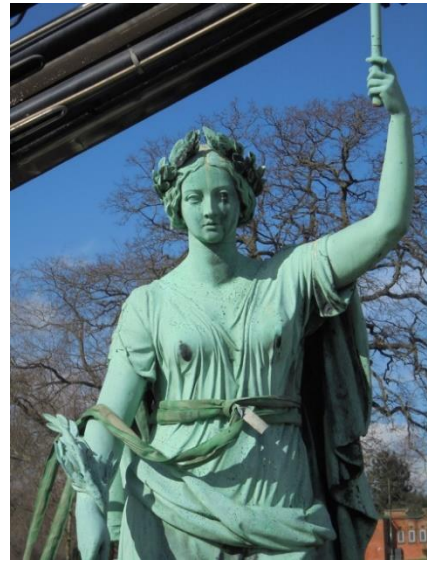
Barnet Council decided that the statue needed restoration, including the reinstatement of the long spear which had been missing for many years and the addition of a dove. The job was given to Rupert Harris Conservation who are experts in statuary and even hold a Royal Warrant. So, on Monday 14 March 2022 a team of experts arrived, undid five bolts, and the



statue was carefully removed and transferred to a lorry for its journey to Poplar where it will be restored to its original appearance, including the removal of the green patination which has accumulated over the years. The work should take two months and we look forward to seeing her back where she belongs.



Nick McKie being interviewed by BBC London News



Victoria in close up



Bye bye, Victoria, see you soon

For more details of the history of the statue, see our *Newsletter Number 78, September 2019*. This can be found on our website: www.friern-barnethistory.org.uk under 'Newsletters'.

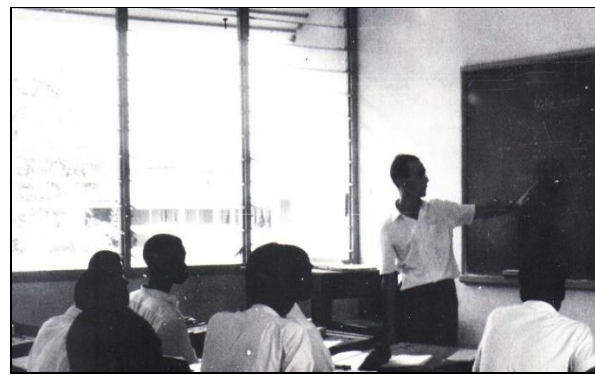
FIVE YEARS IN NIGERIA 1966-1971 – PART 2: THE SCHOOL

by John Philpott

The school continued on sites on Lagos Island until 1959, when under Canon Adelja (principal 1950-1970) it moved north to a new site on open ground near the village of Bariga. This gave room for expansion. Classrooms were arranged, single storey, on either side of a central grass area, each room having louvre windows on either side giving through ventilation. The science block was the tallest building with chemistry, physics and biology labs on successive floors. About half the pupils were borders, the remainder day boys. The boarding house, with the adjoining senior boarding house master's house, were of two storeys. There was a large school hall which served also as a chapel. Another one-storey block contained staffroom, principal's office and bursar's office. The principal's house was just outside the school compound.



A classroom block



Me taking a Maths lesson

Staff quarters were single-storey houses on either side of a road running downhill from the school. Each had two bedrooms, a living room and a kitchen detached a short distance from the house. As with the classrooms, louvre windows allowed through ventilation. Louvres, however were easily slid from the clips holding them, giving ready access to intruders. Windows were therefore fitted with wrought iron bars of interesting pattern. Each house had a garden area. There were no fences. Garden boundaries were sometimes marked by rows of hibiscus bushes with their scarlet flowers.

Up near the school were sports fields and a running track which would appear each year when the undergrowth covering it had been cleared by the boys using machetes. Beyond there was still an untamed area of bush through which I would enjoy walking. This will have been built over by now. Shortly before I left in 1971 a new multi-storey addition to the school was built. I was there for its dedication but did not see it come into use.

In 1979 the Lagos State Government took over control of all formerly independent schools within the state. Deterioration of school standards followed. Twenty-five years later the State handed them back, in the case of the Anglican Boys' Grammar School, to the Diocese of Lagos.

