

Friern Barnet *Newsletter*

Published by Friern Barnet & District Local History Society

Issue Number 1

October 2000

OFF TO A FLYING START

By John Donovan

It seemed most appropriate to hold our first Public Meeting on 6 September at the Town Hall (even though it no longer functions as such.) We had no idea how many would attend and estimates within the Committee ranged from 10 to 25. You can imagine our surprise (and joy!) when 52 attended and 20 of those joined the Society there and then. Pat Cleland, our Membership Secretary, and her neighbour Mary Taylor were kept busy the whole evening receiving visitors and writing receipts for new members.

As President, I was asked to officially open the evening and welcome our audience. I explained that there were drinks and biscuits at the back of the hall to which everyone was welcome, and then I outlined the programme for the evening. At the other end of the room Ollie Natelson and David Berguer had pinned photographs and maps (several of which had been produced by David) on the walls, and laid out more photos and books on tables, so that our visitors could browse at their leisure.

I introduced the Committee by name and title, and then gave a brief resume of the sequence of events since our first advert went into the Barnet Times back in November 1999. Following that, I went on to explain why a local history society is important for Friern Barnet (for our past, our present *and* our future) and I also explained why we call ourselves Friern Barnet & District (it's so that we can investigate items just outside our boundaries). I pointed out that our sheet



Andrew Mussell with the cake

of objectives, available to all, listed many activities and projects that we hope to initiate, especially a Newsletter, which will keep our members in touch with what the Committee and all our Groups are doing.

I finished my little chat by explaining what we would like our members to do for the Society and what we could do for *them*. I then handed over to Ollie who spoke of some his projects and plans for the Society, and of the local history walks he conducts around the area.

Then it was time for our guest of honour, Andrew Mussell (the Barnet Borough Archivist) to explain the work and the

scope of the London Borough of Barnet Archive at Hendon. He observed that the Archive is for the people of Barnet (he pointed out that we actually pay his salary!) and he welcomed any enquiries and/or visitors who wanted to research their family history or just the history of their house. He closed by appealing to all present to actually *use* the Archive.

At this point I should explain that all the teas, coffees and biscuits were supplied by our Treasurer, Janet Liversidge, and her husband Colin (who acted as "tea lady" all evening, helped by Dorrell Dressekie). Janet capped it all by producing a splendid iced cake, which was decorated in full with the Friern Barnet Coat of Arms. Andrew Mussell kindly cut the cake, as a way of launching the Society officially, after which everyone present enjoyed a slice.

The final part of the evening was taken up with more tea, coffee and biscuits while everyone wandered around, chatting to one another and studying all the pictures, books and maps on display. During the evening I had time to note that our audience included John Phillips, the local author, Brian Kolbert, the Roman expert from the Potters Bar Historical Society, Helen Hooper, the Secretary of Friends of Friary Park, and our own Yvonne Ruge.

We had to vacate the hall by ten o'clock, so everyone helped us to clear up, before we closed the doors on our first Public Meeting - a "rousing success".

A KINDLY WELCOME

Following the first Public Meeting, we received a very nice letter from Robert Winton, the Hon Secretary of the Finchley Society, welcoming us and wishing us every success. Thank you Robert, and we look forward to working with you and your colleagues.

BRING YOUR CARD

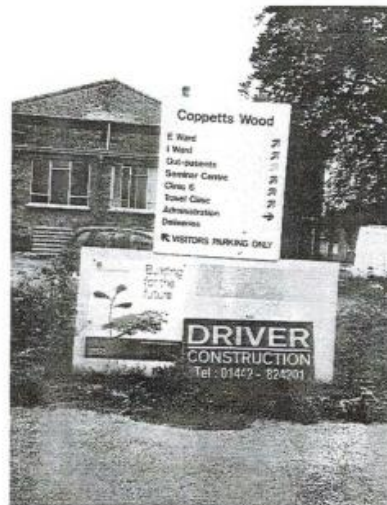
To speed-up the registration process at our Public Meetings, can all members

please bring their Membership Cards with them. Pat Cleland thanks you in advance!

JUST IN TIME

By David Berguer

We had heard several rumours that Coppetts Wood hospital was due to close, so Ollie Natelson hastily arranged for us both to visit the site on Saturday 16 September. To our surprise we learned that the closing date was only a few days away, on 25 September!



We were given a tour of the hospital and the wards by Clinical Nurse Manager Flanagan who was extremely helpful and informative. We took many photographs, both inside the various wards and of the exteriors of the buildings, so fortunately there will be some record for posterity.

The hospital has now relocated to the 11th floor of the Royal Free Hospital in Hampstead, except for Ward G (the High Risk Ward) where patients with extremely contagious diseases such as Lassa

Fever and Ebola will continue to be treated. Apparently the reason that this ward is not moving is that it is fitted with equipment to produce negative pressure, which ensures that deadly germs cannot escape into the atmosphere. We were amazed to learn that this particular unit is one of only two in the country, the other being in Newcastle.

The overriding impression that we gained was that this was a very well run and tightly knit hospital and there was a great deal of camaraderie amongst the staff. It is a tribute to the excellent reputation of the hospital that local residents have never minded having an Isolation Hospital on their doorstep.