The change from 'CMS Boys' Grammar School' to 'Lagos Anglican Boys' Grammar School' would have emphasized that the school was no longer run from overseas but by the Nigerian church. I have not been able to ascertain when the change of name took place. Most people

continued to refer to it as 'CMS Grammar School, and it seems now to have reverted to its original name.

Beyond the wall of the school compound on the western side was the village (euphemistically so called) of Bariga. Through it ran a narrow potholed road with, in the wet season, stagnant polluted water on either side. There was also the local hazard of the Kia-Kia (Quickly-Quickly) buses – minibuses which were the only form of public transport running beyond the town of Yaba as far as Bariga. On occasions when I used them the driver would have me sit in the area next to him, though I would have felt safer in the back cushioned by crowded humanity. Yaba was our nearest town (really a suburb of Lagos). It had a bank, a post office and a market. Expatriate members of staff shared a PO Box, the boxes being in the side wall of the post office. Yaba Co-op was a small supermarket. The University of Lagos was nearby.



Yaba market

On the eastern side of the school compound the “back road”, a laterite road with smooth but undulating surface, providing an alternative route to Yaba, running past St Finbar’s College, a school run by the Roman Catholic White Fathers.

In 1966 there were several expatriate members of staff, particularly in science subjects. Helen and Josh, from south London, both taught biology. Billy, Irish, taught chemistry. He was accompanied by his wife and their two small children. Roger was English and Kent and Monique were Canadian.

The school day started with morning assembly in the school hall, then lessons until lunchtime and after lunch siesta. Wednesday afternoons were for recreational activities. I was involved with a voluntary service group. Some boys would go to a children’s home to play games with the children. I drove others to a blind school (for adults) to read books to the residents. Resident staff took turns in boarding house duties. These involved ensuring the boys were working when they should be and (much more difficult) resting when they should be. Patrolling after bedtime you would find boys concealed in corners with their books, still working.

On Sunday mornings, Canon Adelaja and the boarders would go to the church in Bariga, where the service was in Yoruba. I would go to Yaba, where priest and congregation were Nigerian, but the service was in English. On Sunday evenings Canon Adelaja would conduct a service of Evensong in the school hall.

Stringent measures were taken nationally to ensure the integrity of examinations regarding both security and maintenance of standards. Initially the Cambridge School Examination Board set the papers for School Certificate and Higher Schools Certificate (O and A level). This role was taken over by the West African Examination Council, with external moderation. Papers were kept in the safe in the local bank to be collected on the day of the exam. The envelope containing them then had to be opened in the presence of the candidates. On one occasion, after distributing the papers, I found the first question state "With reference to the map provided". No map was provided, so I was off back to Yaba as fast as the undulations of the road and springs of my car would allow. The bank had no maps, but they were found at the West African Exams Council office, fortunately also in Yaba.

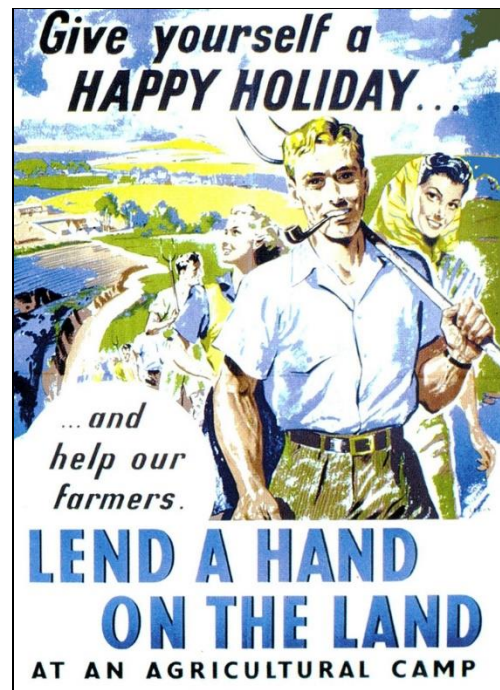
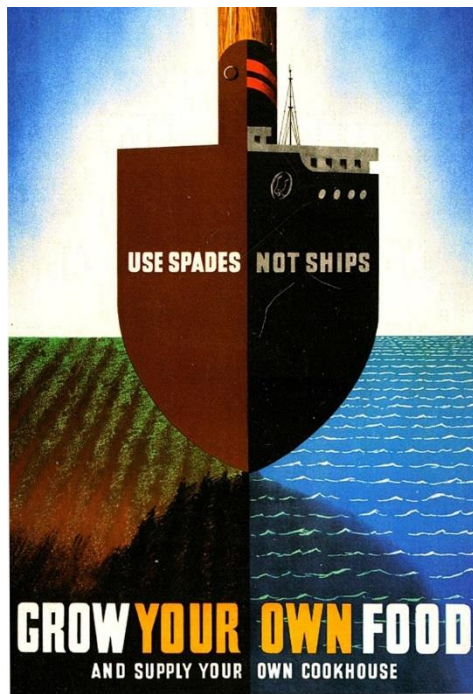
The school had a link with an English public school in the west Midlands. At any one time, there would be two boys sent from Bariga to be educated in the English school. The asymmetrical reciprocal agreement was that pupils of the Midlands school who had just completed their sixth form studies would spend six months in Nigeria to make some practical contributions to the Bariga school. During my first year at the school, Canon Adelaja asked me to provide accommodation in my house to Mike who was coming under this scheme. It was arranged that during my next home leave I should visit the English school. I went with some trepidation wondering what would be expected of me, knowing how much importance would be attached to a visit of a member of staff in the other direction. On arrival I introduced myself to the school secretary. There was no welcome, just: "Take a seat. The head will see you when he's free". The head, when free said: "Mike will show you round." In the course of my tour, I met the two boys from Bariga, who seemed happier than had appeared from their letters, and also the two sixth formers who would be coming to Bariga next year. As it turned out they did not come because of the civil war.

At the end of 1971 I came to the end of the period of my contract (my second contract, for I had renewed it once) and it seemed to be the right time to return home. By this time Nigerians were graduating from the universities in sufficient numbers to make recruitment from overseas unnecessary. I was the only non-Nigerian remaining on the staff. I missed my family, seen after long intervals. My sadness in leaving Nigeria was mitigated when the time of departure actually came by relief as the VC10 took off to have left behind the chaos of Ikeja airport.

DIG FOR VICTORY

by Percy Reboul and John Heathfield

If you are old enough to remember Potato Pete, you will probably recollect that by 1943 the Second World War was going so badly that every scrap of food was vital and every opportunity was taken to grow more of it. Parks and golf courses were just two of the areas turned into allotments or pasture and most householders stopped growing flowers and grew vegetables instead. What is less well known is the key part played by the German and Italian



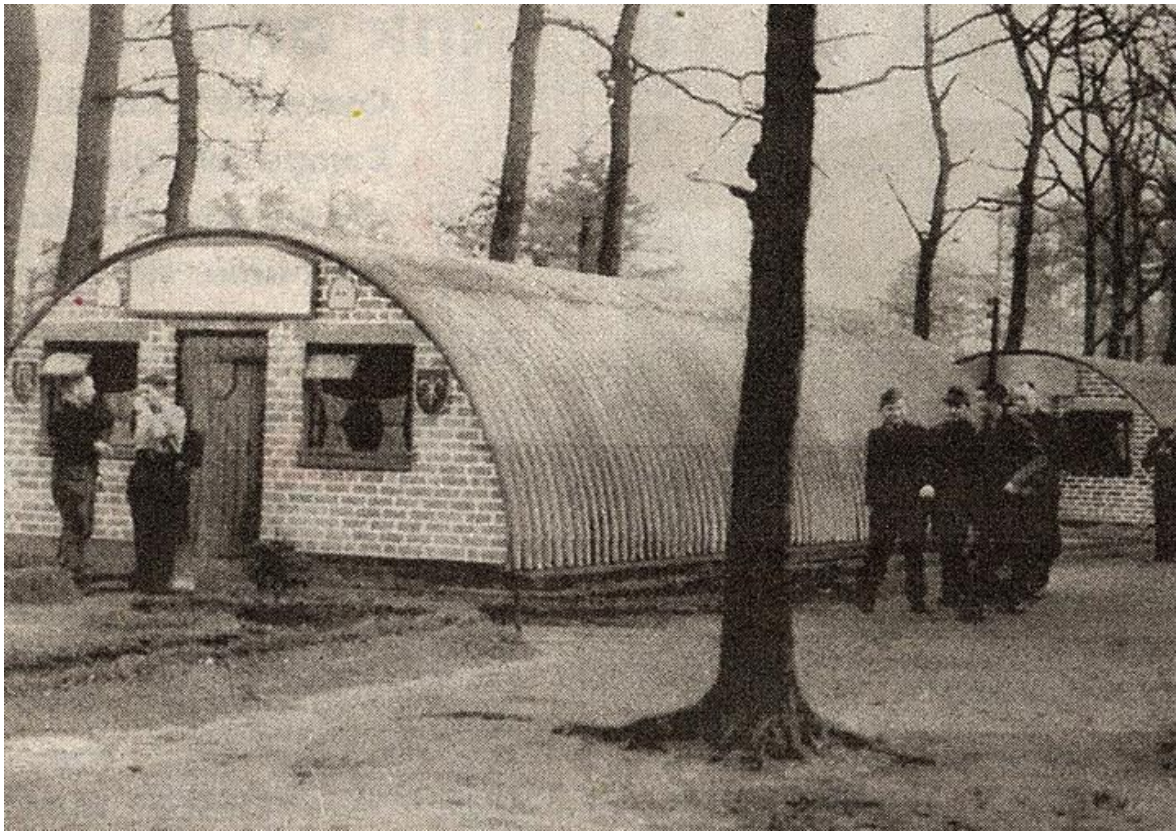
and prisoners of war (POWs) in helping British agriculture to keep the country fed.