In due course we hope to publish a history of Coppetts Wood Hospital, which was founded in 1888, so we would love to talk to anyone who has worked at the hospital or was a patient there. Please contact Ollie on 020 8361 2496.

MORE DEVELOPMENT?

Costco have applied to Haringey Council for outline Planning Permission for a 17,000 sq. m cash and carry store on the site of the former sewage works on the south of the North Circular Road, immediately opposite the Friern Retail Park. Apparently the only access will be via the bridge over the North Circular.

We already have photographs of the site, but we hope to produce a history of the sewage works which helped to give Pinkham Way the tag Stinkham Way and which caused drivers to accelerate along that particular stretch of the North Circular! Anyone with memories (olfactory or otherwise!), photographs, etc. please contact Ollie.

WORKING GROUPS

We have now heard from just over 20 members who have expressed an interest in doing work on various projects. The most popular subjects are Study of Buildings, Transport and Establishing

the Boundary of Friern Barnet. We shall shortly be arranging individual meetings where those interested in a specific area can share views and produce a plan of action that will eventually lead to our producing a series of publications.

BOUNDARY MARKERS

One of our stated objectives is to define the boundary of Friern Barnet. This is not as easy as it sounds, as boundaries



have been moved over time. One useful guide is the presence of Boundary Markers (small metal plaques usually at pavement level or in front gardens) which usually say something like FBP or FBUDC. Janet and Colin Liversidge have already located twelve of these on their travels but doubtless there are others that we don't yet know about. Please keep your eyes peeled and report all sightings to Janet (on 020 8368 3927) who will arrange for their exact location to be recorded and for photos to be taken.

PLANS FOR 2001

We are already working on plans for a programme of Public Meetings for next year. The aim is to have at least six of

these and provisional topics include Shopping as it Used To Be, Wartime in Friern Barnet and the Economy of the Area. As well as our regular meetings we hope to arrange for some outings to places of particular interest. We also hope to persuade Ollie to arrange some more of his famous conducted walks around the area. If there is anything you would particularly like us to cover, please let us know.

CAN YOU HELP?

* The Defence of Britain Project is a database organised by the Council of British Archaeology and, amongst other things, they are compiling a list of old air-raid shelters. So if you've still got an Anderson shelter in your garden, or you know where there is one, please let Ollie know and he'll be round with his camera before you can say "Adolf Hitler".

* We are particularly keen to hear from anyone who lives in the Freehold (south of the North Circular) and has memories they would like to share with us. This is an interesting area with a character all its own and, amongst other things, was at one time home to Muswell Hill Bus Garage.

SURF THAT WEB

For those of you with access to the Internet, here are three web-sites worth visiting:

www.allsaints

This is the web-site of All Saints Church in Oakleigh Road North. It is very informative and, as well as giving details of the church and its Arts Centre, it has a full list of events at the church.

www.far-point.co.uk/awca

This is the site from the Arnos West Community Association. Their area covers Waterfall Road to the north, the North Circular to the south, Station Road to the west and the Piccadilly Line to the east, so if you live in or near there, this site is worth a visit.

www.balh.co.uk

Anyone with an interest in local history should have a look at this site. The British Association for Local History is the charity which promotes local history and serves local historians. As well as arranging conferences and lectures, they also publish a large range of books and pamphlets on the subject.

If, in your travels in Cyberspace, you find any other web-sites that you think would be of interest, please let David Berguer know (on 020 8444 3089)

READ THAT BOOK

Although they do not cover our area, we must draw your attention to the Hornsey Historical Society who produce a whole host of postcards and superbly written and produced books on places such as Highgate, Muswell Hill, Tottenham and Crouch End. You can contact them at The Old Schoolhouse, 138 Tottenham Lane (corner of Rokesley Avenue), Hornsey, N8 7EL. Phone 020 8348 8429.

GET YOUR PEN OUT

We received a very nice letter from our member in Somerset, Mrs Hilda Clark, who writes to say that, although she can't attend our meetings, she would love to keep in touch with any members who recall the days when the trams used to run along Woodhouse Road. Mrs Clark lived in New Southgate and attended Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School from September 1934 to June 1939. She particularly recalls riding on the Feltham and E/1 trams on routes 9 and 19 and has given us some wonderful anecdotes about her days as a passenger. If these bring back memories, or if you were at school around the same time, please write to Hilda at Holly Tree Cottage, Hollow Road, Shipham, Somerset, BS 25 1TG.

KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN

The past is history, but the present is tomorrow's history. That's why we state

"Past, Present, Future" in our literature and that's why we need to make a record of what's happening *today*. So if you hear that a shop is changing hands, or see a building being demolished or renovated, either give us a call, or go out and take a photograph and jot down the date and the details. That way we'll be able to leave something for future generations. To put it into perspective, just imagine how nice it would be if someone had taken a picture of your home or your road as it was being built! If you've got a video camera, record the changes as they take place - even today's cars or fashions will be of interest to someone in 2050.