Our area was home to many German and Italian POWs. They were required to work on the land (Barnet was more rural then) to replace farm labourers who had been called up by the armed services. During 1943 a camp for German POWs was built just north of Dancers Hill Road on the St Albans Road, outside Barnet. It was built by Italian POWs and the prisoners were housed in standard Ministry of War production huts which had an 18ft 6ins roof span. The side walls were made of bitumen-coated corrugated iron sheets with brick end walls, with a doorway at the centre and a window at each side.

It was a small POW camp compared with some. The usual size was 35 prisoners' huts and 15 guard huts. Our camp appears to have had about 15 prisoners' huts plus a cookhouse, grocery and product store, a dining hut, ablution and latrine block connected to services in the St Albans Road, a sick bay and a carpenter's hut.

Some readers may remember a fine model made by the POWs of their cathedral at Salzburg which was located near the gate to the camp. There was a double barbed-wire fence with coils between the inner and outer fence. Contrary to popular belief fostered by the numerous POW movies, there were no guard towers with machine guns and searchlights as the prisoners were probably rated 'low-risk'. And after all, where would they go?

Immediately after the war, priority was given to bringing back our own servicemen. Germany was also in ruins so many of the prisoners did not leave until the spring of 1946. Up to that time, they were employed on the land - particularly on potato production, which suited our area. Under the terms of the Geneva Convention the prisoners were paid six shillings (30p) a week for their labour and this rate remained after the war was over. This compared with 75 shillings a week (£3.75) paid to members of the Agricultural Trades Union. The Germans were upset and felt that there should be equal pay for equal work – all of which petered out when the POWs returned home in spring of 1946 and the camp closed. For a brief period in



A POW hut for Germans and Italians

the winter of 1944/45, a small group of Italian POWs, who worked on nearby farms, were housed at the top of Bell's Hill in Barnet.

THE GREEN MAN

by David Berguer

In the last Newsletter John Heathfield mentioned *The Green Man* as a name for a pub. There was one of that name at the top of Muswell Hill, opposite the ABC cinema and also one in the High Road, Whetstone. But where did such a strange name originate from?



A benign Green Man and a more formidable one

During the first century AD Roman artists started to use the image of a man surrounded by leaves, presumably to celebrate the coming of spring. It was not until the twelfth century that it appeared in England, usually in churches including St Paul's Cathedral and Westminster Abbey. Masons would often include the image high up on the top of columns which would have entailed doing delicate work balanced on wooden scaffolding and barely visible to the churchgoers. A variation on the design showed the leaves issuing from the mouth of the man and smiling men were sometimes replaced by sinister versions with scowling faces; these became more prevalent after the Black Death in the fourteenth century had wiped out anywhere between 75 to 200 million of the population of Africa and Eurasia.

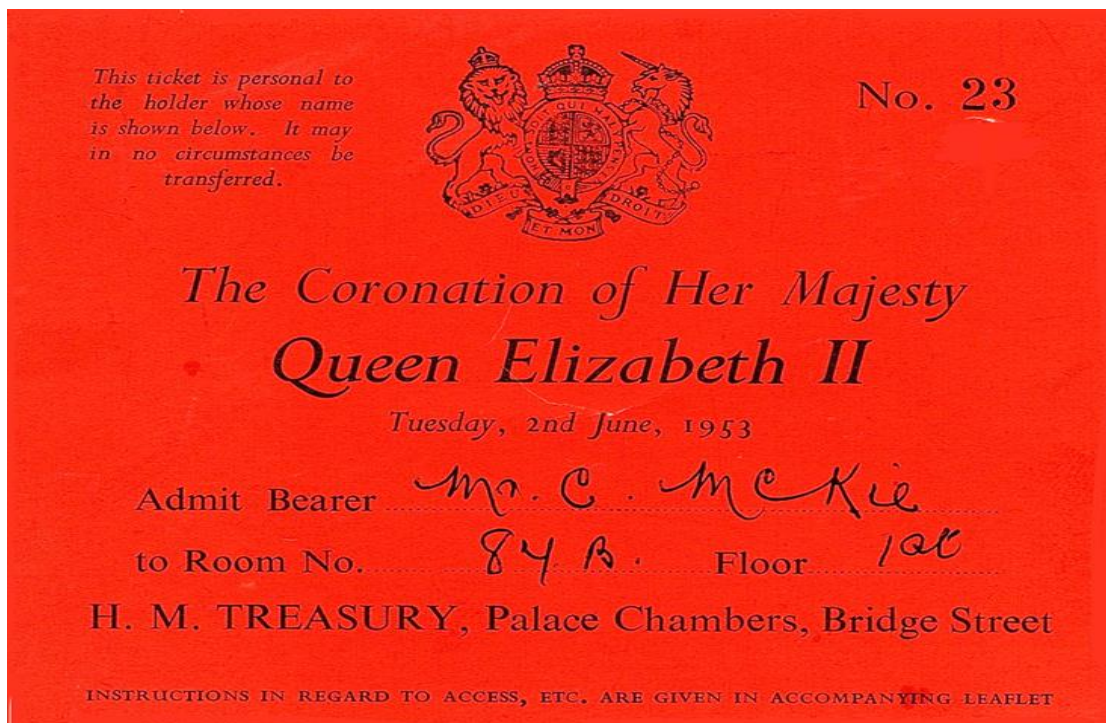
HER MAJESTY

by David Berguer

This year Her Majesty and the country celebrate her Platinum Jubilee. It is 70 years since she acceded to the throne on 6 February 1952. It is worth recalling a few facts about her:

- She is the only person in the UK who is allowed to drive without a number plate and she does not have a driving licence
- She has visited 117 countries – two-thirds of the countries on earth
- She speaks fluent French
- She has seen fourteen Prime Ministers come and go – Winston Churchill, Anthony Eden, Harold Macmillan, Alec Douglas-Home, Harold Wilson, Ted Heath, James Callaghan, Margaret Thatcher, John Major, Tony Blair, Gordon Brown, David Cameron, Theresa May and Boris Johnson
- She has seen thirteen US Presidents come and go – Dwight D Eisenhower, John F Kennedy, Lyndon B Johnson, Richard M Nixon, Gerald R Ford, James E Carter, Ronald W Regan, George Bush, William J Clinton, George W Bush, Barrack Obama, Donald Trump and Joe Biden
- She is the oldest monarch to have celebrated a Golden Jubilee (in 2002 at the age of 76) and a Diamond Jubilee (in 2012 at the age of 86)
- She rarely attends funerals, those of Winston Churchill, Margaret Thatcher and the Duke of Edinburgh are the most notable
- Her full title in the UK is Elizabeth the Second, by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and of the other realms and Territories Queen, Head of the Commonwealth, Defender of the Faith
- She is the only living head of state in the world to have served in World War II
- The last person to have been prosecuted for treason was Marcus Alexander who fired six blanks at her at the Trooping of the Colour in 1981
- The Imperial State Crown has 2868 diamonds
- When whales wash up on any UK shore, dead or alive, they immediately become the property of the monarch under royal prerogative
- She has sat for 129 portraits. There have been five portraits used on UK coinage since 1952
- One of her corgis mated with one of Princess Margaret's dachshunds and produced a 'dorgi' but it was attacked and killed by the Queen Mother's dog