On the same theme, if you have friends, neighbours or relatives who remember the early days in Friern Barnet, ask them for their reminiscences and if possible make an audiotape of them. Facts and figures are very important, but oral history puts the flesh on the bones and helps make the past come alive.

DID YOU KNOW?

- * The organ which was removed from the Gaumont at North Finchley is alive and well and living in "The Plough" at Great Mundon, near Ware, and gives regular concerts.
- * Former Arsenal star Alex James used to live at 24 Friern Barnet Lane
- * The pavilion in Bethune Park was used as a mortuary for a time in the Second World war
- * More than twenty new roads have been built on the site of Friern Hospital

ANOTHER SUCCESS

Our second Public Meeting took place at Friern Barnet Town Hall on Thursday 5 October and attracted over 50 people. The subject was Friern Barnet Memories and as well as a host of artefacts presented by John, Ollie, Janet and David, several visitors brought their own photographs for us to share. As we

had hoped, the sight of old milk bottles, wind-up gramophones, bus conductors' ticket racks and old posters sparked off a flood of reminiscences and some very valuable things were learned.

Unfortunately we had to call the meeting to a close just as everyone was getting into their stride but we have no doubt that the evening was a success, and we even recruited a further 17 members!

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

- * On **Wednesday 1 November** at Friern Barnet Town Hall, Ollie will be giving a talk on Friern Barnet Hospital - The Early Years. This will be illustrated with a selection from Ollie's collection of slides of the hospital. Start time will be 8.00pm and there will be a charge of £1 (members free) and, as usual, there will be free refreshments. We are anticipating a big attendance so make sure you come on time!
- * As a follow-up to the above, on **Sunday 12 November** we are planning a tour of part of the Friern Hospital site. This will be a good opportunity to see from the outside how the old hospital has been transformed into flats, and to see how new houses and flats have been built in the grounds. Meet in the forecourt of New Southgate Station in Station Road at 2.00 pm. Charge £1
- * On **Friday 8 December** we are holding our Christmas Party at 8.00pm at the Old Fire Station (next to the Town Hall in Friern Barnet Lane). This will be for members only and there will be a charge of £3, which will cover food and drink. It will be a chance to meet your fellow members and, as we shall be holding quiz about Friern Barnet, you could come away with a nice prize!

NEXT NEWSLETTER

Our next Newsletter will be published in early January, 2001 and will contain details of our programme of Meetings and events for the year.

MEMBERS

We now have 72 members:

Mr Colin Barratt
Mrs Mary Barratt
Mr David Berguer (Chairman)
Mr F C Blackwell
Mrs Pamela Boden
Mr Stephen Boxall
Mrs Linda Boxall
Mr Kenneth Brooks
Mrs Doris Brooks
Ms Anita Brown
Mr H R Burgess
Mrs M C Burgess
Mr Albert Chipping
Mrs Hilda Clark
Mr Ross Cleland
Mrs Pat Cleland (Membership Secretary)
Mr Leslie Condon
Mr Roger Coupe
Mrs Jenny Coupe
Mr John Donovan (President & Secretary)
Mrs Sheila Donovan
Mrs Dorrell Dressekie (Committee Member)
Mr Alan Evans
Ms Tessa Fairweather (Committee Member)
Mr Alan Fensome
Mr Andrew Forsyth
Mrs Grace Fensome
Dr Stanley Gilks
Mrs Barbara Gilks
Mrs Sylvia Gossett
Ms Eileen Hall
Mrs Margaret Hayes
Mr John A Holden
Mr John Holtham
Mr Mel Hooper
Mrs Helen Hooper
Ms Rose Jones
Ms Janice Kirby
Mr Simon Kirkham
Mr David Laycock
Mr Colin Liversidge
Mrs Janet Liversidge (Treasurer)
Mr Dino Lytras
Mr Eric Morgan
Dr Oliver Natelson (Archivist)

Mr John Phillips
Mrs Phillips
Mr John Philpott
Mr Gary Roberts
Ms Yvonne Ruge
Mr Brian Salinger
Ms Emily Salinger
Ms Jo Salinger
Ms Kate Salinger
Mr Steve Salinger
Mr Tom Salinger
Mrs Iris Sande
Mr Charles Smith
Mrs Joan Smith
Mr P J Smyth
Mrs D R Smyth
Mr Glenn Steed
Mr Derek Spurgeon
Mrs Joan Spurgeon
Ms Catherine Walker
Mr K H Wallis
Mrs P R Wallis
Mrs Sheila White
Mr Alan Williams
Mr Derek Williams
Mrs Joanne Williams
Ms Margaret Wilson

COMMITTEE

If you want to contact members of the Committee, here are their details:

Mr David Berguer

Phone: 020 8444 3089

e-mail: davidberguer@hotmail.com

Mrs Pat Cleland

e-mail: pcleland@beeb.net

John Donovan

Phone: 01707 642 886

Mrs Janet Liversidge

Phone: 020 8368 3927

Dr Oliver Natelson

Phone: 020 8361 2496

e-mail: o.natel@virgin.net

DON'T FORGET THE CHRISTMAS PARTY!

Friern Barnet & District Local History Society
(Past, Present, Future)