- There are nine royal thrones – one at the House of Lords, two at Westminster Abbey and six at Buckingham Palace
- Her first radio broadcast was in 1940 and the first televised Christmas speech was in 1957
- In 2004 the cast of *Les Misérables* performed at Windsor Castle in front of the Queen and Jacques Chirac, the French President – the first time a West End musical had performed at a royal residence
- There have been 23 wax figures of the Queen at Madame Tussauds



*Our Treasurer, Nick McKie, who was working as a clerk at The Treasury in 1953,
had a front row seat for the Coronation*

LIFE AT THE TIME

1952

The last tram ran in London on 5 July. In August 36 people died in floods at Lynmouth and in September 28 people were killed at the Farnborough Air Show when a de Havilland DH 110 crashed into the crowd. In October 102 people were killed in a train crash at Harrow & Wealdstone. On a brighter note, a new play *The Mousetrap* opened in London and a pint of beer cost 4d but the average wage was £7 and you could buy a house for £2028. There were also no yellow lines or parking meters but a biro cost £1 6s 8d and you could see *Singing in the Rain* at your local cinema for 1s 8d.

1953

As far as children were concerned the most important event in 1953 was on 5 February when sweets came off ration after thirteen years of rationing. Their parents could read a new novel – *Casino Royale* by Ian Fleming and at the cinema *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* and *From Here to Eternity* were blockbusters. The event that nearly overshadowed the Coronation was the climbing in May of Mount Everest by Edmund Hillary and Sherpa Tensing. On the football pitch, nobody would forget the Cup Final when Stanley Matthews helped Blackpool to a 3-2 win over Bolton.



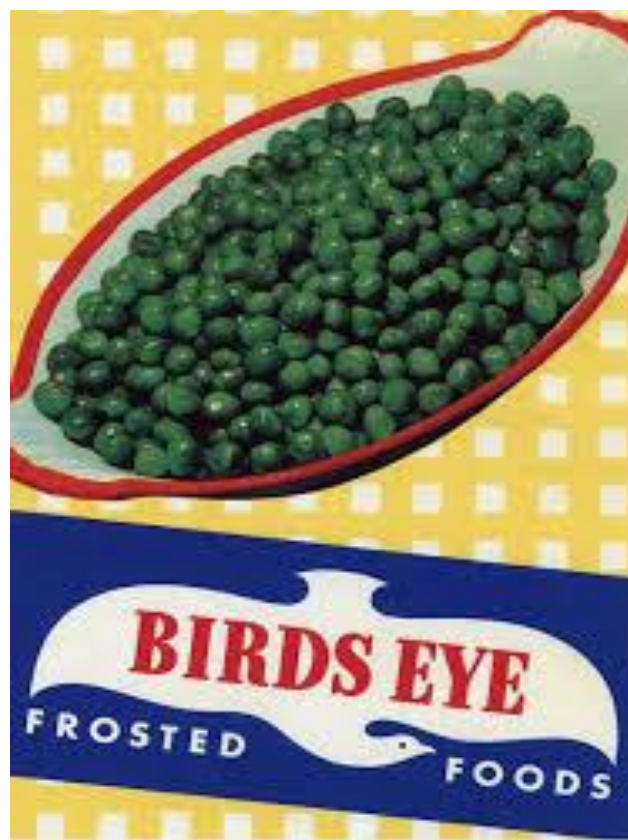
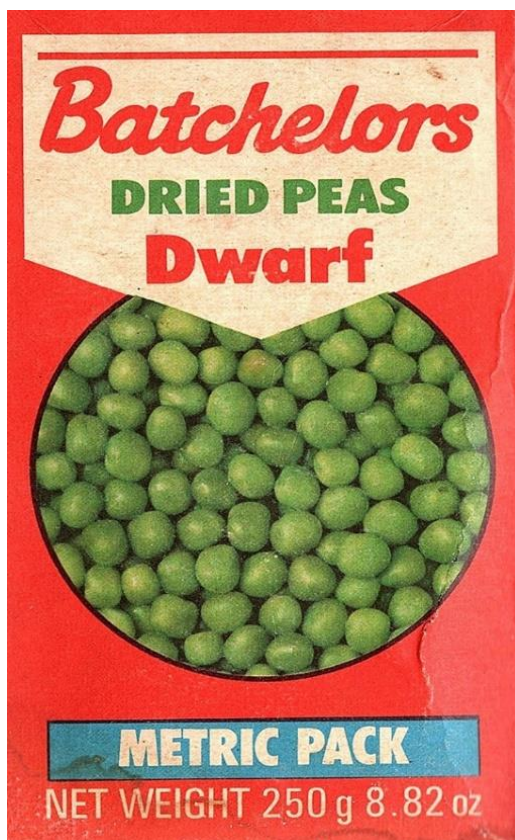
PROCLAMATION OF H.M. QUEEN ELIZABETH II ON 8th FEBRUARY, 1952
(outside the Tally Ho! Public House, North Finchley)

Left to right: Councillors C. H. Kitchen, R. Yorke, G. T. Brunsell, D. H. McGregor, F. L. Pike, Alderman J. G. Bryson, Councillor G. H. T. Watson, Alderman Percy Lawrence, Macebearer, Councillor W. J. Enright (Mayor of Finchley), R. M. Franklin (Town Clerk), Councillor Emil Grant (Deputy Mayor), Alderman Mrs. F. A. Roberts, Dr. A. A. Turner, Medical Officer of Health, Councillors Miss E. M. Killip, Mrs. G. I. Wilson, H. J. Treby, Frank H. Lush.

COOKING MADE EASY

by David Berguer

Amongst our collection that we call 'Relics' is a packet of Batchelors Dried Peas. There is no date on it, but we assume that it was prior to 1963 when Birds Eye introduced frozen peas to a grateful nation.



The old and the new

To give you an idea of how innovative frozen peas were, here are the instructions for cooking Batchelors dried peas:

INGREDIENTS: Dried peas. Steeping tablet (sodium carbonate and sodium bicarbonate).

DIRECTIONS: Cover the peas and enclosed steeping tablet with boiling water and stir until tablet has dissolved. Steep for 12-16 hours, then rinse. Place peas in boiling water (use enclosed net). Add sugar, salt to taste and simmer (not boil) for 20-30 min. or till tender.

One can only imagine how disappointed a husband would be when asking his wife if he could have peas tonight only to be told that it would take about 17 hours.....

Birds Eye had introduced frozen foods into the UK in 1938 and in 1955 fish fingers were launched, followed by beef burgers in 1950. Many of you will recall Captain Birds Eye who arrived on our TV screens in 1967.

THE CORONATION ON TELEVISION

Television began at 9.15am with a tuning signal and coverage lasted from 10.15am to 11.30pm. The television audience was 125 million in Europe and North America. The Americans saw the event on film which was flown over the Atlantic in 8 hours in jet bombers. It was estimated that one-fifth of the world's population either saw or heard the Coronation.

BBC commentators were Richard Dimbleby, John Snagge, Brian Johnston, Raymond Baxter, Tom Fleming and Jean Metcalfe. Many people either bought or rented televisions for the first time and they were then able to see other programmes such as *The Grove Family*, *Café Continental* and *Muffin the Mule*. Televisions had to be 'warmed up' before they could be watched and programmes were often suspended with a caption *Normal Service Will Be Resumed as Soon as possible*. Interludes between programmes included a potters wheel, a windmill, a white kitten with a ball of wool, a moonlight seascape, a bonfire and ploughing. You can see these all again by Googling 'Interludes BBC Archive' on youtube.com!

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While we are in a nostalgic mood, it's worth recalling some radio programmes of the time – *The Billy Cotton Bandshow*, *Workers' Playtime*, *Family Favourites*, *Letter from America*, *Music While You Work* and, of course, *Mrs Dales' Diary* ('I'm rather worried about Jim').

SUBSCRIPTION RENEWAL

For those of you who have not yet renewed your subscriptions for the year commencing 1 April 2022, a further copy of the Membership Renewal Form is enclosed. If you have not renewed by 1 June, you will no longer receive copies of the Newsletter.

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Local History Society©**

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